

**SOCIOLOGICAL-STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS UPON
WISDOM: THE SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL MATRIX OF
PROVERBS 15:28-22:16**

By

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PREFACE

This dissertation represents an attempt at synthesis—and closure—to an intellectual odyssey that has lasted nearly fifteen years. It combines disparate elements, which may ultimately prove incommensurable. Its conclusion has been much delayed, causing pain and frustration not only to me but to those who thought they saw something of value in it and in the lines of inquiry suggested by it. Time has made it a more thorough and mature document, especially the analysis of Proverbs IIb itself, though at the cost of some inconsistency and, loss of clarity. Parts of this work were written at various times over an eight-year period. Ideas change. Approaches change. The writer who finished this work is far different from the one who started it. From it, however, has developed a conception of interdisciplinary research and teaching that may justify its deferral. Such integration means that much impinges on what is actually said here that cannot be dealt with adequately or at length. I have faced the difficult choice of whether or not to cite my other work. For one whose career and research are less integrative, the choice is easy. Humility usually wins out. I doubt the humility, however, of failing to mention what

is an inherent part of the formulative process. So, I choose to cite myself, at the risk of seeming arrogant, to clarify the synthesis which this work represents.

I wish that I could do justice to the encouragement and support that I have received over so many years in producing this dissertation. To mention some people is to do injustice to others by leaving them out. I am fortunate to have such good and caring friends, whose counsel and whose friendship I value above all else in the world. Jim Crenshaw has been friend, colleague and teacher. I know that I am a mystery to him and that that mystery is more grief than glory. His guidance and influence pervade this work and the life that is represented through it. Phil Hyatt ordered me to create a synthesis in my dissertation.¹ I hope some measure of what he sought can be found here. John Gammie offered insight and encouragement when the vision seemed to have been lost. Norman Gottwald provided a superb critique of the theses underlying the chapter on Proverbs IIb. The Dempster Graduate Fellowship underwrote travel and research for some of the work on this dissertation. To my Committee, working under duress—Walter Harrelson, Dan Patte, Doug Knight, Howard Harrod—I offer my thanks and condolences. Gene Floyd made sense of the senseless and converted it into typed manuscript, for which thanks are hardly adequate recognition. Many other

people should see themselves and their influence among these pages; that friendship is beyond value or mere mention. For all of them, this work at last is finished.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

As both literature and philosophy of life, the Hebrew *mashal* holds a powerful elective affinity for the Modern reader. Its seeming assurance about the means and ends of life is tempered with a certain irony. It often exhibits a humanistic concern. Together, the sayings encapsulate and hold up to view features of human experience that transcend a separation of considerable physical, temporal, social and cultural space. Superficially, their settings and their objectives seem to require no elaborate translation. Literatures and philosophies arising from entirely different social and historical settings may have a special saliency, as it were an "elective affinity," for a particular group at some specific time in its social history.¹ Such is the case, I suggest, in our (hermeneutic)

¹Max Weber originally coined the term *Wahlverwandtschaften*--"elective affinities"--as sociological terminus technicus in the articulation of his theoretical approach to the study of religion's development as social ideology. He appropriated the word from the title of a lesser-known novel of Goethe's. In his usage, it refers to the dialectic relationship that exists between social

re-discovery of wisdom and wisdom literature.

Because the original setting is no longer relevant in such affinities and because the new social application invests these works and ideas with quite different meanings and emphases, the literary historian must be scrupulous to avoid anachronism which arises from attributing historical validity to saliences that are in fact creatures of his own time. The biblical scholar of this wisdom finds himself or herself today operating under just such prudential admonitions. Certainly, intellectual understanding is hermeneutic, indeed it may even be normative.¹ The scholar

structure and its legitimating ideology: each alters the other in systematic, if not determined, ways. The explanations that groups develop to interpret their social reality, which are often derived through historical processes from the cultural stuff of other peoples at other times and places, have a basic compatibility with the social organization which values, preserves and transmits them. This compatibility increases with time. Ideas change social structure; social organization alters its legitimating interpretive system over time. Thus, all ideology is hermeneutic. Elective affinities--the interactions between groups and their interpretive realities--become powerful but creative social forces. Weber's archetypal case is laid out in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); and his "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans., ed. and with an introduction by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 129-56. See also his *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittig, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al., 3 vols. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 2:447-529, 583-90.

¹Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer*,

must somehow strive to manipulate this tool of our understanding without being in turn controlled or manipulated by it more than some hermeneutically essential minimum. Literary historical research is a cumulative and approximate science. As all our scholarly implements become more sophisticated, as our application of them is refined, issues we believe to have settled must be raised, debated and answered again. We observe this kind of flux in current studies of wisdom in general and of the mashal collections of Proverbs in particular.¹

Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 12-32. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, A Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press 1975); and Karl Löwith, *Nature, History and Existentialism, and Other Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. with a Critical Introduction by Arnold Levison, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966).

¹James L. Crenshaw surveys this development in his introduction to an important collection of essays reflecting research into wisdom and the directions it has taken in the last generation or so of scholarship, "Prolegomenon," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, The Library of Biblical Studies, ed. Harry M. Orlinsky (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1976), pp. 1-60. See also his article "Wisdom in the Old Testament," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), pp. 952-56. In the same volume, see Ronald J. Williams, "Wisdom in the Ancient Near East," pp. 949-52; and Hans G. Conzelmann, "Wisdom in the New Testament," pp. 956-60. Also, James L. Crenshaw, "Wisdom," in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. John H. Hayes, Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion, vol. 2, ed. John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), pp. 225-64; Gerhard von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel* (Neukirchen-

All historical criticism of literature requires the operating assumption that a work somehow, in form or content or motif, betrays and conveys the setting within which it was constructed into its present form, however composite. In a complex work, if we can isolate the earlier constituent elements, we may be able to discern important aspects of its socio-historical development, as well as the lineaments of its literary history. Individual works may resist such analysis, perhaps because they are too brief, their language too ambiguous, or the effects of later redaction too gross; but, to reject this working assumption is ultimately to deny the possibility of doing meaningful study of literary works as the stuff of social and intellectual history. How we retrieve this history is a question, of methodology. If we accept, albeit with some generosity the implications of affinities as hermeneutic, we may admit that different methodologies will be effective with different elements or aspects of this history. There is a congeniality--affinity --of methodology and material, as well as of social structure and ideology. Indeed, we may need to be methodologically eclectic if we are to deal adequately with this

Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970): On this concept of interpretation as it applies to the development of exegesis, see Georg Fohrer, et al., *Exegese des Alten Testaments: Einführung in die Methodik*, Uni-Taschenbücher, vol. 267 (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1973), pp. 9-30.

history at all.¹

The problem of setting resembles in its implications the aesthetic issue of intention, though the Biblical scholar seldom has the opportunity to raise the latter, and often then only by indirection. What may at first seem to be a marginal change in setting can have considerable influence on the interpretation to be given to a work. The "what-it-meant" side of hermeneutic's dialectic of analysis includes not only the bare meaning of the words used, but who communicated through them (i.e., their social location) and how they were used. We can be frustrated by knowing what the words say without knowing what they said: what they meant in that social and historical context.² The phenomenologically-informed researcher sees the problem of setting divided into two poles of investigation.

First, within what objective social order did this literature arise and acquire its meaning? We seek a history of the society's institutions with their system and

¹Fohrer, et al., pp. 9-30, 148-71.

²Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutic Reflection," trans. G. B. Hess and R. E. Palmer, *Continuum* 8 (1970):77-95; and his *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). See also, Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. with an Introduction by Charles A. Kelbley, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965).

order projected against the comparative background of the histories and institutions of neighboring societies. This aspect of meaning also includes the question what standing the works and their authors both held and acquired within the community. Thus, the question of canon finally is relevant to the objective meaning of a work.¹

Second, how did the writer(s) perceive and structure the experiential world to achieve that understanding which he attempted to communicate in his work? Here we are concerned with the *subjective* pole of meaning. A work bespeaks the worldviews of its authors and editors. Where the literary history is convoluted and the internal construction of the work has become complex and interwoven, the search for consistent and intelligible world-views can become quite demanding. Here again, the danger is that the researcher's ideas of "intelligible" or "consistent" which are his cultural and personal perceptions of rationality may be imposed on the work. Since the wise seem to have been attempting to organize and interpret the realm of

¹Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorothy Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), cp. 56-88; Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert, Northwestern Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), pp. 1-44; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1966), pp. 45-85.

experience in order to cope with it more intelligently and successfully, the danger of anachronistic rationality is far more immediate than its opposite: accepting any contradiction or inconsistency, even to the controversion of common sense, on the appeal to cultural difference or even the oriental mind *soi-disant*.¹

This second pole of analysis is especially important. In order to comprehend a work adequately, we need to understand it as itself a hermeneutic act: an attempt to give coherent meaning to experience. A literary work reflects both subjectivity and objectivity. It results from the interaction of the author(s)'s subjectivity and "objective" experience perceived through traditionally-defined. objective social reality given an objective literary form. For a time, biblical criticism attempted to deal with the subjective dimension of hermeneutic by psychologizing biblical writers as they were then historically understood. As authors became schools, as biblical works unveiled their complex composite character to researchers, psychological

¹Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 89-151; and his *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy: Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*, trans. and with an introduction by Quentin Lauer, Academy Library of Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 188-89; Schutz, *Phenomenology of the Social World*, pp. 102-7, 144-76; Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality*, pp. 135-73; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge," *Sociology and Social Research: An International Journal* 47 (July 1963): 417-27.

analysis of biblical literature became untenable in most cases. Subjective analysis, however, was often discarded with psychologizing.

Literature is virtually the only historical artifact which provides the scholar access to the subjectivity, the mind or minds, of people in their historical matrix. What it meant to be a person of such-and-such an ancient social world is accessible, if at all, only through literature. Moreover, the only vehicle we have to accomplish that reconstruction is our own individual subjectivities as literary and social historians. The objective literary artifact becomes the tool through which to project that coherent understanding which a particular layer or segment of the work reflects. The objective document is the conceptual product of a subjectivity.

Since we can approach the work only through our individual consciousnesses, unnormed by access to any other, our interpretation of the document and our projection of its meanings are biased by our own hermeneutic of our own reality, however much it may be the informed and structured product of a process of social learning. The phenomenologist argues that certain standardized procedures can control, but not eliminate, this bias. To omit any attempt to project the subjective hermeneutic pole is to omit one of the most important social, historical and theological contributions of this literature. Socially accepted

interpretations of the world arise from the interactions of individual consciousnesses, socially in-formed, with socially-defined experiences. Meaning is both subjective and objective.¹

We are both the beneficiaries and the slaves of the western distinction between faith and reason. We recognize the need to ask how dedication to understanding relates to the religious faith of a people, while we are therefore compelled to investigate an issue that people, or

¹Edmund Husserl clearly states the problem in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. and an introduction by David Carr, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). He develops a subjective analytic in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, ed. Martin Heidegger, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964). Another approach can be found Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World*, trans. Richard M. Zaner and H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973). Cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der Historisch-Kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 2d rev. and enlarged ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956, 1969). A variety of methodological essays dealing with such a program may be found in Maurice Natanson, ed., *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); Karl-Otto Apel et al., *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik*, Theorie-Diskussion. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971); James M. Edie, Francis H. Parker, and Calvin O. Schrag, eds., *Patterns of the Life-World: Essays in Honor of John Wild*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

at least the intellectual classes of that people, would not have granted validity. In consequence, we may tend to take silence on cultic or formal religious matters as dis-valuation or outright rejection, rather than take it as a result of the focusing of their attention. We speak here not merely of the notorious argument from silence; it is admittedly quite difficult to establish the givens of a society. Whatever some group takes for granted is not open to discussion, except either when it is no longer a universal social given or when it is confronted by a direct challenge from within or without. The most important elements in the foundation of a people's understanding and interpretation of the world are taken-for-granted.¹ They are so basic that they need not be expressed. Rationalizing objective reconstruction may overlook this taken-for-granted

¹Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1961); Schutz, *Phenomenology of the Social World*, pp. 86-96, 144-63; Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers*, vol. 1: *The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. Maurice Natanson, 2d ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967); vol. 2: *Studies in Social Theory*, ed. Arvid Broderston (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964); vol. 3: *Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy*, ed. Ilse Schutz (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966); 1:15-19, 224-31; 2:12-19, 53-63; 3:116-32. Cf. Norman K. Gottwald, "Biblical Theology or Biblical Sociology: On Affirming and Defining the 'Uniqueness' of Israel," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, a Radical Religion Reader. (Berkeley: Community for Religious Research and Education, 1976), pp. 42-57; and in the same place, Norman K. Gottwald and Frank S. Frick, "The Social World of Ancient Israel," pp. 110-19.

dimension since it is never stated within the work. Subjective analysis may reveal it to us as we attempt to project a coherent and meaning-full perspective on the world. The demands of our subjectivity for coherence may reveal what objective analysis must omit. Silence is a legitimate tool of the literary historian, though it is among the most difficult to wield.

While great progress has been made in understanding wisdom during the past decade, the interest in wisdom studies has not carried as far as some of us might have wished. Considerable debate has been devoted to the problem of definition: identifying what it is which distinguishes this phenomenon wisdom from other understandings of the world.¹ The issue remains undecided.² While the apparent secularism of wisdom has been called into question, its rationality has endured.³ Still, the literature

¹Crenshaw, "Prolegomena," pp. 1-60; James L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon 'Historical Literature,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (June 1969):129-42.

² Crenshaw, "Wisdom in the Old Testament," p. 952. Cf. John G. Gammie, "Notes on Israelite Pedagogy in the Monarchic Period," paper prepared for the Consultation on Wisdom, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Missouri, 28-31 October 1976; R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 135, ed. Georg Fohrer (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974).

³Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of the Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology,"

fragments on examination. What seems to be a single literature either atomizes under analysis into a wide variety of literatures having little in common, or else wisdom becomes so broadly defined that it threatens to absorb materials and modes of thought and expression whose distinctive character we hesitate to surrender.¹ Either wisdom as such hardly seems to exist at all, or everything seems to be wisdom. We face a version of Moore's Paradox of Analysis: every definition is either trivial or false.² Every analysis of wisdom either does not adequately differentiate wisdom from other material or it excludes from wisdom what we obviously must include.

In the chapters which follow, we shall try to accomplish two objectives. First, we shall try to resolve the methodological difficulty of differentiating wisdom. That is, we shall attempt to show what has been misleading

Scottish Journal of Theology 17 (1964):146-58; cf. his earlier "Zur Struktur der Alttestamentlichen Weisheit," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, n.s., 10 (1933):177-204.

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 129-42.

²G. E. Moore in his *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903); on which see Richard B. Brandt, *Ethical Theory: The Problems of Normative and Critical Ethics*, Prentice-Hall Philosophy Series, ed. Arthur E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959), pp. 164-66.

in existing efforts to resolve the problem of wisdom: that these efforts operate from fundamentally incompatible methodological presuppositions. We shall then argue that one approach, the social-historical (sociological), has certain elements which here make it a more analytically powerful and useful definitional methodology for the literary historian. Second, we shall take an instance from wisdom, Proverbs 16:1-22:16 (which we are calling Proverbs IIb for simplicity's sake) and endeavor to show how subjective analysis based on this methodology can help us refine our understanding of this literature and its social, historical, literary and theological character.

Procedure

My research into wisdom began as a suitably modest enterprise. I wanted to demonstrate that it was possible to project a distinct, clearly delineated world-view from the material contained within one of the major biblical proverb collections, Proverbs IIb. If convincing, such a demonstration would show that the material stemmed from an identifiable social milieu which might provide us insight into the nature of wisdom—social and theological—at that time. It would serve as a benchmark for developmental theories of wisdom such as those of Schmid, Skladny and even von Rad. The project would be self-validating. If it

could be done and done convincingly, then a fortiori the material used in that projection would have to constitute something more than a loose editorial Gemisch. At the least, it would demonstrate stringent selection criteria at work in whatever earlier or outside material might have been chosen for inclusion in the collection. At most, it might help prove that the collection so-called should be considered essentially a composition, however much it might draw on traditional poetic conventions and stylistic or —rhetorical techniques. Rhetorical analysis of the collection lends credence in fact to the latter position.

Gradually, however, I came to realize that the argument, being developed concerning Proverbs IIb represented the linch-pin of a much larger, more convoluted and more far-reaching argument concerning the nature of wisdom and the wisdom movement. The analysis of Proverbs IIb cannot readily be separated from this larger argument. On the other hand, the lineaments of this latter would not be clear by implication from an examination of the passage alone. There is, moreover, a methodological issue here. I am making a plaidoyer for the applicability of a certain methodology, and its operating presuppositions, to the problem of the nature and development of wisdom as a Hebrew and early Jewish religious phenomenon. The discussion which follows is not essentially a methodological treatise,

especially since it argues for the necessity, not merely the utility, of methodological eclecticism, a point increasingly being emphasized in biblical exegesis. Rather, it is an attempt to restructure some of the debate concerning the nature and development of wisdom by an appeal to the evidence.

We begin by listing a number of different approaches to the problem of definition that have been taken in wisdom scholarship. Each has contributed to the refinement of our understanding of wisdom as a socio-historical phenomenon and has held significant sway in the scholarly debate. Each, however, has been opposed by other persuasive approaches to the problem of defining wisdom, and no one approach seems to offer a clear and convincing superiority in its analysis. The analytic paradox spoken of above remains: either we exclude what common sense dictates including or include what common sense dictates excluding, without decisively justifying either alternative. The dilemma may be insoluble. Wisdom may be undefinable. Perhaps wisdom is a primitive term whose definition ought never to be attempted as such. Perhaps, as we shall argue, wisdom is not a single phenomenon, but a variety of sometimes related phenomena which must be distinguished from one another if our language is

not to betray us.¹

In reviewing the various approaches to definition we should be aware that this debate has made significant progress. Even without definition, important elements of wisdom's modes of perceiving and relating to the world have been established. The theological underpinnings of wisdom have begun to appear.² The problem of wisdom's claim over

¹Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 1-5; Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 129-42; Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 3-5.

²Berend Gemser, "The Spiritual Structure of Biblical Aphoristic Wisdom," *Adhuc Loquitur: Collected Essays*, ed. A. van Selms and A. S. van der Woude, Pretoria Oriental Series, vol. 7 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 138-49; James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect upon Israelite Religion*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 124 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), pp. 116-23; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 75-148; Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der Alten Weisheit: Studien zu den Sprüchen Salomos und zu dem Buche Hiob* (Tübingen: J. C. 3.: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1938), pp. 29-50; Horst Dietrich Preuss, "Erwägungen zum Theologischen Ort Alttestamentlicher Weisheitsliteratur," *Evangelische Theologie* 30 (1970): 393-417; Horst Dietrich Preuss, "Das Gottesbild der älteren Weisheit Israels," in *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*; vol. 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), pp. 117-43; Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit: eine Untersuchung zur Altorientalischen und Israelitischen Weisheitsliteratur*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 101 (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1966); Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom—Theses and Hypotheses," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, ed. John G. Gammie, Walter A. Brueggemann, W. Lee Humphreys and James M. Ward (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1978, forthcoming); and in the same place, Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, "Observations on the Creation Theology in Wisdom."

its adherents has shown its authoritative nature.¹ On the other hand, the flow and ebb of the tide of wisdom's popularity in the past decade may be related to our inability to make more progress than we have in developing any decisive new in-roads in this research. Zimmerli's reassessment of his position statement of 1933 gives ground to modern critics but stakes out a territory not yet far removed from that earlier one.² The attempt to place wisdom at the center of Hebrew religious thought and practice seems to have led to a proliferation of studies which identified wisdom in virtually every strain of Hebrew religion.³ So much did this occur that hardly a biblical book, hardly an era, hardly a literary form and hardly a stratum of Hebrew religious thought, practice or society remained free from wisdom involvement. This cannot be. If everything is wisdom, then what is distinctive about wisdom? The theological rehabilitation of wisdom almost

¹Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, pp. 116-23; Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 29-50; Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weitordnung: Hintergrund und Geschichte des Alttestamentlichen Gerechtigkeitsbegriffes*, Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie, vol. 40 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1968); cf. von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 102-30.

²Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," pp. 146-58; Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 177-204.

³Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 129, n. 1; Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, p. 1, n. 1.

created a monster that seemed poised to invade and devour the rest of Hebrew religious thought.¹ This apparent excess revealed a methodological weakness--in the sense of a lack of precise and controlled research technique--which I would suspect has also discouraged many wisdom enthusiasts. Do we really know what we are talking about? Are our methodologies and perspectives sufficiently conformable with one another that we can engage in coordinated and systematic research? While I submit that the answer is an unequivocal "yes," I also imagine that some people have not waited around for the answer.

Thus, enumerating definitions becomes increasingly unsatisfactory, not because it does not further the wisdom debate, but because everything else seems to hinge on a dilemma we have been slow to resolve. I propose, then, that we work around the issue by recognizing the inherent multivocality of 'wisdom.' I suggest a typology of wisdom consistent with the ways in which wisdom seems to appear for us historically. We ought to be able to talk far more precisely and cogently with respect to a specific type of wisdom than we can to "wisdom in general"--whatever that might be. Again, perhaps part of our difficulty is that we have been trying to compass too much: incompatible

¹Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 3-6.

types of wisdom that, because of the methodologies or contexts out of which they appear, cannot be conformed to one another, even for definition's sake, without producing insuperable problems at the present stage of our knowledge. The problem of wisdom, however, goes far beyond epistemological or linguistic clarification. Fundamental historical issues will not be solved by stipulation. Some of these types of wisdom are trivial; others are arbitrary; many are secondary or derivative. The question becomes: what provides the fundamental conceptual power inherent in the use of the term 'wisdom' that enables us to apply it to find historical unity or coherence in what seems to be a diverse variety of literarily-expressed historical phenomena. If we must, we may ultimately trace the term to an inference made by the historian. In other words, we may find ourselves forced to argue that the Hebrews never explicitly conceived of wisdom as a distinct social or religious or intellectual phenomenon.¹ We would then see relationships that people in that milieu never explicitly saw nor identified. Such a conclusion would be very costly. It would gravely undermine arguments for the historical development --evolution--of wisdom in any form. Combined with the atomization inherent in some theories of wisdom, it would

¹Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, p. 54.

threaten to leave us without a phenomenon as such to study at all.¹ Thus, we potentially face precisely the opposite threat to the current direction in wisdom studies. Instead of finding wisdom diffusing itself throughout Hebrew life and thought, we might find the concept breaking down as a powerful historical conceptual tool. It would be less than edifying to be left with little more than a loose collection of literary forms, perhaps an elite but diffuse and undistinctive social milieu, or a semiotic of 'wisdom' and related terms held together by little more than their semantic field. What is at stake is the conceptual and explanatory power of 'wisdom' for the literary historian.

Evolutionary theories of wisdom, which predominate in the field, force both the methodological and the historical issues. Most of these approaches depart from some explicit or implicit philosophy of history which postulates a series of compatible historical processes that can be discerned behind the literature and its formal expression. These theories represent an attempt to unify wisdom. One type evolves into another as a result of historical

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 131.

²I develop this point in my "Evidence for the Development of a World-View in Proverbs: An Assessment," paper presented to the Southeastern regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, 17-19 March 1977.

processes whose effects can be discerned elsewhere in Hebrew society at that time, as well as at other points in time and places in history.¹ A few of these positions rely on pan-historic principles: the same fundamental processes of change underlie the entire sweep of human history regardless of the scale of the analysis, the time-period or the culture under study.² Evolutionary approaches raise the question what provides the coherence or

¹Typical, though by no means exhaustive, of such approaches and methodologies are Otto Eissfeldt, *Der Maschal im Alten Testament: eine Wortgeschichtliche Untersuchung nebst einer Literargeschichtlichen Untersuchung der mšl Genannten Gattungen "Volkspruchwort" und Spottlied,* Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 24 (Giessen: A. Töpelmann [vormals J. Ricker], 1913); Udo Skiadny, *Die Ältesten Spruchsammlungen in Israel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1962); William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970) ; Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*.

²Formalism derived from the work of Andre Jolles seems to have had a significant impact on the theories of Schmid and von Rad. Andre Jolles, *Einfache Formen: Legende, Sage, Mythe, Rätsel, Spruch, Kasus, Memorabile, Märchen, Witz*, ed. Alfred Schossig, 2d ed. (Haile [Saale]: Veb) Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1956); cf.. Hermann Bausinger, *Formen der Volkspoesie*, Grundlagen der Germanistik, no. 6 (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1968). While Jollesian formalism is by no means the dominant theory in Germanistic studies, nor has it been, its influence seems to have been pervasive in Old Testament form criticism, if the nuances of vocabulary and methodology are any guide; proving such influence, however, is often difficult. Alternatively, Hegelian evolutionism often seems to underlie exegetical methodologies. The argument for such an implicit historical philosophy goes far beyond the scope of the present discussion, but it has at least been sketched out in my paper, "Development of a World-View."

continuity that underlies and unifies such seemingly diverse or diffuse phenomena. What entitles us to postulate of them such transformations? Obviously, we cannot appeal back to the processes of change grounded in our philosophy of history: the argument would be circular. The unity is surely not self-evident: why should one form or type of wisdom evolve at all, let alone develop into another specific kind of wisdom? What does it mean to label these 'wisdom' at all? The coherence cannot be an inference of the historical researcher without being circular. Something about wisdom, from the data, must justify bringing together materials that differ in type. The problem becomes more poignant when one wants to begin talking about wisdom evolving into rabbinic-legal or apocalyptic thought, or literature, or social movements.¹ What can such a hypothesis possibly mean?

If the ground for such arguments is that there is

¹Jean-Paul Audet, "Origines Comparées de la Double Tradition de la Loi et de la Sagesse dans le Proche-Orient Ancien," in *Trudy 25. Mezhdunaradnego Kongressa Vostckovedov: Moskva 9-16 Avgusta 1960*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izdatelystvo Vostocnoj Literatury, 1962), pp. 352-57; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1: *The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*; vol. 2: *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*; trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 1965), 2: 300-15; cf. Gunter Wied, "Der Auferstehungsglaube des Späten Israels in seiner Bedeutung für das Verhältnis von Apokalyptik und Weisheit," unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Bonn, 1967; cf. Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik in ihren Verhältnis zu Prophetie und Weisheit*, *Theologie Existenz Heute*, vol. 157 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969).

formal unity, it would obviously be invalid. The same can be said for perceiving some coherence or continuity of world-view. Indeed, the problem is to find unity in what is superficially diverse. To argue that wisdom and rabbinism or apocalyptic represent essentially equivalent or related thought-worlds would be patently absurd. While the evolutionary argument is sometimes stated in terms of form or thought, ethic or context, none of these is sufficient for a valid and convincing argument, especially in light of our epistemological (definitional) and linguistic (typological) analysis. Implicitly or explicitly, such theories require, and are appealing to, another ground. Only if there is a continuously-existing, identifiable and self-identified social group who seek, develop, preserve and transmit 'wisdom' can evolutionary theories have a convincing—and valid—argument concerning this literature. If the continuity is not sociological, then the very diversity of the phenomenon undercuts the validity of developmental or evolutionary arguments, except as the otherwise ungrounded expressions of a particular philosophy of history. On the other hand, if some specific group can be identified as the carrier of 'wisdom,' then its typological diversity is secondary to a sociological and socio-historical continuity. If there are no wise as a specific historical group, whatever they may have called themselves and however they might have derived their identity, then 'wisdom' as a category of historical analysis threatens to fall apart. Such diverse forms, theologies,

and social milieux do not provide their own unity; the scholar's inference of unity or coherence must rest on something beyond his methodology per se.

The assumption that such a group existed is, on the basis of present methodology, no less tenuous than the assumption that 'wisdom' has a clear pre-analytic meaning. Whybray has shown that the assumption is not clearly grounded in the historical evidence.¹ The literature does not explicitly refer to such a group, and references elsewhere scarcely require such a hypothesis. Indeed, the absence of an overt Standesethik is an often-noted peculiarity of the Hebrew wisdom literature.² The fact that such a group is methodologically necessary unfortunately does not mean that it actually existed. To resolve this problem, we need a new approach.

¹*Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 6-54.

²Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 6-54; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 39-148; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:418-41; "Struktur," pp. 177-204; Zimmerli, "Place and Limit of Wisdom," pp. 146-58; cf. Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, *Studien zur Israelitischen Spruchweisheit*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, vol. 28 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), pp. 94-96; Ephraim E. Urbach, *Class-Status and Leadership in the World of the Palestinian Sages*, Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, vol. 2, no. 4 (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1966); cf. Brian W. Kovacs, "Is There a Class-Ethic in Proverbs?" in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics: (J. Philip Hyatt, in Memoriam)*, ed. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1974), pp. 173-87; Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 20-22.

The analysis of Proverbs IIb, therefore, turns out to have direct relevance to the problem of establishing historical continuity to wisdom and therefore of being able to speak meaningfully of 'wisdom' at all. An inquiry into one work will not resolve these problems, but it may point the way to a means of resolving them; or, it may show that no resolution is possible at all. Here, the wide-spread assumption that the Proverb material reflects a process of collection becomes pivotal to the argument.¹ What we are trying to do is address the problem of wisdom in a methodologically minimal way.² Clearly, if we can speak

¹Eissfeldt, *Maschal*, pp. 45-52; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 10-22; Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Book of Proverbs*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 16 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), pp. vi-viii; Helmer Ringgren, "Sprüche," in *Sprüche; Prediger; das Hohe Lied; Klagelieder; das Buch Esther*, trans. and ed. Helmer Ringgren, Artur Weiser, and Walther Zimmerli, *Das Alte Testament Deutsche: Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk*, vol. 16, 2d rev. ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1967), pp. 7-10; Berend Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos*, *Handbuch zum Alten Testament*, 1st series, vol. 16, 2d rev. and expanded ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1963), pp. 10-11; R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), pp. 51-59; Otto Plöger, "Zur Auslegung der Sentenzensammlungen des Proverbienbuches," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Walter Wolff (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), pp. 402-16; cf. Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*; cf. Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*.

²Norman K. Gottwald helped clarify the logic and methodology at this point in his "Response" in the same session to my "Social Considerations in Locating the Wise of the Maschal Literature," paper presented to the Section on the Social World of Ancient Israel, Society of Biblical

meaningfully of wisdom at all, and if any literature reflects the existence of an identifiable social group in a clear and unambiguous social milieu, it has to be the four mashal "collections" in Proverbs: Skladny's A, B, C, D.¹ If these do not pass such a test, then the presumption would be against any work passing such a test. If we cannot ground our inferences, at least for Hebrews, here, then it is unlikely that we can ground them socio-historically at all. On the other hand, if we can demonstrate socio-historical coherence within this material, then the weight of the argument swings the other way. We are thereby entitled to infer such grounding for similar or related materials--by form, context or world-view. Can we project enough of the taken-for-granted world from this literature to decide the question? I submit that we can, and that it supports the postulation of an identifiable social group as its source and matrix.

To show such a group, we have to show three things. First, we must show that they perceived themselves to be a group, that they had a sense of self-identity. Second, we would have to show that they formed a network of trans-

Literature-American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Francisco, 28-31 December 1977.

¹*Spruchsammlungen*, p. 6.

mission whereby that sense of identity was preserved well beyond the lifetimes of individual members of the group through certain identity-giving symbols (here, religious and linguistic, at least in their expression). Third, we have to show that there is a 'grammar' underlying their world-view. That grammar represents a consistent set of assumptions or symbolic interpretations of the world that gives structure to what they say about it. The grammar is not the world-view; it is a higher-order consistency from which coherence of world-views derives.

We argue, in effect, that for Proverbs IIb all three criteria can be met. To do this, we have to undertake the subjective analytic proposed above. We seek to project the taken-for-granted world out of the material using certain norming parameters--space, time and in a sense word. These are ineluctable phenomenological structures. They ground and are expressed through the grammar. How do these people locate themselves within space and time as they perceive them; how does word become the expression of that location? If no group provides the matrix, if the material is atomic and derived from a variety of diverse social milieux as some suggest, then the attempt to project should fail. Coherence should be lacking. Behind the obvious inconsistencies and rhetorical peculiarities of the material would lie nothing more specific than the general

Hebrew cultural grammar.¹

Can we find a subjective interpretation of space and time which makes objective sense? We argue yes. If so, then evolutionary hypotheses make sense on that basis, but are also subject to critique on that basis. In other words, while the world-view may change, the grammar must be preserved. To change the grammar of the message is to obliterate the message. Its forms of expression, its practical presentation may change, but the grammar on methodological grounds cannot. From a Structuralist point of view, structure must be preserved (i.e., the grammar), because only in terms of such a continuous synchrony is any communication (here, historical coherence, continuity and unity of expression and interpretation) possible at all. In effect, to allow the grammar to change is to undermine the possibility of sociality beyond any hope of restoration on some other ground. Thus, what we are undertaking is a species of sociological and phenomenological Structuralism, though linguistic Structuralists may balk at the use of the

¹Erhardt Güttgemanns, "Generative Poetics," ed. Norman R. Petersen, trans. William G. Doty, *Semeia* 6 (1976), pp. 181-213; Brian W. Kovacs, "Philosophical Foundations for Structuralism: Grounding the Generative Poetics of Erhardt Güttgemanns," paper presented to the Consultation on Structuralism of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, 28-31 December 1977.

term.¹

We contend that the outcome of the analysis, a clear grounding of wisdom and certain hypotheses concerning wisdom, is self-justifying and -validating. The upshot for evolutionary theories is that those which do not preserve the structure, the grammar, are ruled out of court. This happens to the von Rad hypothesis: we submit that it is grammatically untenable because it does not preserve socio-structural synchrony in the subjectively structured world of space and time. The evolutionary theories

¹Güttgemanns, pp. 198-213; Kovacs, "Philosophical Foundations for Structuralism"; Schutz and Luckmann, *Structures of the Life-World*; Gottwald, "Biblical Theology or Biblical Sociology?" pp. 42-57; Gottwald and Frick, pp. 110-19; Paul Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," Introduction by Loretta Dornisch, ed. John Dominic Crossan, *Semeia* 4 (1975); Daniel Patte, *What is Structuralist Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); Daniel Fatte, "Universal Narrative Structures and Semantic Frameworks: A Review of Erhardt Güttgemanns "Generative Poetics,"" paper presented to the Consultation on Structuralism of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, 28-31 December 1977. The sociological side of this methodology was detailed in my paper "Contributions of Sociology to the Study of the Development of Apocalyptic: A Theoretical Study," paper presented to the Consultation on the Social World of Ancient Israel of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, St. Louis, October 1976; also my "Toward a Phenomenology of History in Sociological Theory," paper presented to the Mid-South Sociological Association meeting, Monroe, Louisiana, 3-5 November 1977. A theoretically important exegetical word-study that deals with spatio-temporal issues in wisdom is John R. Wilch, *Time and Event: An Exegetical Study of the Use of ^ceth in the Old Testament in Comparison to Other Temporal Expressions in Clarification of the Concept of Time* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969).

of Skladny and Schmid are not ruled out, but require further proof. The phenomena they point to, to show development are intrinsic to the grammar in a number of cases, and therefore are invariant. The remaining evidence tends to be insufficient to prove the case except as a philosophical assumption.

We begin with a minimal enterprise: to show that certain structurally norming dimensions of experience, phenomenologically understood, can be inferred from what must incontrovertibly be regarded as wisdom if anything is. We infer only what emerges through this socio-structural approach. Our conclusion is hardly earth-shattering, for we do not drastically revise the postulated social matrix for this literature. We do show its compositional coherence, at least in terms of its structural grammar. That coherence, however, has direct application to the problem of how we are to speak of wisdom at all. From such minimal analysis comes the possibility of a ground—group with identity, continuous existence, grammar—for talking meaningfully about the continuity and development of what are otherwise apparently diverse and incommensurable phenomena. If the sociological argument stands, then we have a comparatively powerful, historically-evidenced basis for making valid and clear statements about 'wisdom.'

CHAPTER II

THE DEFINITION OF WISDOM

So far, we have spoken uncritically of 'the wise,' 'wisdom' and 'wisdom literature.' We have not yet attempted to specify the relationship which might obtain between the wise person and his wisdom, whether it be as a system of thought or a body of literature. What sorts of meanings lie behind these terms? Here we need to be careful for we should not resolve critical issues in wisdom research by definition. We do not wish to assume what we should only conclude after thorough study. Still, cursory examination or simple reflection will show that 'wise' and 'wisdom' are by no means univocal. Not only can they refer to entirely different classes of people or entities (when indeed they may be said to refer at all), but they can be used as quite different analytical categories.

'Wise' can mean whatever the equivalent Hebrew term *hākām* meant. The meaning of the English term becomes a function of the historical analysis of language, incorporating the vagaries, ambiguities and multiplicities, even contradictions, of the Hebrew. 'Wise' may refer to one system of thought, or another. It may refer to one

or more groups of people in the ancient world, or it may designate their writings. It may serve as a term of convenience within the discipline to identify a discrete group of writings which otherwise defy ready categorization. It may designate a broad social force whose interplay with other forces helps explain the general dynamic patterns of Hebrew history. 'Wisdom' may stand for a particular intellectual ideal, or style of life, which some group of writings may be deemed to reflect. The evidence adduced to establish the meaning of 'wise' in one of these senses may be entirely irrelevant in deciding another.

While a meticulous author may successfully manipulate the same word in several different senses without material ambiguity, at least for himself, certainly we need to clarify the alternatives in such a broad and disparate realm of discourse. We should locate our position clearly within it both to be intelligible and to be valid.

Two basic questions provide the basis for our terminological and typological discussions. (1) When we refer to Proverbs IIb as 'wisdom' and its author-editor as 'wise,' what do we mean? (2) What justifies our regarding Proverbs IIb, not to mention the other *mashal* collections, as wisdom? First, we shall ask how 'wisdom' may function as a defined theoretical category. We shall list

alternatives, some albeit quite obvious. Under certain rubrics, we shall need to consider the scholarly contributions which represent or summarize the options under that mode of approach. In the next chapter, we shall turn to a wisdom typology. A number of these categories reflect distinctively different settings, literary forms, and patterns of life and thought within "wisdom." Rather than treat them either as a function of particular methodologies or presenting them in the form of a history of scholarship, we shall treat them systematically. These distinctions will be used to differentiate types of wisdom. This discussion should help us decide what meanings and types of wisdom are, or could reasonably be, relevant to the study of aphoristic wisdom and the mashal literature. We recognize that the distinction between definition and type is somewhat arbitrary. Still, it may prove to be useful for analytical clarity and intelligibility.

As a scholarly term, 'wisdom' serves a number of theoretical and practical ends. The list which follows is intended to incorporate or represent the most important of these. Important uses will require some discussion and develop at the risk of digression. Given the present stage in the development of wisdom studies, we have to show how it is possible to talk about wisdom in this material before we can begin to talk about wisdom there.

1. Wisdom is a field of study. In this view, whatever wisdom is, it is a distinct phenomenon in Hebrew history and religious experience, as well as in Hebrew literature. Therefore, one can distinguish it as an aspect of Hebrew life and culture to be studied and reported upon. This sense of wisdom is obvious; its presuppositions, less so. It assumes that wisdom is sufficiently distinct yet internally coherent that one can study it as a subdisciplinary specialty. Setting boundaries in a discipline is rarely easy, especially in recent studies of wisdom which find evidence of it in prophecy, myth, history and priestly-legal material.¹ Wisdom used in this sense tells us something about the self-identification of scholars, a legitimate concern, but not about wisdom as a historical phenomenon.²

2. Wisdom is a body of literature. The term may function either as a description--to relate works with affinities of form and content--or as a convenient term, a name, to associate works with certain traditional relationships. Thus, Canticles is sometimes included as wisdom

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 129, n. 1; Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, p. 1, n. 1; Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 1-13.

²Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 226-27.

literature because of its traditional attribution to Solomon, its apparent secularism, and its lack of fit with any other category of Hebrew scripture. As a description, wisdom entails that there is something common to these works which transcends the obvious diversity.¹

3. Wisdom is a system of thought. Whether this system is a theology, sacrally founded and ordered, or a “philosophy,” in the non-anachronistic sense of secular and ordered, systematic and consistent, remains to be demonstrated. Most attempts to define wisdom fall somewhere within this rubric. This sense is potentially one of the most restrictive. It may exclude those writers and works which adopt wisdom motifs but employ them in the service of their own theological ends.² On the other hand, it is potentially the most powerful way of using 'wisdom.'

“A coherent system of thought” closely accords with some commonsense definitions of wisdom. Since our sources are principally literary, we would expect them to express

¹Roland E. Murphy, *Introduction to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*, Old Testament Reading Guide, vol. 22 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1965); Scott, *Way of Wisdom*, pp. 19-22.

²Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 133; Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 1-13; Crenshaw, "Wisdom in the Old Testament," pp. 954-55.

an orientation toward life which can be readily and systematically understood (i.e., learned) and intelligibly communicated (taught).¹ We might, without undue violence, subsume much of the history of wisdom study under this rubric. We shall find, however, that there is often some ambiguity between wisdom in this sense and wisdom in the sense of one of the categories following below: e.g., between wisdom as conceptual system and wisdom as a pattern of behavior. Wisdom seen as conceptual system--system of thought--is the sense which follows most naturally from our attempt to project a world-view from the literature, though we shall have to deal with other approaches to wisdom as well.

We should consider the alternative kinds of definitions offered when wisdom is taken as a conceptual system and pay some attention to the scholarship underlying each of these alternatives. Among the terms which recur in such discussions are "knowledge," "understanding" and "experience."² The wise man recognizes the patterns that develop in his experience. He objectifies these patterns

¹Ernst Würthwein, *Die Weisheit Ägyptens und das Alte Testament: Rede zur Rektoratsübergabe am 29. November 1958*, Schriften der Philipps-Universität Marburg, no. 6 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1960).

²Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 3-9, 36-37; Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 6-14.

into a more encompassing description.¹ He "knows how" to apply this description to interpret and respond to novel situations. Consider the interesting double-entendre in the English word "experience." To undergo something is to experience it: it is the occurrence of a single event. To have undergone a wide range of diverse occurrences is also called experience. To know how to deal with a wide variety of often-novel situations is experience. Competence can be experience.

a) Wisdom as *Geistesbeschäftigung*. Jolles' work with basic literary forms could certainly be classified with wisdom as form below. On the other hand, his work provides the theoretical foundation for many subsequent theological studies in biblical wisdom. These build, implicitly or explicitly, from the assumption that there is a pattern of human conceptualization that corresponds uniquely to each basic form. Wisdom represents a particular use of man's capacity to create his reality through language.²

Jolles' three terms for the basic functions of

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 13-27; Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 79-84.

²Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, pp. 218-19.

language are *erzeugend*, *schaffend* and *deutend*.¹ These correspond to archetypal social roles: *Bauer*, *Handarbeiter* and *Priester*.² To give a word to something, a thing or an event occurring in nature, is to create. It becomes an independent existent through the word. The word not only names by direct reference to a specific situation, but it creates new applications beyond the anticipation and power of the word's user. Superstition reflects our attempts to do something effective about the power of the word. Not only is the word potent, but it organizes and structures the world of experience: not *erfüllen* now but *dichten*. The reality which language creates not only gives us direct access to history--what we might call objectified experience--but it virtually builds a separate reality, poetically. We can summon it to mind, understand it and use it as understanding. The world of poetry is independent of the existence of the factitious world of experience. Finally, language gives meaning. It is recognition and thought (*erkennen* and *denken*). It structures life's patterns, helping one to interpret new aspects of existence. Analogies and similarities are perceived through language. Understanding,

¹Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, pp. 9, 15.

²Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, pp. 9-15.

then, is a linguistic process.¹

Each spiritual task in human life (as *Geistesbeschäftigung*) calls up a corresponding elementary form of speech event: legend, saga, myth, riddle, saying, "Kasus,"² memoire, fable and joke.³ While fable and riddle are regarded as also being characteristic forms in the study of Hebrew and ancient Near Eastern wisdom,⁴ Jolles' analysis of the saying or *Spruch* form in particular seems to have had the greatest influence on scholarly studies in wisdom especially those which treat wisdom as somehow related to "experience."⁵

Suffice to say that Jolles regards the saying as a popular high-order abstraction from experience which so tersely objectifies repeatedly experienced situations that

¹Jolles *Einfache Formen*, pp. 13-18.

²Case-in-point, legal case, situation--the novel falls under this rubric.

³Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, pp. 218-22, passim.

⁴Hans Meinhold, *Die Weisheit Israels in Spruch, Sage und Dichtung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Quelle und Meyer, 1908), pp. 13-21; Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 239-47; Brian W. Kovacs, "Reflections on Ancient Hebrew Riddles, Fables and Allegories," paper presented to the Seminar on the Form Critical Study of Wisdom, Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, Chicago, 30 October-2 November 1975,

⁵Von Rad, certainly in his *Old Testament Theology*, 1:355-459, and probably in *Weisheit in Israel*; perhaps Schmid in his *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*; cf. Hermisson, *Sprüchweisheit*, pp. 29-34.

it is instantly intelligible. Its truth and application to one's situation is immediately obvious. It recreates the situation that led to its first utterance.¹ Since his influence in Germanistic and linguistic studies is so great, though perhaps somewhat idiosyncratic, we may suspect other emphases to owe something to his work as well wisdom as pragmatic and worldly-wise (the concern for objectified experience over systematic speculation; application to life), wisdom as popular in use and form of expression, wisdom as secular (experience is general and recreated; opposed to myth), wisdom as universal (the *Spruch* is not culture bound), wisdom as immediate intuition (Jolles in accord with Grimm), wisdom as knowledge objectified by and expressed in language.²

Since Jolles recognizes that a saying must originate with a specific individual and a particular situation

¹Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, pp. 128-29.

²Walter Baumgartner, *Israelitische und Alt-orientalische Weisheit*, Sammlung Gemeinverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte, vol. 166 (Tubingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1933); Johannes Fichtner, *Die Alt-orientalische Weisheit in ihrer Israelitisch-Jüdischen Ausprägung: eine Studie zur Nationalisierung der Weisheit In Israel*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 62 (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1933); Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 177-204; Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 7-11, 42-50; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 13-27; Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 6-14, 75-76; Gemser, "Spiritual Structure," pp. 138-49.

before it can be re-formed and re-formulated in popular application, his influence cannot be dismissed because a scholar also recognizes the theological nationalism of ben Sirah, the Wisdom of Solomon and IV Maccabees through a theory of the theologizing of wisdom. On the contrary, Jolles' interpretation of the saying readily lends itself, in fact invites, treatment in terms of an evolutionary theory of history, especially one with elements drawn from Hegelian dialectic. Thus, secular and practical wisdom based on international models is re-formed and re-formulated gradually to suit its new Israelite setting--re-applied to experience a la Schmid—acquiring an appropriate theological cast.¹

b) Wisdom as know-how, savoir-faire. Fichtner defines wisdom:

Weisheit ist die Kunst, das Leben in jeder Beziehung und in alien Lagen wie ein Meister zu führen. Das setzt voraus, dass überall eine von Menschen zu erfassende Gesetzmässigkeit herrscht, nach der dem jeweiligen Verhalten ein bestimmtes Ergebnis entspricht. Diese Gesetzmässigkeit meint der Weise im praktischen Leben des Tages, im Beruf, ira Verkehr mit den Menschen, überall beobachten zu können: mit einer Regelmässigkeit, die dem Beobachter als Gesetzmässigkeit erscheint. . . . Aus seinen Beobachtungen formt der Weise Ratschläge allgemeiner Lebenserfahrung und Weltklugheit. --Weiter sieht er, dass das Gemeinschaftsleben von dem einzelnen die

¹Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 145-96.

Anerkennung der in der Gemeinschaft geltenden sittlichen Norm fordert. Von ihren Geltungsrecht innerlich erfasst erklärt er Unglück und Verderben als Folge der Übertretung der Norm, Glück und Gelingen als Folge normgemässen Handelns.¹

The wise so often saw this retribution which social norms demanded that they conceived of it as a governing order.

Fichtner postulates a theologizing of wisdom in time, "ohne freilich ihren Zusammenhang mit der übrigen alt-orientalischen Weisheit völlig zu verleugnen."²

Baumgartner points out that the Hebrew wise did not develop systematic philosophy like the Greeks' but "praktische Lebensweisheit. Weise ist, wer seine Leben so einrichtet, dass es zu einem guten Ende führt."³ He adds:

Freilich was wir sonst im Alten Testament als spezifisch israelitisch kennen, tritt hier auffallend zurück: Sinai-Offenbarung und Gottesbund, Israels Erwählung und heilige Geschichte. Ja, von Israel als Volk ist überhaupt kaum die Rede. Die Chokma wendet sich an den Einzelnen, nicht ans Volk. Sie unterscheidet nicht Israel und die Heiden, sondern Weise und Toren; und diese Unterscheidung geht mitten durch das eigene Volk hindurch.⁴

c) Wisdom as anthropocentric counsel, *erfahrungsgemäss*. Zimmerli followed on the work of Fichtner and

¹Fichtner, *Altorientalische Weisheit*, p. 12.

²Fichtner, *Altorientalische Weisheit*, p. 59.

³Baumgartner, *Weisheit*, p. 1.

⁴Baumgartner, *Weisheit*, p. 2.

Baumgartner with his classic study, "Zur Struktur der alt-testamentlichen Weisheit"¹ Taking Proverbs as a starting point, he finds that the archetypes of the wise man and the fool represent alternative total patterns or styles of life (*Gesamtlebenshaltung*), which resolve the question of life, rightly and wrongly respectively. Neither the answer nor the question are in themselves interesting for purposes of our interpretive understanding. Rather, we are concerned with the kind of prior understanding, presupposition (*Vorverständnis*) or preconception (*Vorentscheidung*) which everywhere runs throughout and informs the wise' total pattern of life.²

Zimmerli does not present a simple definition of wisdom's preconception of life. He does, however, set out a number of characteristics that together typify wisdom. First, it is anthropocentric; it is concerned with human possibilities.³ "Sie behält ihren Schwerpunckt im einzelnen, ungeschichtlichen Menschen, nach dessen Glück sie fragt."⁴ Second, though man is autonomous, he is a creature

¹His revision of this 1933 position falls under a slightly different classification below.

²Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 177.

³Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 178.

⁴Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 178.

and bound to the order of the creator.¹ Third, in Israel, wisdom tends to depart from its aristocratic international origins and become democratized. It becomes the property of the people.² Fourth, the admonitions of wisdom carry authority, and they guide man through the "profane world." This "authority" is not that of law or command; it is impersonal while authority in the strict sense is personal. The power of wisdom lies in its counsel (*Rat*, *‘ēśāh*).³ Fifth, wisdom is a summation of experience upon which the advisee is to reflect, and from that reflection to act: 'grundliche Überlegung der 'erfahrungsgemäss' sich einstellenden Folgen."⁴

Der Schwerpunkt liegt also hinter dem Wortlaut der Anweisung in der Begründung, in den Erfahrungssatz, der von dem Menschen einkalkuliert werden soll, den er überlegen, aus dessen Überlegung heraus er handeln soll. Das konkrete Handeln ist im Grunde freigegeben.⁵

Thus, Zimmerli calls attention to the existence of two characteristic wisdom forms side by side, the simple saying (*Aussage*) and the motivated admonition (*Mahnspruch*, *Mahnung*). The first is obviously counsel. The second

¹Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 179-80.

²Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 181.

³Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 181-88.

⁴Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 188-89.

⁵Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 188.

acquires its power through its assessment of consequences on the basis of experience. That is its authority.¹

Es ist überhaupt kein Gehorsam von Wille zu Wille, sondern ein freies Verfügen des Hörenden auf Grund der ihm aufgewiesenen Zusammenhänge und Gesetzmassigkeiten.²

Sixth, even in religious matters, wisdom thought begins with man's possibilities and his interests. Yahweh does not appear as the imponderable authoritarian creator. He is viewed from man's context in terms of his effect on human activities.³ Thus,

Auch die Begründungssätze der Mahnungen . . . lassen eine letztgültige Berufung auf gesetzte Ordnung vermissen und orientieren sich am einzelnen Ich und seinen Vorteil.⁴

Seventh, Zimmerli finds the "better"-sayings (*tôb-min*) quite significant. The wise did not hold a view of absolute good in spite of the paired opposites (*Zwillinge* --wise and fool, rich and poor, good and evil) so common to the literature. Absolute good would imply clear-cut duties for the wise. Rather, they compared possible values and calculated outcomes. They considered advantages and disadvantages. Zimmerli, therefore, takes over Fichtner's ,

¹Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 188-92.

²Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 188.

³Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 192.

⁴Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 192.

term "eudaimonistic" to describe this calculation and self-determination (*selbst-verfügen*).¹ The naively optimistic attitude of Proverbs reflects the perspective of normative (international) wisdom, which asks the question, "Wie steigere ich mein Dasein durch Glück, und Leben?"²

Job and Ecclesiastes, however, call the *mēden agan* of normative wisdom into question when they pose the question how man secures his existence in its negative form, "Wie bewähre ich mich vor Unglück, vor all vor vorzeitigen Tod?"³ They concern themselves with the limits of man's control over his destiny. Divine retributive justice still acts in areas of life where man is powerless. They do not reject the wisdom question. They do not curse God and die. Nor do they see these limits as a direct conflict between divine justice and human possibility, thereby negating the wisdom hierarchy of values.⁴

Der Weiseempfindet keinen Bruch zwischen seiner Einstellung und der Gottbedingtheit der Welt. Die Ansprüche Gottes und der Menschen brauchen nicht in Konflikt zu geraten. Sein Glaube ist es vielmehr, dass in der göttlichen Weltordnung für des Menschen Lebensverlangen aufs beste gesorgt ist, dass der eigentliche Glücksanspruch des Menschen im bereitwilligen Einflügen in die göttliche Weltordnung voll

¹Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 192-94, 203.

²Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 198.

³Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 198-99.

⁴Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 194-204.

befriedigt wird. Auch Gott kommt zu seinem Recht, wenn der Mensch (auf dem richtigen Wege) sein Glück sucht. Und ebenso umgekehrt: Auch der Mensch kommt am allerbesten und sichersten zu seinem Glück, wenn er Gott fürchtet.¹

Last, the fundamental orientation of wisdom is a-historical because its fundamental concern is to understand all of reality rationally, in its diversity and complexity ("der naive Optimismus und die Geschichtslosigkeit des Lebens als notwendige Ausstrahlung dieser rationalistischen Grundhaltung").²

As developed by Zimmerli and later summarized by Schmid, this perspective on wisdom could be characterized as rationalism, which could therefore well be sub-category d). Schmid summarizes this view succinctly:

Utilitarisch, eudämonistisch, rational, ursprünglich profan, später religiös, geschichtslos, überzeitlich: das sind die Attribute, welche die Weisheit während der letzten dreissig Jahre zu tragen hatte.³

What intellectual debt--if any--Baumgartner, Fichtner and Zimmerli might owe to the work of Jolles would be difficult to establish. They continue to see wisdom as founded on common human experience and oriented toward "secular" ends. Wisdom is knowledge; it is learned by and communicated as language. For them, the archetype of wisdom seems to be

¹Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 203.

²Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 204.

³Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, p. 3.

the saying. Von Rad's work proceeds from this view. He himself expressly acknowledges Jolles' contribution to his work.¹

e) Wisdom as gnostic apperception. In his earlier studies, predating *Weisheit in Israel*, von Rad speaks thus of wisdom:

Wie alle Völker, so verstand auch Israel unter "Weisheit" ein ganz praktisches, auf Erfahrung gegründetes Wissen von den Gesetzen des Lebens und der Welt. . . . Dieses Ausgehen von elementaren Erfahrungen ist das Charakteristische fast für alle ihre Lebensäusserungen. In alien Kulturstufen steht ja der Mensch vor der Aufgabe, das Leben zu bewältigen. Zu diesem Zweck muss er es kennen und darf nicht ablassen, zu beobachten und zu lauschen, ob sich in der Wirrnis der Geschehnisse nicht doch da und dort etwas wie eine Gesetzmässigkeit, eine Ordnung erkennen lässt.²

. . . The means of laying hold of and objectifying such orders when once perceived is language. . . Undoubtedly [the Pairs of Opposites] are to be understood as primitive attempts to mark off certain orders and tie them down in words.³

Here we find unmistakable parallels with Jolles.

Remembering that sayings represent normative wisdom, we may continue with von Rad:

Now, when we bear in mind that every people expended a great deal of trouble and artistry in the formation

¹Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:421-22.

²"Die Ältere Weisheit Israels," *Kerygma und Dogma: Zeitschrift für Theologische und Kirchliche Lehre* 2 (1956) :54-72; cf. his *Old Testament Theology* 1:418.

³Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:418.

of this kind of Wisdom literature, and that gnostic apperception is in fact one of the most elegant forms of human thinking and a weapon in the struggle for spiritual content in life, it will be apparent that there are two completely different forms of the apperception of truth for mankind--one systematic (philosophical and theological) and one empirical and gnostic. Each requires the other. Where the one employed by the Wisdom literature is wanting, men are in danger of reducing everything to dogma, and indeed of running off into ideological fantasy. Empirical and gnostic wisdom starts from the unyielding presupposition that there is a hidden order in things and events--only, it has to be discerned in them, with great patience and at the cost of all kinds of painful experience. And this order is kindly and righteous. But, characteristically, it is not understood systematically--and therefore not in such a way as to reduce all the variety experienced and perceived to a general principle of order. . . . As Jolles says, conceptual thinking cannot possibly apprehend the world to which gnostic thinking applies itself. Wisdom examines the phenomenal world to discern its secrets, but allows whatever it finds to stand in its own particular character absolutely.¹

To von Rad, the growing scepticism of Job and Qoheleth does not represent a repudiation of wisdom. Their conflict is only intelligible from wisdom's presuppositions about the world. Thus in this respect, he follows Zimmerli.²

f) Wisdom as humanism. One finds quite a different approach from the fore-going definitions and

¹Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:421-22,

²Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:441-59; Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 198-204.

descriptions of wisdom in this section when one turns to the work of Rankin. His basic operating concept is humanism.¹

The Wisdom literature may be called the documents of Israel's humanism, not in the sense of a rejection of the supernatural, or even as intending a concern chiefly with man's welfare, but because its general characteristic is the recognition of man's moral responsibility, his religious individuality and of God's interest in the individual life.²

All wisdom writings concern themselves with the ordinary individual--even when wisdom becomes hypostasized into an intermediary being between God and man.

Because the interest of the Wisdom books is of this nature, they yield not merely a vast body of moral teaching but complete the foundation of thought upon which a theology could be built. . . . They [the wise] are the rationalists of Hebrew thought and religion.³

While prophetic and priestly thought took only the community into account, the wise looked at a person's peace, welfare and happiness in the context of family and community. In wisdom thought, attention is paid to the basic motives behind human conduct: "gratitude,

¹O. S. Rankin, *Israel's Wisdom Literature: Its Bearing on Theology and the History of Religion; the Kerr Lectures Delivered in Trinity College, Glasgow, 1933-36* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, n.d.), pp. 1-9.

²Rankin, p. 3.

³Rankin, p. 3.

friendship, love, hate, wealth, reputation."¹ "Wisdom is the ability to assess truly the values of life."²

Weinfeld, in his studies of the relationship between Deuteronomy and wisdom, takes over the term "humanism" from Rankin, following in the tradition of S. R. Driver, Delitzsch and Cheyne.³

The humanistic ideology which characterizes sapiential teaching scrutinizes all matters from the human point of view and consequently seeks those ends which will prove to be for "man's good."⁴

. . . The conventional sapiential view identifies wisdom with the knowledge and understanding of nature's laws. . .⁵

Weinfeld approves Rankin's view that "the social ideas of Proverbs are, properly speaking, distinctly sapiential ideas, based on the concept of the 'equality of men,' which in turn derives from the sapiential concept

¹Rankin, p. 4.

²Rankin, p. 4.

³Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Moshe Weinfeld, "The Origin of the Humanism in Deuteronomy," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (September 1961): 241-47; Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy--the Present State of the Inquiry," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (September 1967): 249-62; C. M. Carmichael, "Deuteronomistic Laws, Wisdom, and Historical Traditions," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 12 (1967): 198-206; Jean. Malfroy, "Sagesse et Loi dans le Deuteronomie: Études," *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 49-65.

⁴Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 308-9.

⁵Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, p. 257.

of the 'Creator of man' predominating in wisdom literature."¹ In this respect, scholars in this tradition approach a view which we shall not discuss, wisdom as creation theology (g). Continuing, Weinfeld contends that this humanistic ideology is international. Still, he argues that a special kind of theologizing process in Israel led to deuteronomic thinking. The *yir'at yahweh* upon which wisdom is then said to be grounded reflects a growing conflict with the conventional sapiential view that wisdom is universal knowledge:

The sapiential authors of these dicta apparently wished to say . . . that man's wisdom lies in his moral behaviour. They realized that the human mind could neither fathom the mysteries of creation nor acquire universal knowledge . . . and that the only wisdom man could aspire to was that which pertained to human affairs, i.e. *Lebensweisheit* and not *Naturweisheit*.²

The ideology upon which the humanistic ethic is founded is thus theologized and circumscribed. The deuteronomists combined this new humanism with Torah.³

The application of the term "humanism" to wisdom tends to shade together several different conceptual

¹Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, p. 295.

²Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, p. 258.

³Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 158-319; Weinfeld, "Humanism in Deuteronomy," pp. 241-47.

categories. "Rationalism" (Rankin) and "ideology" (Weinfeld) suggest a system or body of thought which unites all of wisdom, as we have discussed above.¹ But, "moral responsibility" and "moral behaviour" reflect wisdom as ethos: that wisdom distinguished by a certain pattern of action.² The more, since there seem to be severe limitations to the wise' ability to know. Weinfeld also seems to use "wisdom," "sapiential," and "humanism" as theological categories to unite common strands out of seemingly diverse intellectual movements and divers social groups.³

h) Wisdom as the perception of a divine or supra-mundane universal order. This approach to understanding wisdom takes its point of intellectual departure from Egyptian wisdom and its doctrine of *maat*. Gese quotes Frankfort's dismissal of eudaimonistic-pragmatic explanations of wisdom:

The usual comment on this type of advice is totally inadequate. It is neither a rule of

¹Rankin, p. 25; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, p. 189; cf. Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 1-14.

²We shall deal with wisdom as behavior or ethos below. Of course, one can only infer what behavior was historically from evidence, generally literary what. has been said about the supposed behavior.

³Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 158-89.

good conduct, nor a plan for making a man popular and likely to gain advancement--in fact, can think of no behavior more likely to get one into trouble.¹

Here, Frankfort refers to Kagemni's counsel not to eat until a greedy man is sated nor drink until the drunkard has taken his fill. His and Gese's remarks reflect a general dissatisfaction with the rational-pragmatic interpretation.²

Frankfort argues that we have read a modern contrast back into history. We distinguish worldly savoir-faire from religiously motivated ethical behavior. The Egyptian perceived no distinction. He lived in a world suffused by a single order that was at once social, ethical and cosmological:

The Egyptians recognized a divine order, established at the time of creation; this order is manifest in nature in the normalcy of phenomena; it is manifest in society as justice; and it is manifest in an individual's life as truth. Maat *is* this order, the essence of existence, whether we recognize it or not.

The conception of Maat expresses the Egyptian belief that the universe is changeless and that all apparent opposites must, therefore, hold each other in equilibrium. Such a belief has definite consequences in the field of moral philosophy. It puts a premium on whatever exists with a semblance

¹Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation*, Cloister Library of Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 71; Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, p. 9.

²Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 7-11.

of permanence. It excludes ideals of progress, utopias of any kind, revolutions, or any other radical changes in existing conditions. It allows a man "to strive after every excellence until there be no fault in his nature," but implies, as we have seen, harmony with the established order, the latter not taken in any vague and general way but quite specifically as that which exists with seeming permanence.¹

Order, *maat*, is no impersonal force. That would be a modern concept. But, deviation from order is also no act of rebellion. Disharmony brings about the inevitable intervention of some deity in an act of retributive justice, but the operation of act and consequence is not automatic. The world is permeated by a profound religious order. It is man's religious and ethical responsibility to recognize this order and to put himself in harmony with it. Thus, authority becomes significant.²

Gese expressly applies the analogy of *maat* to wisdom in Israel. There, he finds the notion of order, not pragmatism:

Wir müssen uns auch hier im Alten Testament vor der eudämonistischen Interpretation hüten, wenn wir nicht auf Grund der uns eigentümlichen Scheidung von innen und ausseren Erfolg, Massstäbe an die Weisheitslehre herantragen wollen, die ihr--zumindest in ihrem Ursprung--wesentlich fremd sind. Vielmehr wird hier in der Weisheit

¹Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, p. 64.

²Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, pp. 64-71, passim.

auf Grund der Erkenntnis *einer der Welt innewohnenden Ordnung* gesagt, lass der Fleissige durch sein Tun reich, der Faule arm wird; und ebenso wird der Gerechte Erfolg, der Ungerechte Misserfolg davontragen. Wir könnten fast von einer naturgesetzlichen Weise sprechen, in der sich die Folge aus der Tat ergibt.¹

Gese notes the *Unverfügbarkeit* of this order in both Egypt and Israel. Man is inescapably bound to the fundamental order that governs the world. Act and result are inextricably bound together (*Tat-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*) in human action. Man is utterly incapable of interposing himself in this complex.²

Israel differs from Egypt. It breaks through the fateful working out of this process (*schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*). Yahweh is independent of this order. We do find royal ideology in wisdom; the king is the guarantor of order. But, in the same way that Yahweh can act freely with respect to the king, so Yahweh is completely free from the order's jurisdiction. Israelite wisdom is not rigidly determinist. Job emphasizes Yahweh's freedom with respect to his created order, and strengthens the implicit double standard in Hebrew wisdom: that wisdom is nothing with respect to Yahweh. Job however accepts the fundamental premise of order which typifies Hebrew wisdom. Its

¹Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 34-35.

²Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 44-45.

solution leads us again into wisdom thinking.¹ Gese's concluding sentence reflects the paradox of Hebrew wisdom:

Die grossartige und tief religiöse altorientalische Weisheit ist in Israel aufgenommen und bewältigt worden, die Bindung an metaphysische Ordnungen wurde durch den Glauben an Jahwä überwunden.²

In sum,

. . . The wisdom literature of Israel--like that of Egypt--seeks above all to discover the order that is inherent in the world and human life, making it possible for man to accommodate himself reasonably to this order. This inherent order, however, is righteousness. That is to say, the Hebrew *s^edaqâ* corresponds in function to the Egyptian concept of *m3^ct*, "truth," or better "righteousness," "orderly management."³

i) Wisdom as the knowledge of authoritative divine will. Gese's view of wisdom, in terms of order, the relationship of act and result, and the freedom of Yahweh, over against the anthropocentric-eudaimonistic definitions, has steadily gained ground in wisdom studies. Both von Rad and Zimmerli have substantially revised their positions to respond to this line of reasoning

¹Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 42, 45-78.

²Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, p. 78.

³Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 133.

⁴Von Rad in his *Weisheit in Israel* compared to the views expressed in his *Old Testament Theology* and "Ältere

Gemser was one of the first to recognize the implications in Gese's proposals. His article on the "Spiritual Structure of Biblical Aphoristic Wisdom" did not propound a drastically new definition of wisdom so much as pose certain problems that implied redefinition.¹

First, he asked, with what authority does wisdom teaching confront its hearers? For Gemser, as for de Boer,² *‘ēṣah* is not discussible advice:

The counsels of the wise are not advice offered without obligation to the free discussion and decision of the addressed, they claim to be listened to and followed up and put into practice.³

Second, from what does this teaching derive its authority? If Gese be right, authority derives from divine order, permeating and interpenetrating the structure of the world.⁴ Von Rad points out that the search for order is inherent in language itself:

Weisheit Israels"; Zimmerli in "Place and Limit" as opposed to his earlier "Struktur."

¹pp. 138-49.

²P. A. H. de Boer, "The Counsellor," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Presented to Professor Harold Henry Rowley*, ed. Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas, *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*, vol. 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 42-71.

³Gemser, "Spiritual Structure," p. 146..

⁴Gese, *Lehre and Wirklichkeit*, pp. 33-45; Gemser, "Spiritual Structure," p. 142.

Parallel and intertwined with this universal ancient belief in an impersonal, yet authoritative world-order was the conviction that wisdom was a prerogative and gift of the gods; wisdom and word, intelligence and speech were even, in Egypt as well as in Babylonia and Ugarit, thought of as personal divine beings. No wonder that in ancient Israel with its fundamental belief in a personal, even one personal Deity wisdom was seen as one of the most essential qualities of God, and the teachings of wisdom as the expressions of his will.¹

Third, if all have equal authority, how does the counsel of the wise differ from the words of prophets or the torah of priests? The fact that these groups are distinct implies a clear difference in the types of authority appropriate to and held by each. Gemser quotes himself in reply, analyzing the semantic role of the motivating clauses:

"The motive clauses with their appeal to the common sense and to the conscience of the people disclose the truly democratic character of their laws, just as those (the motivations) of the religious kind testify the deep religious sense and concentrated theological thinking of their formulators."²

Motivations are a pedagogic device. "They are appropriate to what is being taught; they are not an appeal to experience, nor evidence of one. We wonder, however, whether Gemser has replied to precisely the question he set

¹Gemser, "Spiritual Structure," p. 147.

²Gemser, "Spiritual Structure," p. 148 quoting from his "The Importance of Motive Clauses in Old Testament Law," in *Copenhagen Congress Volume, Vetus Testamentum Supplements*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), p. 63.

himself. This distinction must derive from didactic intent and from setting, suggesting some unstated assumptions about the nature and objective of wisdom. Still, Gemser clearly stated his intent to pose questions, not necessarily to answer them, except perhaps by implication.¹

j) Wisdom as artful life-mastery in the context of a divinely created and ordered world. In response to the growing emphasis on authority, theology, and divine order, Zimmerli has modified some of his views on wisdom thought, though not so much perhaps as Gemser has suggested. Zimmerli continues to emphasize wisdom's anthropocentrism. He points out, as Baumgartner had long before, that "Wisdom has no relation to the history between God and Israel."² While people and king appear as sociological elements in wisdom, one misses there even a theologizing of the obvious Solomonic connection with a possible covenant theology.³

¹Gemser, "Motive Clauses," pp. 50-66; Gemser, "Spiritual Structure," pp. 138-49.

²Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 147; Baumgartner, *Weisheit*, pp. 1-2.

³Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 147; Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," p. 2.

Zimmerli raises to central importance a point he had made in his earlier article. "Wisdom thinks resolutely within the framework of a theology of creation."¹ This theology, however, is not based on an immutable order or an instruction to trust in Yahweh.

Wisdom is *per definitionem tahbūlôth*, 'the art of steering,' knowledge of how to do in life, and thus it has a fundamental alignment to man and his preparing to master human life.²

Zimmerli repeats the importance of history as he finds it in the mashal. The saying (*Aussagewort*) apprehends the elements of experience, defining and delimiting them ("establishing them").³ The admonition applies what is thereby understood to man's life-situation. It tells him how to behave. It shows him how to gain his life "with respect for the surrounding world of order, even the order of the divine world."⁴ "Wisdom shows man as a being

¹Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 148; cf. Gerhard von Rad, "Das Theologische Problem des Alttestamentlichen Schöpfungsglaubens," in *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments: Vorträge Gehalten auf der Interhationalen Tagung Alttestamentlicher Forscher zu Gottingen vom 4.-10. September 1935*, ed. Johannes Hempel, Friedrich Stummer, and Paul Volz, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 66 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1936), pp. 138-47.

²Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 149; Gese, *Lehre and Wirklichkeit*, p. 47.

³Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," pp. 150-51.

⁴Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 151.

who goes out, who apprehends through his knowledge, who establishes, who orders the world."¹ "Wisdom seeks to be a human art of life in the sense of mastering life in the framework of a given order in this life."²

Its theology of creation emphasizes the subordination of the order of the world to the will of Yahweh. Even Qoheleth operates from the presuppositions of wisdom, and sets the bounds of wisdom before its creator. The attempt to master life can turn into utter foolishness before Yahweh.

Through his sapiential encounter with the reality of the world Ecclesiastes caught sight of the freedom of God, who acts and never reacts. He feels this freedom of God as a painful limitation of his own impulse to go out into the world by wisdom and to master the world. Nevertheless he holds unswervingly fast to the creator, who alone has power to allot and to dispose of the times.³

Qoheleth sharpens the creation theology and sets the bounds of anthropocentric wisdom; he accepts what is possible within those limits.

Zimmerli rejects any attempt to equate wisdom's authority with that of apodictic law or prophetic word. A tension remains between creation theology and the anthro-

¹Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 150.

²Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 155.

³Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 157.

pocentric mastery of life; Qoheleth puts this tension in sharp relief. Wisdom is counsel. The sage convinces the hearer through argumentative persuasion and by evidence.¹

Counsel affords a certain margin of liberty and of proper decision. Certainly we cannot say that counsel has no authority. It has the authority of insight. But that is quite different from the authority of the Lord, who decrees.

So the weighing of the different possibilities always belongs to the behaviour of the wise man.²

Zimmerli seems to reject much of the Egyptian analogy.

In doing so, he restates, with important modifications, the position he set out earlier. Life-mastery is now divinely conditioned.

k) Wisdom as self-understanding in relationship. Like Zimmerli, Crenshaw is suspicious of the attempt to define or redefine wisdom as a system of thought on the basis of the Egyptian analogy. He argues that, while the same motifs may appear, the entire context of any proposed wisdom statement determines the "nuances" of its meaning. Meaning is inseparable from context. "Wisdom" may serve different analytical purposes, referring to a literature, a tradition that could be called *paideia*, or a system of thought as *hokmāh*. Here, Crenshaw moves

¹Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," pp. 155-58.

²Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," p. 153.

toward a typology which he makes part of his definition.¹

Crenshaw stresses the disparate character of wisdom thought. It has many settings and serves many objectives. The conflict we observe over definition may reflect attempts to bring too much together within the confines of too narrow an intellectual space. He proposes:

Wisdom, then, may be defined as the quest for self-understanding in terms of relationships with things, people, and the Creator. This search for meaning moves on three levels: (1) nature wisdom which is an attempt to master things for human survival and well-being, and which includes the drawing up of onomastica and study of natural phenomena as they relate to man and the universe; (2) juridical and *Erfahrungsweisheit* (practical wisdom), with the focus upon human relationships in an ordered society or state; and (3) theological wisdom, which moves in the realm of theodicy, and in so doing affirms God as ultimate meaning. . . .²

1) Wisdom as a demythicized will to knowledge. Responding to recent directions in wisdom study, von Rad presents a revised statement of his views in *Weisheit in Israel*. Like Crenshaw, von Rad emphasizes the secondary position of the term wisdom. It is "ja in

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 130, cf. n. 4.

²Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 132.

den Quellen keineswegs verankert."¹ Rather, it is a category which has been derived through research and is subject to revision and redefinition. From Proverbs 1:1-5, he points out the large vocabulary used by the Hebrews to get at the idea or approach to life which we have subsumed under a single concept. Von Rad also recognizes that the construction of a social reality, implied in Jolles' approach to language, cannot be limited to wisdom. Any social group defines a reality for itself. Typically, in fact, one is confronted with the demands of alternative but competing world-views for his allegiance. While such perspectives have been tested by time for their stability and their validity, they necessarily simplify and generalize in their portrayal of "reality" or "what is so."²

A certain self-knowledge, a certain ordering and interpretation of prior experience, a certain perspective on the world stands behind every experience of reality. "Voraussetzungslose Erfahrungen gibt es ja nicht."³ Since the experience of counter-realities is a threatening one, *Weltanschauungen* alternately struggle against one another

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 19.

²Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 26, 384.

³Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 13.

and seek to encompass conceptually what they do not yet adequately include. Certainly, "wisdom" is found in the attempt to order and comprehend experience, and do this within some literary form. This effort can be found in virtually every culture. Our dilemma is that we must either find what commonalities of thought--not just social methodology--bind together the phenomena we call in the abstract "wisdom," or we must abandon the term altogether as some scholars would have us do.¹

We should recognize that we perceive these phenomena, and our own reality, through highly abstract concepts which the Hebrew did not employ. His real and immediate world grasped him in a way and with a directness and intimacy we can only begin to appreciate if we use the most meticulous methodology. Von Rad believes that he can identify elements of thought which unite wisdom and justify our use of the term.

We search in vain for some method or some faculty of the human mind which constituted wisdom for the Hebrew. Wisdom is a charismatic gift of openness, receptivity, active awareness of the evidences of a truth inherent in the created order of the world. It is not some technical means of manipulated dead matter; that view is strictly

¹ Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 13-20.

modern. The wise trust creation and believe it worthy of that trust. Nevertheless, "Der Weg, wie der Weise zu seinem Wissen gelangt, bleibt in Dunkeln, aber in einem verheissungsvollen Dunkel."¹ Without a commitment of trust, nothing worthwhile can be accomplished. The created order, however, rewards trust. He is the fool who misplaces his trust or withholds it entirely.

Der "Tor" war doch nicht einfach ein Schwachkopf, sondern ein Mensch, der sich gegen eine Wahrheit stellte, die ihm in der Schöpfung entgegentrat, der sei es aus welchen Gründen, sich einer Ordnung nicht anvertraute, die für ihn heilsam wäre, die sich aber nun gegen ihn wendet.²

The basic human search for knowledge and pattern in the world (*Erkenntniswille*) has been cut free of that spirituality which perceives the world in terms of mythology and immanent powers. For the Hebrew,

Es handelt sich um einen Erkenntniswillen, der eine hellwache Ratio auf entmythisierte Welt richtete. Aber, nur scheinbar kam Israel mit dieser Entmythisierung der Welt dem modernen Weltverständnis nahe, denn dieser radikalen Verweltlichung der Welt entsprach die Vorstellung von einem ebenso radikalen Durchwaltetsein dieser Welt von Jahwe. also die Vorstellung von der Welt als einer Schöpfung Jahwes.³

Von Rad argues that wisdom is discursive and

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 377.

²Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 379.

³Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 378.

dialectic. As wisdom thought developed, it became clear that the impediments and defeats of human life would have to be reconsidered. Thus, we find a "theologizing of wisdom." All the old questions are re-ordered in terms of a new theological groundwork. For the act-consequence-relationship or synergistic view of life, other wise came to emphasize the creation, in which Yahweh was hidden from man and the divine will remained at times only a secret. Both sides of this discussion agreed that the creation was the field of divine action within which Yahweh revealed or concealed himself, his will and his law. The discussion centered on how to explain an order in which the ordering will might remain hidden and how to explain a relationship with Yahweh, who might conceal himself in his creation. The will to knowledge is common to both.¹

Wisdom is dialectic in its emphasis on man's relatedness.

Der Mensch--iminer sing es um den Einzelnen--sah sich wie eingebunden in einen Kreis der mannig-fachsten Bezugsverhältnisse nach draussen hin, in denen er einmal Subjekt, einmal Objekt war. Sprachen wie gelegentlich von den Aufbruch des Erkenntniswillens Israels auf die Gegenstände seiner Umwelt hin, so war das eben doch nur die eine Seite der Sache. Ebenso gut könnte man sagen, dass sein Erkenntniswille einer Provokation gegenüber erst antwortete, dass er also erst nachzog, indem er sich in der Zwangslage sah, sich auf Verhältnisse,

¹Von Rad, *Weisheöpfungsglaubens*," pp. 138-47.

ja Bewegungen seiner Umwelt einzustellen, die mächtiger waren als der Mensch. . . . Aber diese Bewegungen der Umwelt . . . liefen nicht in einem beziehungslosen Draussen nach einem fremden Gesetz ab; nein, sie waren dem Menschen in unendlicher Beweglichkeit ganz persönlich zugekehrt. . .¹

Ohne zu einer Gesamtschaudurchstossen zu können, kreiste das Denken der Weisen doch immer um das Problem einer Phänomenologie des Menschen. Freilich nicht des Menschen an sich, sondern um eine Phänomenologie des in seine Umwelt eingebundenen Menschen, in der er sich inner zugleich als Subjekt und als Objekt, als aktiv und passiv verband. Ohne diese Umwelt, der er zugekehrt ist, und die ihm zugekehrt ist, war in Israel ein Menschenverständnis überhaupt nicht möglich. Israel kannte nur einen bezogenen Menschen; bezogen auf Menschen, auf seine Umwelt, und nicht zuletzt auf Gott. Auch die Lehre von der Selbstbezeugung der Schöpfung ist durchaus als ein ungebunden Welt zu verstehen.²

If man is related to a personally perceived world, even "nature," this world is not torn by a confrontation between Yahweh and some personalized evil. Herein lies Job's problem. He must account for life's evils and hiddenness within a monistic view that Yahweh stands within creation. This belief in a related and personalized creation becomes wisdom as it is given verbal and literary expression on the basis of experience. The office of the wise man is to formulate his experience and to communicate it. Thus, in restating his position,

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 383.

²Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 400.

von Rad takes cognizance of new emphases on order and the personal nature of creation. He also stresses the role of subjectivity in the interpretation of experience, a point important to understanding the relationship between the wise man and his wisdom.¹

m) Wisdom as an existential understanding.

Würthwein has detailed the implications of order in the Egyptian setting that could be applied with qualifications to Israel.² Wisdom seeks to comprehend the world of experience as orderly and intelligible. The existential understanding or preconception includes:

1. Das Leben verläuft nach einer bestimmten Ordnung.
2. Diese Ordnung ist lehr- und lernbar.
3. Dadurch ist dem Menschen ein Instrument in die Hand gegeben, seinen Lebensweg zu bestimmen und zu sichern. Denn
4. Gott selber muss sich nach dieser Ordnung, diesem Gesetz richten.³

The last point raises a central issue for Hebrew wisdom: what is the relationship of Yahweh to the orderliness the wise seem to have found within their experience?

In sum, there are clearly many different ways in which one may take wisdom to be a system of thought. This

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 364-405.

²Weisheit, *Weisheit Ägyptens*.

³Würthwein, *Weisheit Ägyptens*, p. 8.

approach to defining wisdom has been a dominant theme in wisdom research. In spite of differences in emphasis, and some significant developments in the history of scholarship, certain themes recur, though with greater or lesser stress.

Wisdom presupposes the orderliness and intelligibility of experience, when it is taken to be a system of thought. As a creation of Yahweh and as the field of his action and his interaction with men, the experiential world is on balance worthy of religious trust--this, despite all its disappointments. Wisdom is open and hopeful, though not necessarily naively so. The wise do not accept the synthetic view of life uncritically. They are fundamentally concerned with stating exactly what sort of relationship might obtain between act and consequence that would reflect the basic justice of the world, in terms of the context of action. Most scholars argue that the wise increasingly emphasize the freedom of Yahweh within his creation and the limits of human knowledge in the face of divine wisdom to resolve this problem. The dilemma of theodicy is unavoidable.¹

The wise are principally concerned with the world

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*; Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 144-201.

of their experience. Wisdom does not mean systematic reflection or abstract system-building for the Hebrews. They live in a world of relationships; the wise seek to give coherent expression to them. Wisdom is anthropocentric or phenomenological because it is concerned with man's interrelatedness and because it has and must have an intense subjective (i.e., conscious, personal) component. Wisdom amounts to the mastery of life. The sage does not necessarily seek the happy life, but he does seek to understand life's patterns and structures. He intends to act coherently, masterfully and "artfully" with respect to them. Because these patterns derive from Yahweh as creator, they are neither impersonal nor mechanical. In what way they are personal, especially apart from Yahweh, remains to be seen.

The wise are in-the-world. Their knowledge is derived from and specifically applicable to experience. Schmid carefully points out that their "worldliness" says nothing by itself about their view of history.¹ The existing Hebrew wisdom literature, for whatever reason, shows remarkably little evidence of *Heilsgeschichte* or institutional theology, including nationalism, in its

¹Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 5-7.

early and middle periods. The wise believed that their wisdom could be taught. The records of the wise therefore contain an inevitable didactic element. The wise taught with the authority of their experience in pursuit of harmony with the created order. While on-going discussions among the wise seem demonstrable, their teachings had at least quasi-religious authority.¹

The applicability of such a general description to Proverbs IIB remains one of the objectives of our research. It should already be apparent that "world-view" as we use it here has particularly close affinities with wisdom perceived as a system of thought or conceptual system. It ties in as well with Zimmerli's notion of pre-conceptions (*Vorverständnisse*) and with von Rad's "world-view" and "phenomenology."² Other notions of wisdom as well, however, may prove to have relevance.

4. Wisdom is disciplined action or a pattern of behavior. In this sense, wisdom may be either a) an ethic or a moral code, or b) an etiquette. In either sense, this category, except by way of emphasis, is more

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 399; Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, p. 35.

²Zimmerli, "Struktur," p. 177; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 400.

ideal than actual. Whatever we may know about the actions of the wise has been learned indirectly through what they say about action. We have their ethic implicit in their admonitions. We infer judgments and patterns of conduct from their descriptions of experience. We also have certain portraits of the ideal wise man. What relationship these values bear to the actual actions of the wise is virtually impossible to say, and only then as the product of a theoretical and interpretive reconstruction based on their apparent thought system and social location. Evidence from other types of literature, whether prophetic or priestly or other, is sparse, sometimes polemical, and rather too general to establish a clear pattern of behavior among the wise. Precisely because our sources are literary, it is both easier and more logical to seek common ground in a body of thought than in action. This is true even if what actually were to have distinguished the wise in their socio-historical context were a pattern of conduct, ethic or etiquette.¹

In the wisdom literatures of Israel and Egypt, there is a distinct tradition of courtly and social etiquette. The wise man is reserved, cool of temperament,

¹Rankin, pp. 1-76; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 282-97.

deliberate in his actions. He avoids open conflict, especially with superiors. While he knows how to manipulate wrath when necessary, even that of the king, he avoids surrendering to his own passions. He is eloquent when it is needed; he is learned in the ways of the royal court. He knows how to express his opinion at the most opportune moment. He does not submit himself to the control of others, particularly financially, except in his calling. He is committed to learning. He is judicial in thought and temperament, suggesting that his vocation is more administrative than purely scribal. Within his profession, he observes his responsibilities carefully. In Egypt, it is expressly said that he pay proper respect to the instruments of his calling, the tools of the scribe. He recognizes a certain obligation, which we shall call noblesse oblige, toward those less fortunate than he, except where their misfortune results from folly. Finally, he delights in his mental agility within his chosen profession.¹ We should therefore consider the possibility

¹Hilaire Duesberg and Paul Auvray, trans. [and ed.], *Le Livre de Proverbes*, La Sainte Bible: Traduite en Français sous la (Direction de l'École Biblique de Jérusalem, 2d ed. rev. (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1957); Willam McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 44 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1965), pp. 15-47; Ronald J. Williams, "Scribal Training in Ancient Egypt," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 92 (1972): 214-21; Hellmut Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung* (Wiesbaden: Otto

that the wise recognized one another, not by thought nor by social or occupational affiliation, but by some common discipline.

5. Wisdom is an attitude toward life, a disposition or intention. Elements of a quasi-psychological understanding of wisdom can already be seen in the optimistic viewpoint with which it is credited. Further, we have Rylaarsdam's distinction between optimistic and pessimistic wisdom. The former is that of *Lebensweisheit*; the latter is found in reflective and theodically oriented wisdom.¹

Pedersen has attempted to understand wisdom in attitudinal terms. It is a form of consciousness, a faculty of the mind:²

Harrassowitz, 1957), pp. 32-48, 65-80; Lorenz Dürr, *Das Erziehungswesen im Alten Testament und in Antiken Orient*, Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Agyptischen Gesellschaft, vol. 32, no. 2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche, 1932), pp. 20-22, cf. 5-14, 58-66, 71-73; cf. *Les Sagesses du Proche-Orient Ancien: Colloque de Strasbourg, 17-19 Mai 1962*, Bibliothèque des Centres d'Études supérieures spécialisés: Travaux du Centre d'Études Supérieures Spécialisé d'Histoire des Religions de Strasbourg (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); William F. Albright, "A Teacher to a Man of Schechem about 1400 B.C.," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 86 (April 1942), pp. 28-31.

¹J. Coert Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in the Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

²Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*,

Wisdom is a property of the soul or, rather, a faculty, an ability to produce, a skill in shaping the very thought which yields the right result. . . . Wisdom is essential in the making of a soul. If a man lacks wisdom, then he has no heart. . . . Wisdom is the faculty of the whole of the soul, just as the will is the direction of the whole of the soul.¹

While European psychology regards action as external to the soul--the end product of ideation, feeling, volition and resolution--the Hebrew emphasis on the unity of the soul entails that mental processes are unified. Actions are implicit in mental activity. There is no dualism of thought and action. Actions trace the soul's movements, hence the Hebrew notion of "ways."

The action and its accomplishment are a matter of course, once the thought is there. . . . As soon as the thought is fixed, the action is at once a matter of course. This kind of fixed thought the Israelite calls *‘ēṣā*, counsel.²

. . . Wisdom . . . consists in the very possession of the "insight" out of which one creates the power to make counsels that persist. . . . The wisdom of God consists in his irresistible fulfillment of what he has in his mind. Wisdom is the same as blessing: the power to work to succeed.³

. . . Characteristic is such a word as *hiškāl*, which at the same time signifies to have under-

trans. A. Møller and A. I. Fausbell in collaboration with the Author, 4 parts (London: Oxford University Press, 1926-1940; reprint 1959), pp. 127 f., 198.

¹Pedersen, *Israel*, p. 127.

²Pedersen, *Israel*, p. 128.

³Pedersen, *Israel*, p. 198.

standing, insight, energy and the production of good results. Sometimes stress may be laid so strongly on the inner activity that the thought of outward action is eclipsed (e.g. Deut. 32, 29). But as a rule the idea of the totality prevails so strongly that it means to be wise and happy, and we are not able to say where the emphasis is laid.¹

Rather than speak of attitude, we could perhaps more accurately say that for Pedersen wisdom is a form of consciousness or subjectivity. It is a type of intentionality or disposition without which the entire personality is irremediably distorted.² Thus aspects of von Rad's position in *Weisheit in Israel* fit within this analytical category: specifically, his phenomenology of wisdom.³

Without doing great violence to the concept, one might also amend the notion of order from a sought-for structure in the world of experience to a type or dimension of consciousness. If it be too much to say that the wise are systematic in their approach to comprehending reality, their drive toward understanding (*Erkenntniswille*) is at least structured and orderly. One might also find a psychological equivalent of the mythic confrontation between order and chaos: the conflict between the will to deal coherently with experience (wisdom) and the passionate

¹Pedersen, *Israel*, p. 198.

²Pedersen, *Israel*, pp. 198 ff.

³Esp. pp. 39-41, 400.

devotion (read: surrender) to forces within experience, subjectively and objectively (folly).¹

In a sense, terms like "rational," "pragmatic," and "eudaimonistic" are far more satisfactory as attitudinal or psychological categories than as descriptions of wisdom thought, especially because of the danger of anachronism or cultural misinterpretation. Again, with von Rad and Pedersen, we should pay attention to the subjective and intentional dimensions of wisdom. The notion of world-view implies a perspective toward and (dialectic) relationship with the world.

6. Wisdom is a social or transsocial ideal. Under our subsequent rubric, wisdom typology, we shall briefly note the portraits of the ideal wise man offered in Tobit, ben Sirah, Aḥikar and elsewhere. At least part of our problem specifying what wisdom really is comes from the fact that wisdom often takes on an idealistic character which is difficult to compass under thought, attitude or ethos.

The ideal wise man is not superhuman, though such a concatenation of virtues in any one person is highly improbable. The wise person enjoys a divine charism which

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 364-405.

is attributable to his virtue, not to any specific good deed or deeds. If von Rad is right that the Joseph story is wisdom, then these figures assume epic proportions. The postulated doctrine of retributive justice figures prominently here. The importance of the wisdom equation of good with wise and evil with folly can hardly be overstated. Exactly what is it about the act which calls forth the appropriate consequence? The disharmony between the act and the established order of the world, it is often asserted, leads inevitably to harsh results, even ruin. The wise are not depicted as faultless paragons of impeccable morality, however, nor is the fateful choice among evils unknown to them. Retribution seems to be tied to what we shall come to call "character" or "disposition" and include under the rubric of intentionality. Still, the inchoate idealistic dimension to wisdom cannot be ignored. Wisdom as a social ideal--reflecting the aspirations and ideology of a class or caste--stands in constant tension with wisdom as a realized intentionality, a formal system of thought, and a disciplined pattern of conduct.¹

¹Gerhard von Rad, "Josephsgeschichte and Ältere Chokma," in *Congress Volume [of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament]: Copenhagen, 1953*, *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), pp. 120-27; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 355-63; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 2:301-15; Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 135-37; George W. Coats, "The Joseph Story and Ancient Wisdom: A Reappraisal," *Catholic Biblical*

7. Wisdom is the distinctive property of a specific social group. Something of this category is already present in the attempts of Zimmerli, Gese and others to reduce the conflicts between optimistic and pessimistic wisdom to family disputes.¹

. . . Gegenüber dieser Annahme einer Zweigesichtigkeit der Weisheit ist es wohl verständnisvoller, in dieser Gegensätzlichkeit eine Auseinandersetzung innerhalb der Lehre der Weisheit zu suchen, die beiden Gruppen historisch aufeinander zu beziehen und im Prediger eine späte Ausbildung der ursprünglich "optimistischen" Weisheit zu finden.²

Gese expressly rejects any thought of *Standesethik* in either Egyptian or Hebrew wisdom. They are "eine Lehre für die Erziehung eines jeden im Volke,"³ not the instructions of a restricted social group. Gese seeks for the origins of Israelite sayings within popular or folk wisdom.⁴ If this view should prevail, then any relationship between

Quarterly 35 (July 1973):285-97; George W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, vol. 4, ed. Bruce Vawter (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976).

¹Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 177-204; Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," pp. 146-58; Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 21-45; Robert Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages: Essays in Biblical Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 160-97.

²Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 1-2.

³Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, p. 30.

⁴Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 29-31.

the wisdom literature and a particular social class becomes purely adventitious. That a literature, especially an oral one, requires literature-preservers to transmit it on is a historical and social necessity, not a statement of affinity.

The last point may be an untenable distinction. Are we not only permitted but entitled to draw conclusions or inferences about the relationship between a literature and the identifiable social group which worked to preserve it and transmit it on? Do groups, with any significant frequency, involve themselves in preserving works that lack some salience or affinity for them? Moreover, the evidence deduced by much modern scholarship seems to support a relationship. First, the popular origin of even some of the wisdom writings, e.g., the sayings collections, can easily be denied. Formal, rhetorical and theological considerations seem to bar folk origin for virtually all of the wisdom literature, even that long regarded as popular or as *Sippenweisheit*.¹ Second, even apart from the question

¹Roland E. Murphy, "The Interpretation of Old Testament Wisdom Literature," *Interpretation* 23 (July 1969): 289-301; R. B. Y. Scott, "Priesthood, Prophecy, Wisdom, and Knowledge of God," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (March 1961):1-15; Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 15-52; Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, pp. 160-97; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 39-53. See Erhard Gerstenberger, *Wesen und Herkunft des "Apodiktischen Rechts,"* Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, vol. 20

of absolute origin, the wisdom material was adopted, used and preserved by a fairly restricted social group.¹ Application seems a legitimate basis for inference. Third, McKane and others find a distinct social group, the “*h^akamîm*,” for whom these writings would have had peculiarly appropriate relevance. Whether this group is identical with or directly related to the scribal class remains to be seen.²

Once popular origin and application are called into question, resolving the social location of wisdom becomes all-important to understanding it. For McKane, wisdom is clearly the product of a restricted social class.

(Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965) , pp. 117-30. Cf. William F. Albright, "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 1-15; Christa Bauer-Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9: Eine Form- und Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung Agyptischen Vergleichsmaterials*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, vol. 22 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966); Christa Bauer-Kayatz, *Einführung in die Alttestamentliche Weisheit*, Biblische Studien, vol. 55 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), pp. 13-21; Henri Cazelles, "Les Debuts de la Sagesse en Israel," in *Sagesses du Proche-Orient Ancien*, pp. 27-40.

¹McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*; Wolfgang Richter, *Recht und Ethos: Versuch einer Ortung des Weisheitlichen Mannspruches*, Etudien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, vol. 15 (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1966) , pp. 183-92; Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 15-52.

²McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 1-208.

[Wisdom] is empirical in its spirit, with an emphasis on intellectual rather than ethical values and so well adapted to the hard realities of statecraft and government. Its practitioners were therefore pre-eminently an elite who were in the higher echelons of government and administration and . . . the literature of this wisdom was directed particularly towards the training of statesmen, diplomats and administrators in the schools whose educational discipline was shaped to this end.¹

The wisdom literature is, for the most part, a product not of full-time men of letters and academics, but of men of affairs in high places of state, and the literature in some of its forms bears the marks of its close association with those who exercise the skills of statecraft.²

Their posture in life, the intellectual position whereby they conduct the business of state, is best described as humanism, according to McKane. They are educated and disciplined to “attain to such a mental grasp and delicacy of judgment as to be consistently clear thinkers, perceptive policy-makers and incisive men of action, poised between the extremes of impetuosity and indecision.”³

Interestingly, McKane expressly disagrees with von Rad, holding that the wise are well aware of a possible conflict between wise counsel and the Word of Yahweh. Their world was not amenable to religious assumptions or

¹McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, p. 17.

²McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, p. 44.

³McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, p. 46.

black-and-white analysis.¹

In their professional capacity they thought it right to challenge the encroachment of religious authority on their sphere of responsibility, for they argued that they had to reckon realistically with the world as it was and not as it ought to be.²

Gordis, too, locates wisdom within a social elite.

He shares Gese's view that, behind apparent disagreements within wisdom, lie highly significant shared understandings.³

. . . Wisdom Literature . . . was fundamentally the product of the upper classes in society, who lived principally in the capital, Jerusalem. Some were engaged in large-scale foreign trade, or were tax-farmers. . . . Most of them were supported by the income of their country estates. . . . This patrician group was allied by marriage with the high-priestly families and the higher government officials. . . .

. . . The upper classes were conservative in their outlook, basically satisfied with the status quo and opposed to change. Their conservatism extended to every sphere of life and permeated their religious ideas as well as their social, economic and political attitudes. What is most striking is that this basic conservatism is to be found among the unconventional Wisdom teachers as well. Though they were independent spirits who found themselves unable to accept the convenient assumptions of their class that all was right with the world, they reflect even in their revolt the social stratum from which they had sprung or with which they had identified themselves.⁴

¹McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 53-54.

²McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, p. 47.

³Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, pp. 160-63.

⁴Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, pp. 162-63.

In Gordis' view, the wise are pre-eminently teachers in the academies in the larger cities. They seek to educate the scions of the wealthy, those with the leisure and resources to enjoy learning. Their aim is selective, even if they coopted some gifted few from the poor, for they trained their students for the exigencies of upper class life. Their ethic reflects that objective. They retained retributionism, having no strong motive for rejecting it, but their leisure offered them the opportunity to develop a sceptical literature. Despair is a peculiar vice of the well-to-do. The presence of scepticism in wisdom merely reinforces the likelihood of its location among the social elite. The summum bonum of life is achieving practical success and economic prosperity. The utilitarian and prudential wisdom ethic offers the best means to attain that goal.¹

Hermisson also sets wisdom within the school. He regards the skills of reading and writing as far more widely distributed than Gordis or some other scholars, though not universal. He notes the presence of works like *Sinuhe* and the *Succession Narrative* in the literatures of the ancient Near East. They could hardly have been intended for a few select readers, let alone deposition in musty archives,

¹Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, pp. 160-97.

While advanced training might have been restricted to high administrators and public officials, skilled artisans and agricultural supervisors doubtless required some minimal literacy to carry out their duties effectively.¹

Hermisson thinks that an academic setting for wisdom is indisputable. Wisdom is didactic and pedagogic, though non-wisdom works like romances and travelogues may have emanated from the same group. Some sort of *Standesethik* seems unavoidable. Hebrew wisdom is intended to be broad and general in its application. It is not aimed at some particular favored group.²

If the wisdom writings strictly understood are centered within a delimitable social group and if they constitute merely one aspect of their social life, perhaps even relatively unimportant in historical context, then our understanding of wisdom changes materially.³

¹Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, Fp. 113-36.

²Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 94-96; Richter, *Recht und Ethos*, pp. 183-92; Kovacs, "Class Ethic?"

³As we examine the world-view underlying and implicit in Proverbs IIb, we shall have to evaluate its social location carefully. The disagreements here are astounding: from popular to elite; from common oral tradition, later codified, to the artistic product of individual reflection; from reflection to didactic material for academic reflection.

8. Wisdom is a social force. We mentioned earlier von Rad's view that 'wisdom' is a unifying analytical abstraction. It brings together what was far less unified in historical context and what the Hebrews perceived far more concretely as well.¹ Going beyond von Rad, we might argue that wisdom is to be distinguished neither by some specific sets of views nor by location in some determinable social setting. Rather, wisdom represents a broad social movement of successively different groups with a variety of views, all attempting to achieve a common series of social goals, some explicit and some implicit. What justifies calling something wisdom is the scholar's subsequent determination that this writing, idea or group contributed to a broad attempt to reach certain social and intellectual objectives within the context of Hebrew history.²

When wisdom is understood as humanism or as the quest for a certain kind of knowledge, this analytic category may come into play. There are certainly sound philosophical reasons for arguing that one may be able to name what he cannot define. Some perceived patterns have no universally common elements. Wittgenstein proponed the

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 19.

²Scott, "Knowledge of God," p. 11; Rankin, pp. 1-4; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 162-64.

notion of 'game' as a classic case in point.¹ Perhaps the search for a specific social group or some determinable point of view violates Whitehead's Fallacy of Misplaced Concretion.² Because we can discern a pattern and have given it a name for analytical purposes, we incorrectly assume that the concept has or stands for some reality beyond that pattern. The pattern exists only as an inference, a hermeneutic interpretation, of the researcher. We search for more reality in the term than is justifiably there. In a sense, we approach Moore's Paradox of Analysis from another direction here. Perhaps we can classify as a scholarly interpretation what we cannot define independent of that interpretation.

We are not saying, however, that we cannot clearly and unambiguously determine, let alone state, the position of a particular group or individual at a particular time. That task is potentially independent of the other. Historical evidence can be sorted. Conclusions can be drawn, apart from inferring that certain works or movements have a socio-historical affinity which we may attribute to them.

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3d ed.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), pp. 67, 77, 108.

²Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Academic Library of Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 11.

Two points follow, if this category is not to be reduced to one of the others. First, wisdom may be distinguishable as a succession of individuals, schools or groups whose overlapping views developed and changed through time, even radically. "Social force" may be understood as historical movement. Second, the relationship which sustains this movement is a role in the intellectual, political and social economy of the time. Its identification and its implications are what the historian qua historian must state fully. This category and the next are closely associated.

9. Wisdom is a theological concept or theological movement. The two senses are related. In the former, wisdom is one aspect of the total divine revelation to Israel. Wisdom thought and wisdom movement are the means of its revelation. What is important however is the theological significance of wisdom for the Hebrews understanding of their relationship to Yahweh.¹ In the latter sense, what unites wisdom is its place within God's progressive revelation of himself to his people. The views of the wise constitute one aspect of an adequate theology. The wise are united by their quest to comprehend what is in

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 129-42; Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 1-45; Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 1-7.

fact only one aspect of the divine revelation.¹

Both senses generally entail that wisdom is being understood in terms of a theology of the Hebrew scriptures. Wisdom, and the revelation received through the wisdom movement, thereby play a part in some kind of theologizing by the investigating scholar. The historical research functions as theological interpretation, hermeneutic. We cannot properly raise nor hope to deal with the issue of the validity of Old Testament theology. We find these approaches in both Jacob and Eichrodt, who each discuss the wisdom movement under the rubric “the wisdom of God.”²

For Jacob, wisdom as a concept expresses “the universality of [God's] knowledge and the omnipotence of his deeds.”³ In practical terms, “the wisdom of God shines in his works and mainly in the creation whose order and harmony are a clear witness to it.”⁴ Wisdom is closely related to discernment of good and evil, discrimination and

¹Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, 1958) , pp. 118-20, 251-53; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Saker, Old Testament Library, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961, 1967), 2:80-92, 490-95.

²Jacob, p. 118; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:80.

³Jacob, p. 118.

⁴Jacob, p. 118.

the art of success. Personified, this wisdom which "reigns in nature should also preside over God's directing of human life."¹

This wisdom movement also has theological significance for Jacob:

By regarding man independently of all national attachment, as a creature governed by certain elementary laws quite well summarized by the term righteousness, the wisdom movement affirms the universality of God in opposition to the restrictions which the covenant and the law, manifestations of a jealous God, ran the risk of introducing. However, . . . it is the legalist current which ended by absorbing the wisdom current. . . .²

Eichrodt argues that wisdom functions to enable Israel to assimilate what it has learned from other nations to the needs of its own special revelation. At its best, wisdom provides a link between all men's quest for truth

¹Jacob, p. 119.

²Jacob, p. 119. Elsewhere (p. 253), Jacob continues: ". . . Moses never succeeded in ousting Solomon completely; by deliberately taking the great syncretist king as their patron, the wisdom writers set out to strike a universalist note which will allow Judaism to become, despite the barrier of the *torah*, a missionary religion.

The wise, as dispensers of knowledge under its cognitive aspect, but especially under its practical aspect, are one of the channels through which God's presence is communicated to men, and even though their person itself lacks the religious prestige attaching to the king, to the priest and to the prophet, they are none the less a sign, in view of the time when all men will be taught by the author of all wisdom (Jer. 31.34; Is. 54.13)."

and the Old Testament understanding of God.

Yet this assimilation to alien truth did indeed conceal dangers. The more important the divine Wisdom discernible in Nature became, the easier it was to suppose that from that starting-point one could arrive at a rational understanding of God accessible even to the heathen. And the greater the confidence that wisdom could achieve this goal, the more quickly were men ready to expect from her a solution to the rest of life's riddles as well.¹

Early wisdom was unprejudiced in its borrowing; the Hebrews awoke to the realization that other nations had a share in the deposit of truth. This awareness challenged chauvinism and "ossification" of the intellect.² Yet, this assimilation ignored "the necessary differences between the basis in morals in Israel and other nations."³ Later wisdom, rising when Israel was a theocracy under Persia, was selective, choosing those elements in keeping with Israel's own nature and refusing to surrender their cultural heritage. This "new flowering of wisdom" includes Proverbs 1-9, Job, Qoheleth, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and the Wisdom of Solomon. Eichrodt is most interested in this later, specifically hebraized, wisdom, in which "the concept of wisdom has been radically expanded."⁴

¹Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:87.

²Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:82.

³Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:82.

⁴Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:83.

Wisdom has become either hypostasized or extended to "the purposes and order discernible in the cosmos."¹ As a vehicle of revelation, this wisdom ran many of the same risks as the earlier. The impetus for it, Eichrodt believes, may have come from the artistic exaggeration of wisdom diction and from the search of the wise for an authority to rank with the prophetic Word and the Spirit of God.²

This literature does criticize its own potential excesses Job 28 counters the belief that one can attain total comprehension of Wisdom from creation.

. . . . God's wisdom is not placed in its entirety within Man's grasp for him to read off from the works of creation alone. Because Man can discover only traces of Wisdom, but never Wisdom herself, therefore there remain riddles in the course of the universe which Man cannot plumb, but can only accept in awe and adoration before the all-wise Creator.³

Equation of the fear of God with the beginning of wisdom, the *yr't-yhwh*, means not simply beginning but "its chief ingredient, its essence, its germ."⁴ Strictly speaking, wisdom belongs only to Yahweh. In its most developed hypostasis, Wisdom becomes indistinguishable from Spirit.

¹Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:83.

²Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:86.

³Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:88.

⁴Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:89.

They "easily combine to form a homogeneous concept," which gets in the way of clear explication.¹ These writers never developed a systematic organization of hypostases.

10. Wisdom is a mythos. Like Jolles, Schmid sets forth the view that wisdom is something quite different from myth.² It has a different view of history and another perspective on man's relationship to the world. Certainly this position is consistent with the widely accepted position that at the least wisdom and myth have nothing to do with one another; they may even be perceived as somewhat antagonistic modes of thinking. Hypostatic wisdom suggests, and personified wisdom virtually requires, some sort of mythos to explain its relation to Yahweh, to creation and to man.³

Ringgren carefully distinguishes hypostasis from personification. Hypostasis means attributing some sort of independent existence to the attributes, elements or characteristics of a divine being. Personification goes beyond hypostasis by giving those entities personal characteristics. A hypostasis is not necessarily a personification. An

¹Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:91.

²Jolles, pp. 75-103, 124-40; Schmid; *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 3-5.

³Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 79-84.

example of the kind of personification that might derive from an unknown mythos is I Enoch 42:1-3. Wisdom searched the earth for a hospitable place to dwell among men. She found none, and returned to heaven where a special seat was made for her. Unrighteousness, on the other hand, found satisfactory lodging on the earth.¹ We should remember, though, that I Enoch is late, dating sometime after 94 BCE. Rankin typifies the dominant view that such personifications derive from Persian, Greek and other foreign influence (the Iranian Amisha Spentas?), and are *prima facie* evidence of lateness.²

Recently, Christa Bauer-Kayatz' study of Proverbs 1-9 has called this position into question. She argues that at least Proverbs 8 is clearly dependent on Egyptian influences. Maat exists hypostasized much earlier in Egypt than the proposed Greek or Persian forebears of hypostasized or personified Hebrew Wisdom. Further, Egyptian scribal influences go back in Israel to early times. Scribes presumably brought both Egyptian patterns of scribal training and the international classics with them to their new posts in Israel. Their literacy,

¹Helmer Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom: Studies in the Hypostatization of Divine Qualities and Functions in the Ancient Near East* (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1947), pp. 133 ff.

²Rankin, pp. 222-64.

administrative duties and linguistic fluency would have given them access to wide-ranging foreign intellectual and theological developments. To restrict the hypostasizing and personification of wisdom to post-Exilic times lacks sound historical foundation. Such figures could appear quite early among the Hebrews. If Kayatz' analogy with Maat is valid, then we must include in it as well the possibility of some Hebrew analogue to the Egyptian mythos that incorporates Maat.¹

Albright and Cazelles both look to Canaanite precursors of Hebrew Wisdom. Albright opines that Proverbs "teems with isolated Canaanitisms."² The rare "*hkmt*," which appears three times in Proverbs 1-9, may be analogous to the Phoenician *Milkot*, "Queen," and therefore the name of a deity.³ The seven-pillared house resembles a third-millennium structure that was very late dedicated to Cyprian Aphrodite. The precursor of the Wisdom figure in Proverbs 1-9 may well be a Canaanite goddess, according to Albright.⁴

¹Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9*; Kayatz, *Einführung*, pp. 70-92.

²Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," p. 9.

³Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," pp. 8-9; cf. Cazelles, "Sagesse en Israel," p. 37.

⁴Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," p. 9; Patrick W. Skehan, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*,

Both Albright and Cazelles point out the Ugaritic application of "*hkm*" to El. "Thy command; O El, is wise, Thy Wisdom lasts for ever, A life of good fortune is thy command."¹ Proverbs 8:22-24 may reflect Canaanite imagery: El created Wisdom before conquering the dragon or establishing his house.² Such an analysis, if valid, clearly requires an underlying mythos.

While the evidence for Canaanite influence is not great, the Egyptian parallels cannot easily be dismissed. Both Gese and Schmid have emphasized the analogy of *maat* to the Hebrew *sdqh*, righteousness.³ The opposition of divine order and primeval chaos in and of itself suggests mythic motifs. We cannot quickly dismiss the notion of wisdom mythos.⁴

The next two analytical categories are closely related to methodology. The two are distinct in about the same way form and content are. In practice, the distinction

Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, vol, 1 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971), pp. 9-14.

¹Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," pp. 7-9; Cazelles, "Sagesse en Israel," pp. 35-39.

²Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," p. 7-

³Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 11-21, 29-50; Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 68.

⁴Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 144-55.

tends to be less obvious. Obviously an adequate discussion of either would involve us in a lengthy methodological discussion. We must instead be brief.

11. Wisdom is a series of motifs. In this sense, we may speak of the priestly and prophetic adoption of wisdom imagery. The metaphor, image or phrase may be typical of wisdom writings; the nuance remains unswervingly prophetic, priestly or historical. The spread of motifs seems to show intellectual influence, but only to the extent that the image can still be considered wisdom in nature if not origin.¹ The generally unresolved question of motif study in wisdom is, what relationship obtains between a motif and its borrower? Was the image still identifiably part of a larger wisdom mode of thought and perception, or had it become so much a part of the inherited conglomerate that its wisdom origins were no longer discernible to nor intended by its users?

Even a partial list of such motifs would have to include the *Zwillingformen* (Antitheses), the passionate versus the cool man, the reserved and silent man, the Wisdom-figure, the 'yšh zrh or foreign woman, the sagacious

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 133-34; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 5-6; cf. Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 88 n. 3, 43; Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 71-72.

king, the charismatic interpreter of dreams, the grateful dead, the angel-companion, the conflict of evils, the divine wager (God and the Advocate), the *ryb* or Joban (i.e., theodical) lawsuit, the suffering innocent, the scribal *Standesethik*, father and son/teacher and pupil, the satire of occupations, *Weltschmerz*, the resigned man, the wise courtier, the man of low estate shown favor because of his virtue, the debate or *Streitgespräch* concerning good and evil, "*deus disponit*," the callow youth, and what we shall call below the "proprieties."¹

12. Wisdom is a collection of forms. Essentially the same questions apply here as for motifs. Granted that some forms seem to have indisputable wisdom settings and applications, however defined, what does it mean when a form has both wisdom and overtly non-wisdom applications? Some wisdom forms would be fables, riddles, numerical and alphabetical sayings, rhetorical questions, admonitions, instructions, ironic sayings, disputations over injustice

¹The elaboration of these motifs complements the theological and form-critical analyses of von Rad in *Weisheit in Israel* and Schmid in *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*; see also Preuss, "Weisheitsliteratur," pp. 393-417; Michael V. Fox, "Aspects of the Religion of the Book of Proverbs," Hebrew College Annual, vol. 39 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, "Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21 (1962): 129-39; Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*.

or *Streitgespräche* and the *ryb*, the mashal, apothegms, maxims, proverbs, by-words, *blasons populaires*, "wellerisms," perhaps romances and novellas, perhaps summary-appraisals, certain types of drama, *twb-mn* sayings, 'šry sayings, *bnv* sayings, Wisdom mythoi and satires.¹

13. 'Wisdom' is the English equivalent of the Hebrew root **hkm*. Suffice it to say that terms in different languages seldom if ever have the same semantic field--cover the same range of meanings--or serve the same syntactic functions. The equation is one of convenience. Other terms both in Hebrew and English share important elements of the same semantic field. In the wisdom literature, some terms appear with striking frequency; others have undeniable technical applications. Von Rad points out, however, the virtual impossibility of adequately comprehending the common intellectual ground of the wise through a study of their vocabulary.

Zweifelloos liesse sich eine Reihe von Begriffen zusammenstellen, deren Verwendung in den Lehrüberlieferungen besonders auffällt; aber es wäre u. E. ein aussichtsloses Unterfangen, über eine Analyse

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 41-73; Johannes Schmidt, *Studien zur Stilistik der Alttestamentlichen Spruchliteratur*, Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen, vol. 13, no. I (Münster: Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1936); Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 229-62; A. Taylor, *The Proverb* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931).

ihrer spezifischen Inhalte and über die Art ihrer Verwendung zu einigermaßen tragfähigen Erkenntnissen zu gelangen. Die überlieferungsgeschichtliche Betrachtung alttestamentlicher Texte hat uns gezeigt, wie innerhalb gewisser Traditionsströme kultischer, rechtlicher oder didaktischer Art gewisse Begriffe zwar in grosser Zähigkeit durchgegeben werden, weil sie terminologisch konstitutiv waren, dass sie aber damit eine grosse Beweglichkeit ihrer Bedeutung verbindet.¹

Both Barr and Nida have raised serious questions about the validity of *Begriffsgeschichten* for this kind of historical study. It is extremely doubtful that the person using the term even knew the historical background of the term he used, much less its scientifically accurate linguistic history. Consider, for example, the Cratylus. Further, people do not consider the entire semantic field of a term when they use it for a specific purpose. Extraneous non-functional meanings are not *prima facie* relevant, except perhaps in a certain psychological sense which has doubtful historical application. People select a term on the basis of its functional meanings: the way people are actually using the word at that time. They seldom consider the peculiarities of its intellectual, conceptual or linguistic history, even when these are known.²

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 25.

²James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); James Barr, "Hypostatization of Linguistic Phenomena in Modern Theological

To counter these objections, some scholars have turned to semasiology. They argue that the relevant semantic field should be regarded as that used in a particular body of literature, usually the Old Testament. For biblical study, the pertinent senses of a word are those actually used by biblical writers in the language.¹ This approach is valid if one accepts one of two propositions. Either there is a common determinable religious history and tradition in which a given word had a particular intended special application, or there is a common theology uniting disparate works for which this term is relevant. At least for wisdom, we do not see how the former can be asserted with confidence. Fohrer, for example, has shown how the technical terminology of wisdom varies among different works.² The second proposition reflects the

Interpretation," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962):85-94; Eugene A. Nida, "Implications of Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (March 1972):73-89.

¹Cf. James Barr, "Semantics and Biblical Theology--A Contribution to the Discussion," *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971*, International Organization for Old Testament Study, *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*, vol. 22 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), pp. 11-19; Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 74-76.

²Georg Fohrer, "Die Weisheit im Alten Testament," *Studien zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie and Geschichte (1949-1966)*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 115 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Company, 1969), pp. 243-74.

issue of Old Testament theology, stated in another form.

Von Rad adds another important objection that also applies to this discussion of semasiology.

Es ist eine Tatsache, dass Israel auch in seinen theoretischen Reflexionen keineswegs mit einem einigermaßen präzisen Begriffsapparat arbeitet. Es war an der Herausarbeitung ordentlich definierter Begriffe erstaunlich wenig interessiert, denn es verfügte über andere Möglichkeiten, eine Aussage zu präzisieren, z. B. den Parallelismus membrorum, der jeden redlichen Begriffsanalytiker zur Verzweiflung bringen kann.¹

Still, if we cannot expect *Begriffsgeschichten* to give us an adequate understanding of wisdom thought, an understanding of the technical terminology of wisdom and the semantic field of **hkm* orients us within the linguistic setting of the wisdom writers, perhaps locating some necessary uncertainties as well. Table 1 in the Appendix presents a summary of this semantic data.²

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 25. Von Rad offers Proverbs 8:12 as an example. The roots are **hkm*, **c**rm*, **y**d*^c and **zmm*.

²Tables 2-6 in the Appendix present related semantic data and interpretations; see Fohrer, "Weisheit im Alten Testament," pp. 243-74; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 75.

CHAPTER III

A WISDOM TYPOLOGY

The proverb collections, if that is what they are, constitute only one of a number of different wisdom forms that have been proposed or identified. Their postulated location within the scribal schools or, alternatively, within the professional literature of government officials stands alongside a variety of possible settings for wisdom thought and forms of expression. The-historical development from individual *mashal* to general collection is hardly less difficult to establish than the history of wisdom generally.

Gese, Gemser, Schmid and others have challenged accepted theories of wisdom's origins. They raise questions about such accepted concepts as folk origins for wisdom, scribal mediation, theologization, democratization and nationalism.¹ Albright, Ringgren, Cazelles, and Bauer-Kayatz raise doubts about the accepted criteria for distinguishing early wisdom from late. They have suggested alternative scenarios for the historical development of wisdom

¹Gemser, "Spiritual Structure," pp. 138-49; Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 1-7; Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 7-11.

which make relating different kinds of wisdom in terms of some postulated historical process an often precarious affair.¹ It would, therefore, be helpful to have some idea of the other kinds of wisdom, as well as the social settings that seem appropriate to them.

Such a typology provides us with a standard of comparison. Some kinds of wisdom seem so drastically unlike the mashal literature that it is difficult to know what the common ground might be, except in the most general of terms. Such a situation might develop, for example, if wisdom were in fact not a single body or system of thought but a group of historically-related or similarly-oriented social groups. From the linguistic analysis above, we might have to concede instead that the Hebrews applied the terms 'wisdom' and 'wise' to a variety of distinct social-phenomena. Still, we should allow for the possibility that other types of wisdom may have close affinities to the mashal, though they may lack the specific two-line mashal form.

The typology may also establish limits to the alternatives we may plausibly propose for the mashal literature. Barr's objection to certain kinds of linguistic

¹Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," pp. 1-15; Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, p. 49; Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 126-50, passim; Cazelles, "Sagesse en Israel," pp. 27-40; Bauer-Kayatz, *Proverbien 1-9*.

conjecture applies to wisdom study in some important respects. He argues that some scholars are too hasty in postulating new meanings for known terms on the basis of comparative linguistics and *Begriffsgeschichten*. We look for unknown meanings of perfectly acceptable words, rather than attempting to construe a syntax whose awkwardness may be a reflection of the inadequacy of our grammatical understanding. As a result, if some Hebrew words bore anything like the possible range of meanings that scholars have seriously proposed for them at one time or another, they would have been incomprehensible and semantically useless to the speakers of the language. Hebrew would have been hopelessly inefficient as a means of communication. Mutual understanding would have been an impossibility.¹

Similarly, there is a practical limit to the varieties of wisdom that could have existed historically. Israel could have supported only a limited number of competing wisdom groups or parties, for economic, social, religious and intellectual reasons.² Equally, 'wisdom' can

¹Barr, "Linguistic Phenomena," pp. 85-94; Barr, "Semantics and Biblical Theology," pp. 11-19; Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*; Nida, "Implications," pp. 73-89.

²Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, pp. 160-97; Dürr, *Erziehungswesen*; Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*; Albright, "Teacher to a Man of Shechem" (!) ; Williams, "Scribal Training," pp. 214-21; Urbach; Scott, "Priesthood," pp. 1-15; Gerstenberger, *Wesen and Herkunft*, pp. 117-30;

compass only so large a semantic field before, as Barr contends, it becomes effectively vacuous.¹

One cannot make sense of the mashal literature apart from other kinds of wisdom. Together, they must make social—as well as intellectual and theological—sense.

The following list of types is intended to sketch the range of wisdom and its possible settings. Certain of these types—scribal, folk and royal wisdom—are especially important for understanding and locating the proverb literature. The proverb could have originated in the popular aphorism. The king's wisdom may have formed its archetype; the royal court may have been its patron. It may have been put together into collections, to be preserved as the intellectual or didactic property of scribes. Priests,

Richter; *Recht and Ethos*, pp. 183-92; Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 15-52; McKane, *Prophets. and Wise Men*; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 10-22; see Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968); Anson F. Rainey, *The Scribe at Ugarit: His Position and Influence*, Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, vol. 3, no. 4 (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1968); Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); compare also the notion of partisanship within a socially restricted milieu developed in Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); also, Duesberg and Fransen, *Scribes Inspirés*; Gammie, "Pedagogy."

¹Barr, "Linguistic Phenomena," pp. 85-94; Barr, "Semantics and Biblical Theology," pp. 11-19.

prophets and government administrators may all have shared the training of the academy. They may all have shared its heritage and traditions, if not its theology.

Precisely because of the difficulties in trying to relate different kinds of wisdom to one another historically, our list is not ordered by any assumptions about historical sequence or some process of evolution. Some types share many characteristics; we shall try to place them as near one another as practical.

Our list, however, is neither a history nor a survey of contemporaneous types. In some cases, we could properly debate whether those types are wisdom, or whether in fact they ever existed at all, e.g. apocalyptic wisdom. Types differ in importance and in the level of confidence we may assert on their behalf. Finally, this list cannot be exhaustive; we hope that it is reasonably comprehensive. With these caveats in mind, we offer the following list of possible wisdom types.

1. Isolated entities. Here, we refer to wise animals or plants, not in the context of fables, that appear within works that otherwise lack any overt wisdom character. The classic instance of this type is the tree of knowledge *ᶜs hdᶜt.twb wrᶜ* in the J creation story.

If the account does not derive from wisdom historiography, then the nature of the image and its relation to the story

remain obscure. If *twb wr^c* refers to discernment rather than being a meristic reference to "everything,"¹ it would support von Rad and Stoebe, who give the paradise account a decided Promethean character. 'Man takes upon himself the "former" divine authority and the responsibility for

¹Elsewhere, *twb wr^c* may be taken for hendyadis. It simply means "everything" or "anything"--the totality of elements or aspects. Best support for this interpretation comes from Deuteronomy 1:39, II Samuel 13:22, Genesis 31:24 and 29, and Genesis 24:50. The expression has no special technical meaning. It is a merism: the essence is expressed through its extremes. While the term's association with the *mn-^cd* form supports this line of argument, other uses weigh against it. While the tree of life may be a doublet or theological reinterpretation, in the present redaction it stands as counterpart to the tree of knowledge; the former is a common wisdom image. Among the other occurrences, I Kings 3:9 is embedded in a royal wisdom context; II Samuel 14:17 is the wisdom of the wise woman. II Samuel 13:22 and Genesis 31:24, 29 would leave their protagonists speechless if taken meristically; they call for the interpretation of non-judgmental or neutral behavior. The same consideration applies in Genesis 24:50, where Laban avoids passing any judgment on a word stated to have come from Yahweh. Isaiah 5:20, 23 clearly refers to ethical or legal judgment; II Samuel 19:36, the powers of judgment and discernment. Leviticus 27:12 involves the decision of a priest. For Stoebe, the term is neither expressly ethical nor intellectual. It reflects a characteristically J image for the power of self-decision and self-determination. Von Rad on the other hand amplifies the element of hubris, while emphasizing the noetic dimension of the tale. Note also the obvious paronomasia of *^crwmy^m* (Genesis 2:25, *^cwr*, naked) and *^crm* (Genesis 3:1, *^crm*, crafty, cunning). Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 189, 205, 379-86; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 1:141; Hans Joachim Stoebe, "Gut und Böse in der Jahwistischen Quelle des Pentateuch," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 65 (1954):188-204; Luis Alonzo-Schökel, "Motivos Sapienciales y de Alianza en Gn 2-3," *Biblica* 43 (1962):295-316; D. J. A. Clines, "The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm XIX)," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (January 1974):8-14.

determining whether something is good for himself or not. Man's knowledge is not at issue; rather, man decides himself what is good.¹ The snake makes a dangerous sly interlocutor; note the charism of speech. He obviously knows enough about the tree (trees?) and about Yahweh to use that information to his own cunning ends. He exceeds all other creatures in his slyness. The J writer has united a mythic, cultic figure with the notion of practical cunning.² These two motifs seem isolated in the account. Still, they may contribute to a wisdom or wisdom influenced historiography or epic/royal wisdom tale.³ We might also mention in passing, since it appears in an overt wisdom context, the enigmatic figure of Tobias' dog, Tobit 5:16.

¹Gerhard van Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), p. 94; cf. Ivan Engnell, "'Knowledge' and 'Life' in the Creation Story," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 110-17; Susumu Jozaki, "The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: Its Theological Implications," in Kwansei Gakuin University Annual Studies, vol. 8 (October 1959), pp. 1-18; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible, vol. 1 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1964), pp. 21-28.

²Von Rad, *Genesis*, pp. 85-91; von Rad, "Alttestamentlichen Schöpfungsglaubens," pp. 138-47; Odil Hannes Steck, "Genesis 12:1-3 and die Urgeschichte des Jahwisten," *Probleme Biblischer Theologie*, pp. 525-54; John A. Bailey, "Initiation and the Primal Doman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (June 1970):137-50.

³Engnell, "Creation Story," pp. 102-19.

2. Wise women. Twice in II Samuel--each time in connection with Joab--we come across references to wise women. They are competent in speech; they can analyze a situation and achieve some sort of intelligent compromise that had formerly appeared unattainable. The first is the wise woman of Tekoa. She presents David with a parabolic legal case in order to show him the political consequences of banishing his son. Though she appears at Joab's behest, she herself artfully arranges a succession of pleas that wheedle a self-condemnatory judgment from David.¹ The wise woman of Abel beth-Maacah saves her city from Joab's troops. The city has offered sanctuary to Sheba in his attempt to resist Judah's domination of Israel. Joab has the city under siege; ramparts against the walls bode swift victory. The wise woman offers compromise: not Sheba, but Sheba's head cast over the wall. She apparently convinces the city to accept the agreement through her wise counsel.² In both cases, Joab's identification

¹The account is interrupted by the woman's paeon of the king's insight—"the king is like the angel of God to discern good and evil" (14:17)--and concluded by her panegyric of his royal wisdom--"my, lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth" (14:20).

²Significantly, in appealing to Joab, the woman quotes a popular aphorism, "let them but ask counsel at Abel" (20:18). Thus, the community is a by-word for its sagacity, but also for its pragmatic insight: "and so

with or participation in the events is evident.

In the context of II Samuel, the figure of the wise woman may be a motif of the Deuteronomic historian, or it may be a motif deriving from his source at this point. The latter seems the more likely. Whichever, the image itself appears to be a folk figure. The wise woman comes from the country. She possesses native shrewdness and rhetorical ability. She uses her "wisdom" or her counsel or skillful "wisdom techniques."¹ No association with any organized wisdom movement can or should really be inferred from such a figure.

One can readily search for other such women, though their association with the image of the wise woman has to be inferred. One thinks of the "cunning" of Naomi or Rebekah, though neither is an anonymous figure. There is a reference in Jeremiah to women skilled (**hkm*) at mourning:² this passage probably belongs with skilled artisans below. In Judges 5:29, the women of the Court are referred to as wise women who can intuit the meaning of ominous events.³ The context is obscure and isolated; perhaps the

they settled a matter" (20:18). "Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom" (20:22).

¹De Boer, p. 60.

²9:17 ET, *hḥkmt*.

³"Her wisest ladies make answer, nay, she gives answer to herself." De Boer, p. 59.

reference should be classed with royal wisdom. Other remote candidates for the rubric of wise woman might be Abigail, Judith, Esther (!) and Huldah.

3. Skilled artisan or competent ritualist. Especially in the later chapters of Exodus, the P writer consistently predicates "wisdom" in speaking of the skill of artisans.¹ Ezekiel has a reference to wise/skilled sailors and repairers of leaks.² On the other hand, both II Isaiah and the interpolator in Jeremiah describe idols that have been made by clever (wise) craftsmen.³ Isaiah 3:3 also has a cultic tinge, although Lindblom has doubts.⁴ Jeremiah's skilled mourners may belong here.⁵ Except linguistically, wisdom in this sense is wisdom by courtesy, since it seems to have no association with either a form of wisdom thinking or some social movement.

4. Folk or popular wisdom. If wisdom be a fundamental psychological or spiritual propensity of man (a

¹Fohrer, "Weisheit," pp. 254-55.

²Johannes Lindblom, "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, p. 194. Ezekiel 27:8, 9.

³Lindblom, pp. 193-95. Isaiah 40:20; Jeremiah 10:9. Cf. Fohrer, "Weisheit," pp. 254-55.

⁴P. 194.

⁵Lindblom, p. 194. Jeremiah 9:16.

Geistesbeschäftigung) insofar as he is human, so that he formulates insights derived from experience into concise, expressive and highly metaphorical statements which give the world a semblance of system and order, then wisdom is by definition essentially a folk or popular phenomenon.¹ Apart from such an argument, however, some wisdom forms seem to reflect a popular *Sitz-im-Leben* even though they may later have been modified to serve other purposes.

Certain sayings—some “proverbial phrases,” rhetorical questions and metaphors—are either expressly cited from popular usage or have such striking imagery and refinement of phraseology that folk origins must be assumed. The latter criterion, as Eissfeldt has noted, rests on the somewhat shaky ground of subjective judgment and individual sensitivity, particularly to differences in tone and style between the passage and the larger work within which it is embedded. Eissfeldt develops a list of thirteen sayings which are introduced by formulae that seem to attest to their popular currency.² Four are expressly designated a *mashal*.³ The others begin with such phrases as *‘l-kn y’mrw*, *dbr ydbrw br’sh l’mr*, and *ky*

¹Jolles, pp. 124-40. Cf. von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 13-27.

²Eissfeldt, *Maschal*, pp. 45-52.

³I Samuel 10:12; 24:14; Ezekiel 12:22; 18:2 f.

'*mrw*'.¹ Such formulae constitute no absolute guarantee, of course, that the author or redactor did not originate the saying and set it in a formulaic context for his own purposes. Indeed, the saying may well have acquired its proverbial currency through such, or other, use by the author or redactor himself.

In addition, Eissfeldt finds some sixteen other sayings that seem to be proverbial.² He also believes that a number of one-line popular aphorisms were expanded whether by parallelismus membrorum, constructive expansion, or the addition of an illustrative image--to fit the later and more literary two-line *mashal* form. Such expanded sayings may then have found their way into the discourses of wisdom thinkers. If nothing else, the very fact that so many of these collected sayings could have become proverbial, popular, attests to the probability that some or many came from the folk milieu and not the later

¹Genesis 10:9; II Samuel 5:8; 20:18; Ezekiel 9:9 ("Man kann freilich mit Grund bezweifeln, ob alle von den Propheten als sprichwörtliche Redensarten des Volkes angeführten Worte es auch wirklich sind: diese Formeln haben die Propheten vielleicht selbst geprägt." [Eissfeldt, *Maschal*, p. 45 n. 8]); 18:25, 29; 33:17; 33:10; 37:11; Zephaniah 1:12; Isaiah 40:27. cf. Jeremiah 33:24; Ezekiel 8:12; 11:3, 15; so Eissfeldt, *Maschal*, p. 46 n. 2.

²P. 46. Genesis 16:12; Judges 8:2, 21; 14:18; I Samuel 16:7; II Samuel 24:15 (see 9:8; 16:9; I Kings 18:21; 20:11; Isaiah 22:13 (see I Corinthians 15:32); 37:3 (see Hosea 13:3; Isaiah 66:90; Jeremiah 8:22, 20; 12:13; 23:28; 51:58 (see Habakkuk 2:13); Hosea 8:7 (see Proverbs 22:8); Qoheleth 9:4.

writer's artistic imagination.¹ Whether Eissfeldt is convincing when he argues that the simpler one-line saying antedates the refined two-line mashal form remains to be seen. While attractive, the contention that literary forms become expanded and more baroque with use both suggests a potentially anachronistic analogy out of European Romanticism and a suspiciously simple evolutionary hypothesis.

Distinguishing originally popular material within wisdom collections seems a precarious activity. Without a continuous running literary context, judgments made about tone and style appear too subtly aesthetic to be reliable. Readily identifiable popular aphorisms share certain characteristics. They tend to be terse, usually a single line, sometimes without internal balance between their parts. Thus, the bounds of folk wisdom are intimately tied up with the question, what is a mashal?

Such folk sayings are brief and pointed comments on human behavior and recurrent situations. They make frequent use of metaphor and comparison. Sometimes they take the form of rhetorical questions to show that something is absurd or impossible. A large proportion of Old Testament colloquial proverbs have a distinctly scornful tone, implying a deviation from social norms.²

¹Eissfeldt, *Mashal*, pp. 45-52.

²R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs; Ecclesiastes: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible, vol. 18 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1965), p. xxvi.

The term 'mashal' appears not only in the context of scornful by-words (the discouraging prospect of becoming the proverbial victim of some disaster) and blasons populaires,¹ it is also used to refer to *Spottlieder*, prophetic oracles and even ecstatic visions.² Though the latter are not wisdom in any conventional sense, some scholars argue for a root meaning of **mšl* which would encompass both the proverb and the oracle. Thus, the mashal can reflect the attempt to establish a rule or order to existence, a theourgic ritual or spell which has later become metaphorical, a basic sense of "to be like" (resulting in both theourgy and metaphor), or a fundamental sense of "parable" or "metaphor" which led to such diverse use and meanings.³

We should be mindful of Barr's caveat. Even if

¹Taylor, pp. 97-109; A. S. Herbert, The 'Parable' *māšāl* in the Old Testament," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7 (1954):180-81.

²J. Schmidt, *Stylistik*; Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 229-39; A. R. Johnson, "Māšāl," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 162-69; Allen Howard Godbey, "The Hebrew Māšāl," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 39 (November 1922 through July 1923): 89-108.

³Johnson, pp. 162-69; Hans-Peter Müller, "Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptik," in *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971*, pp. 268-93; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 1-10. Claus Westermann makes an important methodological and biblical theological contribution in his "Weisheit in Sprichwort," in *Schalom: Studien zu Glaube und Geschichte Israels; Alfred Jepsen zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Karl-Heinz Bernhardt, *Arbeiten zur Theologie*, 1st. s., vol. 46 (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1971), pp. 71-85.

linguistic history should ultimately support the inference that a common meaning of the term 'mashal' serves to unite early folk wisdom with a folk or cultic theurgy, that fact alone would not prove that the two were regarded as the same or as closely related by those who used the term. We may exclude the *Spottlied*, oracle and theurgic spell from folk wisdom (1) because folk wisdom in the strict sense is readily distinguishable from them on the basis of both form and content without significant overlap or ambiguity, (2) since these forms are neither typically nor commonly associated with wisdom elsewhere, (3) since 'mashal' is used to refer specifically to proverbs in a narrower sense (including, however, extended poetic compositions in metaphoric or parabolic style) in superscriptions to Proverbs, and (4) because the distinction between proverb and oracle/spell is so compelling on common-sense conceptual grounds in the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary.¹

For those who argue that proverbs concisely summarize experience, the aphorism at I Samuel 10:12 is a parade example. Saul's (unfortunate?) ecstatic experience among the band of prophets at Gibeah becomes proverbial:

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 1-33; Scott, *Proverbs*; *Ecclesiastes*, pp. 3-9; cf. Fohrer, "Weisheit," pp. 254-62; cf. Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 229-39; see J. Schmidt, *Stylistik*; Eissfeldt, *Maschal*.

"Is Saul also among the prophets?" *Hgm š'wl bnb'ym?*¹ In Genesis 10:9, we find what Taylor would call a proverbial phrase, a partial saying that can be adjusted to suit the situation, with a historical allusion.² Scott finds a number of proverbs of consequence, proverbs of analogy and colloquial sayings among the prophets. He would include Amos' rhetorical questions under the rubric of folk wisdom.³ Folk wisdom can also be found as riddles and fables, not just proverbs. In Judges 14:14, a riddle, a counter-riddle, and their solution form the basis of a tale about Samson.⁴ According to Scott, the Samson riddle is

¹"And who is their father?" implies that the proverb is complimentary neither to Saul nor the prophetic band and suggests the ostensive folly of incongruous associations (or, demeaning) and misperceived metiers. We might also include I Kings 20:11 and I Samuel 24:13 ET.

²Taylor, pp. 184-200.

³Scott, *Proverbs; Ecclesiastes*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

Compare Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos' Geistige Heimat*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, Vol. 18 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1954); Lindblom, pp. 192-204. Jeremiah 31:29; Ezekiel 18:2; Hosea 4:9; Jeremiah 23:23. Scott also notes the parallel between Isaiah 10:15 and Ahikar vii.

⁴Samson proposes a riddle to the thirty companions at his wedding, thinking of a swarm of bees that he found in a lion he had killed. The Timnahites must answer this virtually unsolvable riddle:

"Out of the eater came something to eat,

Out of the strong came something sweet." (v. 14)

Extracting the solution from Samson's wife, the guests are able to counter with

"What is sweeter than honey?

What is stronger than a lion?" (v. 18)

improbably difficult for the guests to decipher without aid. Their counter-riddle, however, seems singularly appropriate to the setting. The account is set in "humble surroundings" suitable to folk wisdom. The difficulty of the first riddle and the missing answer to the second suggest that the riddles may have been adapted to this context, strengthening the argument in favor of their folk origins. Later, the riddle clearly also becomes a form for Court entertainment, e.g., Solomon and Sheba, the tale of Darius' three body-guards.¹

The riddle is not automatically a popular form. It implies that the proponent of the riddle have some symbolic, parabolic or metaphorical understanding of a situation that the solver is trying to discover. The world has meanings which are not immediately apparent in experience but which the agile and attuned mind may uncover. Thus, the world of experience consists of layers, of-which the everyday

Presumably, they mean "love between the sexes" in what is by contrast with the fore-going a rather transparent riddle. Samson rejoins,

"If you had not plowed with my heifer,

You would not have found out my riddle." (v. 18)

Scott, *Proverbs; Ecclesiastes*, p. xxix; see James L. Crenshaw, "The Samson Saga: Filial Devotion or Erotic Attachment?" *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86 (Fall 1974):470-504; J. Sturdy, "The Original Meaning of 'Is Saul Also Among the Prophets?' (I Samuel X:11, 12; XIX:24)," *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (April 1970): 206-13.

¹Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 239-45.

meaning or interpretation is only the first and most superficial. Where the riddle can be solved through reflection, the solver is reaching for an attainable insight for which experience ought to have prepared him. The riddle is a vehicle which suggests a radical reinterpretation of the meaning of things. The solver gains new insight into the deeper significance of his experience by solving the riddle.

The riddle, however, may be beyond easy solution. It may be the means of communicating arcane insight or interpretation. From the riddle alone, the solver, really an initiate, learns only his inability to discern the true or basic significance of things. As proponed, the riddle confronts one with his ignorance. When the initiate is given the key to solving the riddle, the plain meaning of things is transformed. The symbolic understanding of the world transcends its apparent meaning. The solution of the riddle provides the initiate entree to an elite group of cognoscendi. They possess a secret knowledge which is only made available to those who prove themselves worthy. Insight is the key. The riddle distinguishes the elite few who have insight from that mass which does not. Thus, the riddle may function to preserve secrets rather than reveal them. When it does, it represents the establishment of an intellectual or "gnostic" elite. The wisdom form is

the technical means for differentiating members from non-members.¹

In analyzing the fable, Scott contends:

The fable combines features of the riddle and the parable. A "fable" in the strict sense is an imaginative tale in which the actors are animals or inanimate objects such as trees (which may seem to be alive because of movement and sound when a wind is blowing) endowed with human speech. Often, as in Aesop's fables, the story conveys a message or carries a moral for human behavior.²

The requirement of speech over parabolic intent appears rather strict. The tree of knowledge seems scarcely less fabulous than the serpent, though neither would be folk wisdom. Further, we question the animistic motivation implied by Scott's parenthesis. Balaam's ass seems to be a legitimate fable, incorporated into a more elaborate tale, which points up Balaam's bullheadedness.³ Jotham's Fable,

¹ Kovacs, "Reflections"; Hans-Peter Müller, "Der Begriff 'Rätsel' im Alten Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (October 1970): 465-89; Elli Köngäs Maranda, "Theory and Practice of Riddle Analysis," *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (January-March 1971): 51-61; Elli Köngäs Maranda and Pierre Maranda, *Structural Models in Folklore and Transformational Essays*, Approaches to Semiotics, vol. 10, ed. Thomas A. Sebeck (The Hague: Mouton, 1971); Benjamin R. Foster, "Humor and Cuneiform Literature," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 6 (1974): 78; compare L. Makarius, "Ritual Clowns and Symbolic Behavior," *Diogenes* 69 (1970): 44-73.

² *Proverbs*; *Ecclesiastes*, p. xxix.

³ When his poor, but fabulous (!), beast is repeatedly struck for thrice discomfiting Balaam on account of the angel of Yahweh whom Balaam either fails to notice

in Judges 9:7-15, is a fable which is clearly used polemically, though it has perhaps been adapted to the occasion.¹ Jehoash's Fable depicts the self-puffery of a thistle that seeks for its son the hand (branch?) of the daughter of a cedar of Lebanon; it is trampled by a wild beast.² Ezekiel is a goldmine of fabulous entities, extended metaphors and "allegories."³ Scott notes in particular the fabulous creatures which appear in Ezekiel 17:1-10. It seems to be a fable or allegory of Exile that has been expanded and explicated, if not written, by the prophet. It is expressly termed a 'mashal."⁴

or more likely is not meant to see, the animal must speak out to call his master's attention to this most out-of-character behavior. "Was I ever accustomed to do so to you?" Balaam's answer is a profoundly brief, "No," a concession which makes a parabolic point. The angel incidentally is *Ištn lw*, for his adversary. Numbers 22:21-35.

¹It trades on the irony of a bramble asked to reign as king over the trees; the tree which has no special gift that it finds more rewarding than the offer of rulership not only cannot offer the other trees security and protection, it is itself a dangerous source of potential fire.

"If in good faith you are appointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon" (v. 15). Abimelech poses such a danger to Israel.

²II Kings 14:9. Since the application to Amaziah in respect of his conquest of Edom and desire to meet with Jehoash (presumably to demand fealty or tribute) is quite inexact, the fable may be in origin folk, applied later and derivatively to the case at hand.

³Meinhold, pp. 13-21, q.v.

⁴Scott, *Proverbs; Ecclesiastes*, pp. xxix-xxx

Unlike the riddle, the fable reveals its own interpretation. Defined strictly, the fable requires a final parabolic interpretation which gains poignance from its application to the life-situation of the hearer. While the hearer may initially miss the application, by the end of the story, he should not be in doubt. In fact, this sort of fable makes emotionally charged situations accessible by interpreting them in a more emotionally distant and objective way. Having made sense of an objective, even humorously preposterous situation, the hearer can make the same interpretation of an experience with which he is intensely involved. The fable permits one to say by indirection what cannot often be said fully and coolly directly. It can, therefore, be polemical, since it is intended to change one's understanding of a situation.

On the other hand, because it is self-revealing, it is not the property of some gnostic elite. There is no secret

(v. 1); see Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 245-47; Ronald J. Williams, "The Fable in the Ancient Near East," in *A Stubborn Faith: Papers on Old Testament and Related Subjects Presented to Honor William Andrew Irwin*, ed. Edward C. Hobbs (Dallas: SMU Press, 1956), pp. 3-26; Erwin Leibfried, *Fabel* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967); Hugo Gressmann, *Israels Spruchweisheit im Zusammenhang der Weltliteratur*, Kunst und Altertum: Alte Kulturen im Lichte Neuer Forschung, vol. 6 (Berlin: Verlag Karl Curtius, (1927)); Edmund I. Gordon, "Animals as Presented in the Sumerian Proverbs and Fables: A Preliminary Study," *Drevnij Mir* (Moscow: n.p., 1962), pp. 226-49; W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 150-212.

noesis; no special key is required. All who hear the fable understand. The story is accessible to everyone; it is open.¹

Less strictly understood, the fable shades into a variety of other forms which have in common an extended metaphor which reinterprets the situation of the hearer. It may, in particular, lack a parabolic resolution. Re-interpretation may appear solely through the appropriation of the fabulous in the story. The fabulous stands for, and reinterprets, what is mundane. Still, the meaning is readily intelligible to all who listen; it reveals, it does not conceal. The fable in all its forms is a re-interpretation--a wisdom--that is potentially close to the people. The riddle, by virtue of its implicit inaccessibility, anticipates the development of a social elite or in-group to whom and to whom only this noesis is available. In that sense, the fable stands closer to popular wisdom than the riddle. Whether, however, these Hebrew riddles and fables are folk and not literary contrivances is less certain. In their present context, most have been adapted to serve literary, and sometimes polemical, ends. The accessibility of a wisdom form to popular comprehension does not assure that popular instances of such forms have

¹Leibfried; Meinhold, pp. 13-21.

been preserved. In fact, the trend of present scholarship is to question systematically whether any preserved wisdom material can be popular or folk.

5. Royal wisdom. One way to establish a relationship among the divers types of wisdom thinking and materials is to postulate a historical process of democratization. For such theories, royal wisdom is the first, and key, link. One who is wise knows how to govern: an essential part of wisdom is the capacity to execute the tasks of imperial justice, administration and governance well. The king seeks to pass on his wisdom and experience to his heir.

In practice, wisdom cannot be so confined. Life is unpredictable. The king is not the only person with administrative responsibilities. All possible successors to the throne and the sons of high courtiers must be trained to rule the land and serve the king. That many documents drawn from international wisdom, especially those from Egypt, apparently deal with courtly training and advice ostensibly conferred by the grand vizier or even the king himself supports this view. In Israel, Solomon is the first and foremost of wisdom's patrons, himself sage in ruling and in administering justice.¹

¹R. B. Y. Scott, "Solomon and the Beginnings of

Samson, the riddle-maker, judged Israel. The woman of Tekoa offers paeans to David's wisdom; she compares it to that of a divine emissary in knowledge and judicial discernment. Hezekiah's men collect proverbs.¹ Court officials have duties that could be connected with wisdom beginning with the time of David and Solomon.² Ahithophel's counsel ranks with consulting the divine oracle.³ Yahweh works through the conflict of counsels to separate Israel and Judah. Yahweh himself the source and archetype of royal wisdom finds wisdom in his Council.⁴ Royal and near-royal epic heroes possess wisdom: Danel, Adam, Noah, Joseph, Moses, Solomon aid Daniel.⁵ Whatever the actual historical location and development of Hebrew wisdom,

Wisdom in Israel," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 262-79; in the same place, Martin Noth, "Die Bewahrung von Salomos Göttlicher Weisheit," pp. 225-37; Albrecht Alt, "Israels Gaue unter Salomo," *Kleine Schriften Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. 2 Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953). pp. 76-89; Norman W. Porteous, "Royal Wisdom," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 247-61; cf. Margaret Pamment, "The Succession of Solomon: A Reply to Edmund Leach's Essay 'The Legitimacy of Solomon,'" *Man* 7 (December 1972): 635-43.

¹Scott, *Proverbs; Ecclesiastes*, pp. xxx-xxxv.

²Scott, *Proverbs; Ecclesiastes*, p. xxxi; Noth, "Bewahrung," p. 226; McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 15-47; Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 262-79.

³McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 55-62.

⁴De Boer, pp. 4.271; cf. Noth, "Bewährung," p. 235.

⁵See Ezekiel 14:14, 20.

effective governance, sound administration and judicial discernment have traditionally been deemed wisdom. Important royal and court figures are therefore adjudged to have possessed such wisdom, though that judgment may be that of a much later writer or historian; in the case of Solomon, for example, of the deuteronomic historians.¹

If Solomon greatly expanded the Hebrew monarchy in pomp, power and hegemony, especially at a time when its expansion could not readily be checked by powerful and jealous neighbors, then the need for an elaborate court bureaucracy would be evident. Trade and economic records would have to be kept. Imperial correspondence in all the official languages must be attended to. Ambassadors, emissaries, tradesmen, officials, all must report and be instructed, and those instructions carefully and politically orchestrated. Since the king has chosen to marry into the good graces of the Egyptians, the niceties of court etiquette must be emulated and observed. The conquered territories must be governed. Levies must be supervised so that submission is assured. The corvee requires detailed administration.²

The social and situational incentives to expand

¹Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 262-79.

²McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 15-47; Porteous, pp. 247-51; Scott, *Proverbs; Ecclesiastes*, pp. xxx-xxxiii.

royal wisdom from the confines of a favored few to a rather large administrative class would support the democratization process. This is true however much the glories of early Hebrew history may have been exaggerated to serve later political purposes. The basic exigencies still remain. Didactic materials must be produced. Writing, therefore scribal training at no less than an elementary level, is the sine qua non of competent administration. The administrator must be in harmony with the royal order; he must be just and competent in his discernment and in distinguishing cases.¹ Later, with the Exile or perhaps even before it, would come the weakening of royal influence. Disillusionment follows. Speculative wisdom develops, and the wisdom movement moves away from the court and the aristocracy to locate in independent schools. These serve the needs of a more complex and de-centralized society in which the middle-class plays an important social role.²

Especially for Egypt, this scenario is very attractive. The major impetus for democratization would come during the Middle Kingdom. Our reading of Egyptian sources,

¹McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 23-45.

²Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 84, 133; Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1972), pp. 64-103.

however, may be too credulous, weakening the foundation of the analogy. Where the material attributed to the early wise viziers even exists--much does not and much of the rest is fragmentary--the attributions should be regarded as at best traditional. The "Instruction for King Merikare" reveals striking blunders on the part of his pharaonic teacher. It seems rather out of character--and culture--for pharaoh himself to admit mistakes so baldly. The possibility that this text is polemical or apologetic, therefore pseudonymous, cannot be dismissed.¹ The "Instruction of Amenemhet" raises undeniable difficulties. It is the purported teaching of a dead pharaoh to his son and heir to the throne. The attribution must be pseudonymous.²

¹James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2d corrected and enlarged ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 414-18. John A. Wilson edited and translated the Egyptian material presented here., Cf. James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament, Consisting of Supplementary Materials for "The Ancient Near East in Pictures" and "Ancient Near Eastern Texts"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), Section VI. The Egyptian material was not revised for the third edition, which revisions are the substance of the *Supplement*.

²Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 418-19. Note Wilson's introductory remarks: "The specific historicity of the text has been challenged, on the grounds that a *dead king* is offering the advice. . . . [B]ut the text is historical in its applicability to the times" (p. 418). The question, however, is the difference between the literal activity of the pharaoh and his figurative activity and what such a difference might mean in

The later *sebayit*, Egyptian instructions, come generally from obscure officials.¹ Thus, the evidence for royal wisdom and for a democratization process in Egypt are intensely problematical. Analogy with Egypt forms the basis for postulating a democratization process in Israel.

We may add the general observation that any instruction committed to writing would seem to be aimed at some kind of preservation and at an audience significantly larger than one. While it is not altogether implausible that a father should communicate his experience and expertise in government to his heir in written form, the fact of the writing plus its preservation in scribal circles would suggest that the original intent was far broader, and the setting therefore an artifice. Two aspects of content further support this observation. First, there are references to a scribal *Standesethik*, to humility and circumspection in the face of superiors (and who is superior to the pharaoh?), and to conventional wisdom imagery.² In the "Prophecy of Nefer-rohu," we find a

literary-historical interpretation and socio-structural reconstruction.

¹See Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 420-25; cf. McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 90-150.

²Kovacs, "Class-Ethic"; Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 20-22; Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 94-96.

pharaoh learned in the scribal arts.¹ Nevertheless, the paeans to scribal learning and its preservation, to administrative shrewdness, and to reading and learning from the fathers are singularly important to the scribal school. Conventional wisdom imagery appears: the distinction between the wise man and the fool, noblesse oblige, the son-father relationship for that of pupil and teacher² (the paradigm for the pharaoh and his son, rather than vice versa?).³

Second, many scholars have remarked about the almost "Macchievellian" tone to many of the instructions. Yet, some scholars have argued that these wily calculations are far more appropriate to distanced intellectual reflection about how rulers act than they are pragmatically

¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 444-46.

²Cf. J. W. McKay, "Man's Love for God in Deuteronomy and the Father/Teacher-Son/Pupil Relationship," *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (October 1972): 426-35.

³See Jean Leclant, "Documents Nouveaux et Points de Vue Récents sur les Sagesses de L'Égypte Ancienne," in *Sagesses du Proche-Orient Ancien*, pp. 5-26; in the same work, Baudoin van de Walle, "Problemes Relatifs aux Methodes d'Enseignement dans l'Égypte Ancienne," pp. 191-207; Duesberg and Franssen; McKane *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 13-54. E.g., Ptah-hotep 510 ff., 575 ff.; Merikare 35 ff., 45 ff., 50 ff.; Ani iii 5 ff., 13 ff. (foreign woman!), vii 20 ff.; Amenemopet chs. 6, 9, 11, 13 (!), 17, 20; Onchsheshonqy col. 7; 8:2-10. For Onchsheshoqy, see S. R. K. Glanville, *Catalogue of Demotic Papyri in the British Museum*, vol. 2: *The Instructions of Onchsheshonqy* (British Museum Papyrus 10508), pt. 1:

useful advice on how to proceed as a ruler:

Fill not thy heart with a brother, nor know a friend. Create not for thyself intimates--there is no fulfillment thereby. [Even] when thou sleepest, guard thy heart thyself, because no man has adherents on the day of distress.¹

He who is rich does not show partiality in his [own] house. He is a possessor of property who has no wants. . . . Great is a great man when his great men are great. Valiant is the king possessed of courtiers; august is he who is rich in his nobles.²

Note the following excerpt from Ptah-hotep:

If thou hearest this which I have said to thee, thy every project will be [*better*] than [*those of the ancestors*]. As for what is left over of their truth, it is their treasure—[*though*] the memory of them *may* escape from the mouth of men--because of the goodness of their sayings. Every word is carried on, without perishing in this land forever. It makes *for expressing well*, the speech of the *very* officials. It is what teaches a man to speak to the future, so that it may hear it, what produces a craftsman, who has heard what is good and who speaks to the future--and it hears. . . .³

Those whose profession requires them to work in the presence of the powerful, and be subject to their whims and fancies, want to understand the principles which govern the

Introduction, Transliteration, Translation, Notes, and Plates (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1955).

¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 418 (Amenemhet).

² Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 415 (Merikare).

³Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 414.

exercise of great power so that they may conform their lives and their decisions to that pattern, minimizing though not eliminating the chance of misstep. The ruler possesses free discretion: he has little need to understand its principles and structure. The royal bureaucracy, what we may loosely call the bourgeoisie, have a great stake in that structure and those principles. Moreover, their vulnerability, hence alienation, may be reflected in what they write as a kind of amorality. One who cannot escape the influence of absolute power must submit to it; whether it be just, and how it might be so, is quite beside the point.¹

On the basis of these considerations, we can apply Egyptian analogies to Israel only with great caution, regardless of how direct the path of Egyptian-Hebrew influence may seem to be, since the relationship between royal wisdom and the *Sitze-im-Leben* of its ostensive texts remains obscure.

The Egyptian materials do, however, suggest

¹ Niccolo Macchiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Luigi Ricci, rev. by E. R. P. Vincent, *The World's Classics*, vol. 43 (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles S. Singleton, Anchor Books (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1959). See W. Lee Humphreys, "The Motif of the Wise Courtier in the Old Testament," unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1970; and Susan Niditch and Robert Doran, "The Success Story of the Wise Courtier: A Formal Approach," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (June 1977): 179-93.

important themes in royal wisdom.¹ The king's wisdom consists of formal scribal training, judicial discernment between right and wrong, successful administration, encyclopedic or encompassing knowledge, and concord with the harmonizing order of maat. In Egypt, the king functions as the guarantor of order, maat (or, as a goddess Maat), in his capacity of law-giver. He not only vanquishes the chaotic force of *isf.t*, but he establishes a reliable and fruitful natural order.²

I was the one who made barley, the beloved of the grain-god. The Nile honored me on every broad expanse. No one hungered in my years; no one thirsted therein. . . . Everything which I had commanded was

¹Hellmut Brunner, "Die Weisheitsliteratur" in *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed., Bertold Spuler, vol. 1: Ägyptologie, pt. 2: *Literatur* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952); Georges Posener, *De la Divinité du Pharaon*, Cahiers de la Société Asiatique, vol. 15 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1960); Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*, Oriental Institute Essay (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948); Georges Posener, *Littérature et Politique dans l'Égypte de la XII^e Dynastie*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, no. 307 (Paris: Librairie Ancienne-Honoré Champion, Éditeur, 1956); Rudolf Antes, *Lebensregeln und Lebensweisheit der Alten Ägypter*, Der Leipzig Alte Orient, vol. 32, no. 2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1933); Friederich Wilhelm, Freiherr von Bissing, *Altägyptische Lebensweisheit*, Die Bibliothek der Alten Welt: Reihe der Alte Orient (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1955). Compare also Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité*, 6th rev. and expanded ed. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965); Siegfried Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion*, Die Religionen der Menschheit, vol. 8 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960).

² Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion*, pp. 117-43.

in the proper place.¹

About Maat, Schmid comments:

Die Weisheit setzt nicht eine ewige, ideale, metaphysische Ordnung voraus, der sich der Mensch nur zu unterziehen hätte, sondern behauptet, dass durch weises Verhalten Weltordnung überhaupt erst konstituiert und realisiert wird. Weisheitlichem Verhalten wohnt eine sehr zentrale, Kosmos schaffende Funktion inne, es hat teil an der Etablierung der (einen) Weltordnung.²

We do not find Mesopotamian materials which significantly clarify the issue of royal wisdom. Although a number of proverbs have been found in Sumerian and Akkadian collections, their place in royal or scribal wisdom is less clearly established, especially since the attributions have frequently been lost. One instruction purports to relate the counsel Sharuppak, survivor of the flood, gave his son Ziusudra: clearly the setting of a legend.³ Lambert labels some proverb collections "popular."⁴ We question whether any collection can in the strict sense be considered popular, particularly at this

¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 419 (Amenemhet).

²Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*, p. 51. "Die Weisheit zielt auf Maat, auf die Eingliederung des menschlichen Verhaltens in die alles umfassende Weltordnung: wer recht lebt, steht in Einklang mit der Weltordnung" (p. 50).

³Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, pp. 158-59. Robert D. Biggs, editor and translator.

⁴Lambert, pp. 216-82, *passim*.

historical remove. The same difficulty applies to fables.

As against either popular or royal wisdom, the Mesopotamian evidence best fits the scribal and speculative categories which follow. Certainly in Mesopotamia, as in Ugarit and elsewhere, one can establish the royal ideology of order: the king serves as the earthly vice-roy of that "gray Eminence" who has laid out a cosmic order that confines and restrains the powers of chaos. The king's law-giving word supports that order, harmonizes his land and his people with it, and thereby guarantees both justice and an auspicious Nature which is reliable in its cycles and bountiful in its harvests. The application of this ideology to wisdom specifically becomes convincing only when, as in Egypt, we find wisdom and a royal setting together.¹

¹Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*, pp. 24-65; Frankfort, *Kingship*, p. 6; Humphreys, pp. 58-60. On these issues more generally see also Edmund I. Gordon, "A New Look at the Wisdom of Sumer and Akkad," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 17 (1960): 122-52; Edmund I. Gordon and Thorkild Jacobsen, *Sumerian Proverbs: Glimpses of Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Museum Monographs (Philadelphia: University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, 1959); J. J. A. van Dijk, *La Sagesse Suméro-Accadienne: Recherches sur les Genres Littéraires des Textes Sapientiaux, avec Choix de Textes*, Commentaires Orientales, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953); F. R. Kraus, "Altmesopotamisches Lebensgefühl," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 19 (1960): 117-32; Samuel Noah Kramer, "Sumerian Wisdom Literature: A Preliminary Survey," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 122 (April 1951): 28-31; Samuel Noah Kramer, "Sumerian Similes: A Panoramic View of Some of Man's Oldest Literary Images," *Journal of the American Oriental*

There is more to this discussion than the obvious hazards of an analogy. Ultimately, one is compelled to ask how wisdom came into Israel. If wisdom is to be associated with the royal court in social location and development, then what is its relationship to the royal ideology? Theses of divine order, *maat/sdqh*, and democratization strongly support the argument that wisdom entered Israel through high scribal officials brought in under an internationalist king to organize a highly literate and relatively non-parochial administrative elite. The theories also establish a convenient relationship among three kinds of wisdom: royal, scribal and speculative.

On the other hand, we can question what may be inferred about royal wisdom from our Egyptian and Hebrew sources. Further, the proximity between royal ideology and scribal wisdom depends on both showing that scribes

Society 89 (January-March 1969): 1-9; S. Langdon, "Babylonian Proverbs," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 28 (1912): 217-43; S. Langdon, *Babylonian Wisdom: Containing the Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, the Dialogue of Pessimism, the Books of Proverbs and the Supposed Rules of Monthly Diet* (London: Luzac and Company, 1923); T. Eric Peet, *A Comparative Study of the Literatures of Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia: Egypt's Contribution to the Literature of the Ancient World*, Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1929 (London: Humphrey Milford at the Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1931); Åke W. Sjöberg, "In Praise of Scribal Art," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 24 (1972): 127-31; Benjamin R. Foster, "Wisdom and the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Orientalis* 43 (1974): 344-54.

adopted the ideology as an explanation of their own activities and that the order-chaos motif correctly represents this ideology in its royal and scribal forms.

To the former: in both Egypt and Israel, we suspect that later writers elaborated received traditions about royal wisdom in order to serve the needs of their social class and their academies. Thus, wisdom motifs may well have been read back into a royal mythos and its implicit ideology. Both may thus have been quite independent of scribal wisdom, except as a later coloration. Cosmic elements of the mythos would shade over into the postulated creation or cosmic order emphasis of wisdom, suggesting more affinity between royal myth/ideology and wisdom than should be considered the case.

To the second: the order-chaos mythos is common throughout the ancient Near East. It is typically associated with the king as the guarantor of order. That administrative classes would give due service to this view should be expected. Whether the view can be invoked to explain their ethos and *Weltanschauung* is another matter. Here, we must distinguish between manifest and latent world-views. One may say out of social necessity--with entire conviction--what one's actual pattern of living and acting belies. The distinction between wisdom as a form of thought and wisdom as a form of conduct is by no

means idle, especially in arguing this hypothesis.

Finally, we recognize that different models of royalty functioned in the ancient Near East. In Egypt, the pharaoh is divine or potentially divine; he is the guarantor of Maat. He participates in and confirms the interpenetrating cosmic order. Strong value is placed on the status quo, although the stability of the political system and the Egyptian social economy can easily be exaggerated. The scribal ideal predominates. Later, eternal life becomes an important focus of all Egyptian thought, wisdom included. It is both an objective of one's life and an important ethical consideration.

For the Mesopotamian, eternal life is that unattainable characteristic which distinguishes a god from a mere mortal. The king is not regarded as divine. Porteous argues that the executive responsibilities of the Mesopotamian monarch are far greater. He has a more detailed responsibility for the day-to-day matters of governmental administration. The king maintains order by right administration, which thereby assures nature's bounty.

In Israel, Porteous contends, the king is charged with maintaining a covenant relationship between the people and Yahweh, a relationship which antedates the institution of the monarchy itself. As in Mesopotamia the king is not

perceived as divine. Eternal life does not figure into the ethical equation. It does distinguish man from god, though that is perhaps not the primary difference. Since the institution of the Hebrew monarchy is, in many respects, closer to that of Mesopotamia than Egypt, adopting Egyptian royal wisdom as the paradigm for the introduction of wisdom into Israel, for its social location and for its pattern of subsequent development, would seem a perilous enterprise except where specific supportive evidence can be found.¹ A brief examination of the traditional association of Hebrew wisdom with the monarchy seems to be in order at this point.

Studying the Davidic history, Noth finds two strands to traditions about government. In one, David is led by oracles. He continually inquires of Yahweh what he should do. In the other, his wisdom is almost divine; note the paeon of the wise woman from Tekoa. David acts on the basis of his own understanding. Significantly, his counsellor Ahithophel speaks with oracular wisdom. Divinely founded wisdom takes the place of the oracle *per se*. To receive Ahithophel's counsel is *as if* one had consulted the oracle of Yahweh.²

¹Porteous, "Royal Wisdom," pp. 247-61.

²Noth, "Bewährung," pp. 225-37.

Solomon, however, becomes the Hebrew paradigm of the wise king:

In alledem spürt man die geistige Luft der salomonischen Zeit. Es ist nicht wahrscheinlich, dass erst eine späte Überlieferung diese im einzelnen verschiedenen and in mehreren literarischen Quellen auftretenden, aber in der Grundlage übereinstimmenden Züge zusammengetragen habe für die Erzählungen über die spätdavidisch-salomonisch-nachsalomonische Zeit. Vielmehr haben wir es offenbar zu tun mit der Atmosphäre dieser Zeit, wie sie wirklich war.¹

Noth's view is that of many scholars. Solomon's association with wisdom represents the working together of a number of different strands of tradition, as well as free-floating legend, principally by the deuteronomic historians. The material they use does not appear to derive from annals. It is not contemporary with the events it reports. What has already become tradition has been expanded and developed to serve the historians' literary, historical and theological purposes. Yet, so many consonant strands of tradition cannot be without any historical foundation: there must be a basis for Solomon's special relationship to the development of wisdom. The accounts cannot spring alone from Solomon's administrative competence, discernment and adroit leadership. He would seem to have been the patron of some sort of wisdom,

¹ Noth, "Bewährung," p. 237.

whether royal counsellors, scribal schools or court wisdom forms.¹

I Kings 3:3-15 bases Solomon's wisdom on a Request Theophany at Gibeon.² The king pleads his ignorance, like that of a child who does not know how to go out or come in. "Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind to govern thy people, that I may discern between good and evil."³ Pleased with this request (framed in persuasive speech!), Yahweh also confers on Solomon the riches, power and longevity which he did not request. Wisdom derives therefore from a theophanic experience. Over against this Request Theophany at Gibeon stands the clearly deuteronomic theophany of 9:1-9. Noth argues that it was written to set off the other, therefore older and received, tradition.⁴

¹Scott, "Solomon," pp. 262-79; McKane *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 15-62.

²"Ask what I shall give you" (v. 5).

³Note the *twb-r^c* of administration, the power of command, v. 9.

⁴Noth, "Bewährung," pp. 226-28; Scott, . "Beginnings," pp. 264-65. Noth identifies two strands to traditions about governance. In one, David is led by oracles. In the other, his wisdom is almost divine, a charism. He acts out of his own 'charismatic' understanding. Ahithophel speaks with oracular wisdom. The charism of divinely-founded wisdom comes to

The Gibeon Theophany serves to introduce a tale of Solomon's judicial insight, the Two Harlots.¹ In their present form, the two belong together, particularly because of the inclusio of 3:28. The Gibeonite setting of the theophany, however, suggests that each has an independent history. The second part, the Tale of the Two Harlots, can be found in a number of other cultures, though always later and with a somewhat different situation. The most notable version comes from India. Originally, two wives may have been fighting over preference in the eyes of their husband or over inheritance rights. Gressmann argues that the tale has been recast to give both women the same external appearance--rather than one virtuous and one evil and grasping wife--in order to make the decision more difficult, and therefore more perspicacious.²

substitute for the oracle. Solomon, in his dream, selects the latter, charismatic, wisdom through a direct theophany. The oracular word thus becomes the word of command founded on insight and discernment. Yahweh directs human judgment to attain his ends. Hence, Absalom neglects Ahithophel's sound counsel (!) and Rehoboam rejects the advice of the elders for his younger advisors. (Pp. 231-37.)

¹Noth, "Bewährung," pp. 228-29.

²"Im Alten Testament wäre also mit Rücksicht auf das üble Verhalten der einen der beiden Frauen die Geschichte aus dem Milieu des Hauses eines Mannes mit mehreren rechtmässigen Gemahlinnen in das Milieu eines Dirnenhauses verlegt worden, und zwar beide Frauen, da ja die Erzählung notwendig das gleiche aussere Erscheinungsbild für beide Frauen voraussetzte, das die Entscheidung des Streitfalles so schwer machte." (Noth, "Bewährung," p. 229)

Noth remarks that the customary procedures of Hebrew law and Near Eastern legal practice are ignored. A formal oath is not sworn to seek resolve contradictory testimony; divine judgment is therefore not invoked, not even by oracle, lot or other means. Instead, the king's wisdom becomes a divine charism whereby he stands above established legal practice. He possesses the insight to resolve the case decisively:¹

Zwar ist diese Weisheit eine "göttliche Weisheit", d.h. ein Geschenk Gottes, wie alles, was ein Mensch hat; von Gott gegeben ist; aber sie ist doch nun "in" Salomo, sie ist rein Besitz, mit dem er wirken kann, and sie erübrigt ein "Befragen" Gottes in Einzelfällen der Rechtsfindung.²

According to Scott, a common theme underlies this passage:

"Wisdom as the insight to distinguish right from wrong, with the resulting ability of a judge to render true justice."³

Under the rubric of "wisdom as intellectual brilliance and encyclopedic knowledge, especially of the world of nature other than man," Scott includes both the summary of Solomonic wisdom in 5:9-14 and the account of the visit of the Queen of Sheba.⁴ The passages, he argues,

¹Noth, "Bewährung," pp. 230-32.

²Noth, "Bewährung," p. 232.

³Scott, "Beginnings," p. 270; italics deleted.

⁴Scott, "Beginnings," p. 271. Sheba: ch. 10.

are post-deuteronomic.¹ While the deuteronomic material does not glorify Solomon beyond his building of the Temple and his judicial sagacity--it presages his defection from Yahweh-worship, glorification is the sign of a separate and, here, later source. For the Queen of Sheba, wisdom obviously encompasses courtly magnificence and ritual majesty. Riddles and interrogations form a vital part of the meeting, reminding one of the Three Young Guardsmen as well as the tasks Pharaoh posed for Sennacherib and Ahikar. An actual practice of royal or court wisdom would appear to underlie such accounts.²

I Kings 4:29-34 (ET) sets forth a paean to Solomon's wisdom which makes specific reference to a variety of types of wisdom, including encyclopedic knowledge:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about. He also uttered three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And men came from all

¹Scott, "Beginnings," p. 271.

²Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 271-72.

peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

This, as we have already implied, is grandiose language indeed. Significantly, Scott argues, this description of courtly magnificence can be matched only in Esther, Daniel 1-6, and Chronicles. The first two he regards as midrashic tales, prominently treating wise men at court. The last gives the Davidic court equally extravagant treatment.¹

The quantity of proverbs and songs should be regarded simply as large round numbers (like the "Thousand and One Nights"). The term *wydbbr*, "uttered," should not be construed as meaning that Solomon is merely a collector; Noth contends that Solomon himself invents and composes innumerable songs and proverbs.² The plants and animals are synecdochic. Presumably, Solomon compiles onomastica along the lines of the Egyptian *Ordnungswissenschaft*. He exceeded the bounds of the conventional list-wisdom form by treating the materials poetically. This late and rather legendary glorification of Solomon lets us conclude little about its actual historical character.³

¹Scott, "Beginnings," p. 267.

²Noth, "Bewährung," pp. 225-29.

³Noth, "Bewährung," pp. 225-37; Scott, "Beginnings,"

Scott's third and final rubric in this discussion is "Wisdom as the ability of the successful ruler," a wisdom which is hardly unique to Solomon. When moribund King David charges his son to deal with the father's friends and enemies and appeals to Solomon's wisdom, the account basically serves as a pre-deuteronomic introduction to the account of the summary executions.¹ While the accounts of Solomon's dealings with Hiram of Tyre contain two references to Solomon's wisdom, one may belong to deuteronomic editorial material thematically derived from the Gibeon Theophany while the other may go back to the pre-deuteronomic material.² This sort of royal wisdom, however, is a far cry from proverbs.

The superscriptions to Proverbs are evidence of a sort. Scott notes that the references in 1:1 and 10:1 are vague and indeterminable: they could refer to a literary style or convention. Claims for authorship only gain credibility from the passage in I Kings cited above, which is basically late folklore. Since Proverbs 25:1 already looks to Hezekiah ascriptions to Solomon may not

pp. 271-72; Gerhard von Rad, "Hiob XXXVIII and die Alt-ägyptische Weisheit," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 293-301.

¹Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 270-71.

²Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 270-72.

be a particularly early convention. The allusion to the "men of Hezekiah" is important, however, because it would seem to lack ulterior motive.¹

. . . this is first-rate evidence that an organized literary wisdom movement existed at Hezekiah's court and under his patronage. The king's men transcribed, published, or carried forward from tradition a collection of maxims which, in this later editorial title, are designated "proverbs of Solomon." There is a double ambiguity: just as the phrase may or may not indicate-authorship, so it may or may not imply that the association of proverbs with the name of Solomon existed before Hezekiah's time. The significant point is that such an association did exist at that time, when a literary wisdom movement and a court scribal establishment were to be found at Jerusalem under royal patronage.²

The appearance of the wise as a distinct social class coincides with Isaiah and Hezekiah, in this view. Notably, Hezekiah was the first post-Solomonic king to be sole ruler of Israel. He appears to have set in motion a national revival, following the lines of his legendary predecessor. The Chronicler credits Hezekiah with cleansing the Temple and restoring the grandeur of its worship, an excellent comparison with Solomon. The writer expands on the military prowess with which the writer of Kings already credits him, pointing up the peace, admiration,

¹Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 272-74.

²Scott, "Beginnings," p. 273.

tribute, riches and honor which graced his reign.¹

Far more important, by any standard, are the pictures of the Hezekian monarchy found in Isaiah. They are contemporaneous for one thing. More important, they are entirely incidental to Isaiah's own interests. From this material, Scott elicits three important parallels with Solomon:

(i) intercourse with Egypt, with resulting strong Egyptian political and cultural influence on the Jerusalem court; (ii) unusual prominence in the scene of horses and chariots as the basic military arm, and as a symbol of glory; (iii) the power and influence at court of organized "Wisdom"; in this case not so much in the person of the king as in "the wise" as a professional group. . .²

Not only does Isaiah speak of the wise as an organized group, but his recorded sayings include clear uses of wisdom forms (parables, rhetorical questions), reflecting his occasional adoption of the role of wisdom teacher. Scott speculates that Proverbs 25:1 reflects a literary renaissance in Israel. After the fall of the North, Judah becomes the repository of Hebrew thought. Traditions are recorded and reshaped so that they will not be lost; the fall of Israel has made people conscious of the potential fragility of their traditions. Note also

¹Scott, "Beginnings," p. 275.

²Scott, "Beginnings," p. 276.

the attribution of a psalm to Hezekiah in Isaiah 38:9-20. After Solomon, Hezekiah is the only king to have literary associations, both with psalms and with wisdom.¹

Scott asks why Deuteronomy 17:14-20 has been written. "It is a well-known principle of law that a practice is not forbidden by law unless the situation demands it."² Manasseh, he argues, surpassed Solomon only in cruelty and oppression. Hezekiah seems the obvious alternative object: subsequently, kings are to be forbidden to pattern themselves after Solomon. Though the latter is never mentioned in the passage, the allusion is transparent. Further, while Solomon had the misfortune not to have a copy of the law to study(!), hereafter kings must be well-read in the law. They are commanded to be literate: by implication Solomon was not! If such a tradition existed, it would support the lateness of I Kings 4:29-34 (ET) as well as the late development of a wisdom class associated with the royal court and its patronage. Since the deuteronomic code likely post-dates Hezekiah, the application is

¹Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 276-79; Johannes Fichtner, *Gottes Weisheit: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, ed. Klaus Dietrich Fricke, Arbeiten zur Theologie, 2d series, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1965), pp. 18-26; see Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 18-21 e.s.

²Scott, "Beginnings," p. 279. In studies of scientific methodology, T. H. White is often credited for "What is not forbidden is compulsory" (!).

logical.¹

Scott concludes:

though general historical considerations do not preclude, but rather favour, the connection with Solomon of the origins of literary wisdom in Israel, the ostensible biblical evidence for this in the first Book of Kings is post-exilic in date and legendary in character. . . . The first real impact of Egyptian wisdom on Israel, with evident results in Hebrew literary production, seems to belong to the reign of Hezekiah. . . . If "proverbs of Solomon" were so called before this time, there is no substantial evidence to show when and how this came about. . . . The tradition seems to have been cultivated deliberately by Hezekiah as part of his grandiose plans to restore the vanished glories of Solomon's kingdom, for in Hezekiah's reign appear the first clear evidences of Hebrew Wisdom as a significant literary phenomenon.²

If proverbs were not the actual products of royal wisdom, it is safe to say that they must have received royal patronage. In them, therefore, we may expect to find evidence of royal ideology, though not to the exclusion of the authors' own views of the world. For that ideology at least wisdom had several meanings other than *Lebensklugheit*. More, if the interest in proverbs and proverb-collections belongs to a comparatively late period in the Hebrew monarchies, perhaps to the time of Hezekiah, then the somewhat more expansive views of wisdom, including even legend, may well have formed part of the authors'

¹Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 272-79.

²Scott, "Beginnings," p. 279.

intellectual milieu. Finally, on the basis of the chaos-order mythos, one would expect wisdom to be predicated of the king by analogy to the wisdom of Yahweh and his divine council. Noth contends, however, that this is not the case.¹ The Solomon stories are the earliest that deal even indirectly with Yahweh's wisdom. There, the orientation is strictly toward man's sphere of existence. Yahweh teaches, he gives wisdom, he makes one wise in the same way that he is said to make one rich or confer prosperity. Only in relatively late materials do writers speak of wisdom as the gift per se of Yahweh. When the reference is to God himself, and to his wisdom, the sources tend to be rather late. Most often, then, they speak of Yahweh as he who created everything "with wisdom." Only in Daniel do we finally encounter wisdom as the possession of God in the most general sense. A few older passages do mention wisdom in the vicinity of Yahweh, (*Umgebung*) without predicating it of him directly--the divine analogy of the wise woman of Tekoa, the "spirit of wisdom and understanding" which enlightens the messianic king, and the wisdom of the divine council.²

¹Noth, *Bewährung*, p. 235.

²Isaiah 11:2; "Ratsversammlung Gottes" in Job 15:8 and Proverbs 30:3. Noth, *Bewährung*, pp. 234-35.

Es ist ganz deutlich, dass man im Alten Testament nur sehr zögernd das Prädikat der "Weisheit" Gott zugesprochen hat, dass man abgesehen von ganz späten Stellen gelegentlich die Schöpferweisheit Gottes ausgesagt, in übrigen aber an einer Reihe von Stellen die Weisheit nur so zu Gott in Beziehung gesetzt hat, dass sie als eine Gabe Gottes gepriesen wurde wie andere Gaben Gottes auch, die von Menschen empfangen werden; auch dies letztere vorwiegend in späten Stücken der alttestamentlichen Literatur.¹

In sum, the king, his court, and the royal ideology provide a setting which serves, at least potentially, to bring together a number of subtypes of wisdom. Royal wisdom is not whole cloth. The evidence even raises questions about the royal setting of certain forms or subtypes. Traditionally, the royal court appears as the cradle and then patron of wisdom. Royal wisdom is crucial to the democratization theory, which holds that wisdom began in the king's search for the principles of effective and reliable governance in which he educated his heir. The needs of an expanding empire made administrative education of the aristocracy necessary. Increasing social complexity both forced the issue of merit, opening education and administrative rank up to a "middle class," and led to further expansion of education. It could no longer remain the exclusive property of the elite. Wisdom represents the *Standesethik* of the school; it becomes less

¹Noth, "Bewährung," p. 235.

imperial and elitist as its social milieu changes from the royal house to the decentralized school. Royal wisdom evolves into democratic wisdom. For democratization, Egypt is the model.

Such a thesis would be compatible with wisdom's origination or early association with the divine council. Noth finds it lacking in Israel.¹ Moreover, the analogy between Israel and Egypt is weak. The evidence for a personal wisdom of administration that formed the basis of the king's education of his heir is doubtful. Early royal wisdom in Israel becomes an inference from late and legendary material.

Finally, royal wisdom encompasses subtypes whose relationship with one another is obscure. Which of these subtypes do we mean? How do they relate to one another historically? We have seen how problematic these issues are.

A list of subtypes, drawn from our discussion, would have to include:

- a) Royal oracular wisdom
- b) Judicial discernment, the wisdom of the wise judge
- c) Effective governance, sound administration
- d) Royal ideology

¹Noth, "Bewährung," pp. 232-35.

- e) Imperial guarantor of maat/order
- f) Imperial bureaucracy, international scribalism
in royal service, bureaucratic Standesethik
- g) Ordnungsweisheit, the wisdom of lists
- h) Wisdom of the royal council
- i) Wisdom forms of court etiquette (e.g., riddling
exchanges between monarchs or their emissaries)
- j) Insight of a royal counsellor
- k) Patron of the school and its forms and ethos
- l) Patron of wisdom forms, literature, aesthetics
- m) Royal stylistic conventions of poetry and speech

6. Epic Wisdom. The epic wisdom category holds importance for our discussion because it forms an essential part of the bridge von Rad builds between wisdom and apocalyptic. If we are interested in locating any wisdom *Weltanschauung* within theories of wisdom's evolution, the von Rad hypothesis implies significant elements are to be derived from the "structure" of wisdom. The term "epic" should be taken in its broadest sense, as "heroic" or even "ideal." There now rages a dispute within wisdom studies whether what we would include in this wisdom type should properly be considered wisdom at all.

Crenshaw, in his article on the problem of determining wisdom's influence on historical literature, sets out five criteria that should be met before asserting the

presence of some kind of wisdom. First, there is conformity with definition, a problem we have already discussed. Second, the material must display "a stylistic or ideological peculiarity found primarily in wisdom literature."¹ Common cultural expression or experience does not count. Third, one must explain the nuance: how are the wisdom elements actually used in the literary and historical context of the work. Fourth, one must be continually aware of the predominant negative attitude toward wisdom evidenced in much of Hebrew literature. Last, the usage should make sense in terms of what we know of wisdom's historical development.²

While Hermisson dismisses Crenshaw's argument, calling it "superficial" on the basis of an entirely off-hand reference to I Kings 13,³ he actually takes a more moderate position than his disagreement would suggest. Setting out from von Rad's work relating history and wisdom to various *Geistesbeschäftigungen* à la Jolles,

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 132.

²Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 130-35.

³Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 88 n. 3, 46; Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, "Weisheit and Geschichte," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie*, p. 148 n. 17. Yet, compare Noth, "Bewährung," p. 237 (!).

Hermisson concedes that a basic consideration in wisdom study is where to draw bounds.¹ In fact, his discussion of the Succession Narrative and Isaianic wisdom argues for an integration of wisdom motifs and its presuppositions quite consistent with an appreciation of the problems of nuance and history, though he weighs them differently from Crenshaw in the end.²

At the risk of over-simplification, these criteria might well be summarized in terms of the problem of nuance. Though a writer may draw on motifs, language and ideas that otherwise seem related to one or another type of wisdom, the ultimate criterion is how he adapts these materials to serve his own artistic and intellectual objectives. Wisdom imagery is not per se wisdom thought, let alone wisdom as a social class, force or movement. Further, that so-called "wisdom" which consistently appears in a wide range of otherwise non-wisdom contexts becomes suspect; it is hardly good evidence for either wisdom influence or wisdom thought.

What we are calling "epic Wisdom" raises these issues in two ways. First, there is the question whether

¹Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 14-36, esp. 29; Hermisson, "Weisheit und Geschichte," p. 147.

²Hermisson, "Weisheit und Geschichte," pp. 136-54; cf. Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 113-33.

the hero or ideal figure should be considered a wise person *tout court*, in the strictest application of the term. Is his or her insight into experience or discernment of justice in an ambiguous conflict situation patterned on one of the established models of the wise person? Insight, shrewdness, discernment, whether native, acquired by training, or received by divine charism, all are not in themselves specific characteristics of wisdom thought nor traits or virtues of the wisdom movement alone. Prophets, priests and patriarchs, no less than the wise, display such virtues. We must be cautious not to confuse the technical sense of 'wisdom' with the adjectival. He who is wise is not perforce a sage; a sage, however, is surely a wise person. All parts of the portrait must be weighed against the motifs, images, forms and thought of incontrovertible wisdom. One has to account for any deviations, contends Crenshaw. Thus, while von Rad can provide an elaborate list of wisdom themes in J's Joseph narrative, Crenshaw educes a number of non-wisdom elements. He points to nuances that conflict with accepted understandings of wisdom.¹

Second, one has to deal with the problem of how this portrayal is used. Is a wise person being depicted in

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 135-37.

the context of a non-wisdom historiography? Even if Joseph is an archetypal wise man, what role does the account play in the whole J cycle? Are we to make J a wisdom writer or his work wisdom literature because the J school incorporates the figure of an epic wise man into its history? When Hermisson contends that wisdom and non-wisdom thought intermingle in the Succession Narrative or Isaiah's oracles, he may expand our understanding of the message underlying those specific works, but at the considerable expense of dulling the analytical precision of 'wisdom' as a category of literary historical research.¹

About the Succession Narrative, Hermisson concludes:

Es bleibt abschliessend zu bemerken, dass der Autor der Thronnachfolgegeschichte wirkliche Geschichte darstellen wollte, nicht etwa ein weisheitliches Lehrbuch schreiben. Der Einwand, den man gegen weisheitliche Einflüsse auf die Thronnachfolgegeschichte geltend machte, dass hier als Vertreter der Weisheit zT recht zwielichtige Gestalten auftreten, dass der Rat des Weisen gerade keinen Erfolg hat (Ahitophel!) u. dgl., könnte gegen ein Lehrbuch sprechen, nicht gegen eine Geschichtsdarstellung im weisheitlichen Horizont. Als Geschichtsschreiber muss man den Autor wohl mit den Massstäben seiner eigenen Welt messen darf ihm dann nicht vorrechnen, in welchem Mass er geschichtliches Geschehen stilisiert hat. Denn es ist gerade das Mass, das ihm Erkenntnis von Geschichte ermöglicht hat.²

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom influence, pp. 135-37; Hermisson, "Weisheit und Geschichte," pp. 136-54.

²Hermisson, "Weisheit und Geschichte," p. 148.

Hermisson makes a clear and valid decision about where to draw the boundaries of 'wisdom'--it is, in part, a scholarly choice about the descriptive use of technical vocabulary. In addition, however, he uses the term to distinguish peculiar characteristics of this account over against other Hebrew historiography. It shows concern for natural causality, without reference to the other-worldly. It examines individuals and their relationships, instead of groups, community or the nation. It is interested in the behavior, action and reaction of people. There is a balance between an order established by Yahweh and Yahweh's position above that order in attaining his own ultimate objectives.¹ Still, the notion of a wisdom "horizon" or "influence" seems disturbingly unspecific. The assertion requires at least that the wise have existed as a distinct social group with an identifiable world-view, *which could form an influence or horizon*, no later than the time of the Narrative's author. This is no idle thesis.

The same line of argument applies to von Rad's analysis of the Joseph story. Such a refined and systematic artistic composition virtually demands organized, refined and systematic thought to support it. Von Rad's

¹Hermisson, "Weisheit und Geschichte," pp. 153-54.

position, like Hermisson's, requires the comparatively early existence in Israel of organized groups of wisdom thinkers, whether they be in the royal bureaucracy, an academy associated with the royal court, or in various decentralized schools composed of people from a range of social strata. Such elaborate compositions require not only a refined and stable religious and intellectual atmosphere which provides the coherent world-view in terms of which the materials have been drawn together, they require a sophisticated audience to appreciate them. It must be knowledgeable in that implicit and underlying world-view and its symbolism. Its appreciation must lead to preservation as well as the literary activity that produced them.¹

If we argue for influence rather than horizon, the problem becomes even more complicated. What relationships obtained between the writer and those "influences"? Are social groups merging or diverging? Is this work the unique product of a literary genius, an admissible but historically unilluminating possibility? Did the author consciously borrow from a competing intellectual movement, or are the parallels strictly unconscious or inadvertent, the products of the demands of literary form and content?

¹See Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 113-33.

Proof of intellectual dependence is notoriously difficult to establish, far more so than literary dependence. It is difficult to specify how much similarity must exist before the argument of influence becomes plausible.

The quote from Hermisson above also points up the problem of form. Clearly there is no such thing as a mere assemblage of facts; every composition purporting to report factual occurrences operates under some set of guiding principles which determine what is to be reported and what is to be excluded. To call the Narrative “history” leaves open the question, what kind? Is it propaganda, novella, court apology, annal? One of the basic objectives of form criticism is to bring us nearer the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the document. What is wisdom-history and where is it to be located?¹

Again, what is the scenario for the evolution of a setting for such apparently refined forms? We cannot hope to resolve here the question of whether there existed an epic wisdom or wisdom historiography in ancient Israel. The discussion, however, points up the interdependence of various lines of inquiry within wisdom research.

¹In particular, see R. N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9-20; I Kings 1 and 2*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2 series, vol. 9 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1968); cm. Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 259-62.

The views of von Rad, Hermisson and Whybray, among others, require some kind of organized group--which the former two would regard as wisdom--set sharply at variance with the literary and historical reconstructions of Noth and to a lesser degree Scott. These views seem to require the importation of an organized scribal bureaucracy, based on the Egyptian model, during the reign of Solomon. Certainly, it would be the simplest line of explanation.

Our inability to reach to reliable contemporary sources leaves the situation open to considerable speculation, pro and con. Not only could the argument shift the date of the proverb collections and subcollections nearly three hundred years backward, but such an early wisdom would compel us to read them through different eyes. These historic epics would effectively counter the view that early Hebrew wisdom was profane and non-covenantal, that it gradually became more theologized and nationalized during and after the Exile. The reinterpretation becomes even more drastic if we follow some scholars and add to the Succession Narrative and the Joseph Story the Second Creation Account (J), the Tales of Moses as Judge, and the epic Hero Daniel.¹ Even if the proverbs belong to

¹Chs. 1-6. Danel? Cf. "The Tale of Aqhat," Aqht A, in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 149-52 ff.

another wisdom group and even if they therefore display an entirely different perspective on the world, they would have to be seen in dialogue with these other competing forms of wisdom. Most important, the Joseph Story, through divination, its possible connection with the Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers,"¹ and the charism of an elaborately active and single-minded deity, would bring together both wisdom and myth, sage and priest, teaching and cult. It would seriously undermine the contention that the proverbs tend to be neutral or somewhat hostile toward the cult. We would have to see the proverb collections coming from a milieu in which some wisdom groups at least concerned themselves with mythos, national heroes and historical events of religious significance (Heilsgeschichte!).²

Because of these inescapable historical implications, it is curious that the battle over wisdom historiography seems to be fought out entirely on the ground of content: whether certain motifs or forms are so specifically associated with wisdom that when a certain number of them appear together in the same context the passage should properly be denominated wisdom. We submit that the

¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 23-25.

²Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 378-86, 391.

historical consequences are relevant to such judgments, especially since the determination is to some extent semantic in terms we have argued above. It is a matter of judgment at what critical level one may validly apply a particular technical term. Even having stipulated the evidence, scholars disagree.

Consider, for example, the "Instructions of Amenemope" and the parallel in Proverbs (22:17 ff.). Scholars have argued, with some persuasiveness, that the Egyptian material as is is prior, that the Proverbs passage as is is prior, or that some Semitic or Egyptian *Vorlage* must be invoked to explain both texts. Only when Albright and Cerny all but ruled out a later date for the Egyptian text and then Williams showed that the Instruction's stylistic peculiarities are consistently Egyptian was the issue basically concluded.¹ Precisely how much

¹Irene Grumach, *Untersuchungen zur Lebenslehre des Amenemope*, Münchener Universitätschriften Philosophische Fakultät, Münchener Ägyptologische Studien, vol. 23, ed. Hans Wolfgang Müller (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1972), p. 3 n. 9; Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 421-25; Hugo Gressmann, "Die Neugefundene Lehre des Amenemope und die Vorexilische Spruchdichtung Israels," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 1 (1924): 273-96; Marion Hiller Dunsmore, "An Egyptian Contribution to the Book of Proverbs," *Journal of Religion* 5 (1925): 300-08; Hubert Grimme, "Weiteres zu Amenemope und Proverbien," *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 28 (1925): 57-62; F. Ll. Griffith, "The Teaching of Amenophis the Son of Kanakht, Papyrus B.M. 10474," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 12 (1926): 224-39; Ludwig Keimer, "The Wisdom of

evidence is required to demonstrate direct literary dependence was at issue in this instance: a judgment of value or method to which the enumeration of specific parallels was not in and of itself decisive. The historical consequences of such judgments are substantial.

Whybray and Hermisson do not sufficiently explore the historical consequences of their positions. Whybray argues that the Succession Narrative is a dramatization of various proverbs, proving its' wisdom background. And in a later work he argues against the early existence of

Amen-em-ope and the Proverbs of Solomon," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 43 (1926): 8-21; D. C. Simpson, "The Hebrew Book of Proverbs and the Teaching of Amenophis," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 12 (1926): 232-39; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament in the Light of the Newly Discovered "Teaching of Amenemope"* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1927); František Lexa, "L'Analyse Littéraire de l'Enseignement d'Amenemopet," *Archiv Orientální* 1 (1929): 129-239. R. O. Kevin, "The Wisdom of Amen-em-Apt and its Possible Dependence upon the Hebrew Book of Proverbs," *Journal of Oriental Research* 14 (1930): 115-57; Albrecht Alt, "Zur Literarischen Analyse der Weisheit des Amenemope," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 16-25; Etienne Drioton, "Le Livre de Proverbes et la Sagesse d'Amenemope," *Sacra Pagina: Miscellanea Biblica Congressus Internationalis Catholici de re Biblica*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensum, vol. 12-13, bk. 1 (Gembloux: Editions DuCulot, 1959), pp. 229-41; Ronald J. Williams, "The Alleged Semitic Original of the Wisdom of Amenemope," *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 47 (December 1961): 100-06; B. Couroyer, "L'Origine Egyptienne de la Sagesse d'Amenemope," *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963): 208-24.

a specific social class of the wise!¹ Could such a milieu of proverbial wisdom have arisen and stabilized itself to such a degree by this time? Could it exist in such a form that this writer could draw upon it intelligibly to articulate his Solomonic court apologetic early in that King's reign? What is the pre-history of the "cultural and professional circle to which the author belonged?"²

Von Rad, in similar fashion, avoids the earliest history of organized scribal wisdom.

Der Zeitraum, dessen literarische Hinterlassenschaft wir befragen, beginnt mit dem Aufkommen einer Schulweisheit in der frühen Königszeit. Das Vorhandensein einer älteren Sippenweisheit soll nicht grundsätzlich bestritten werden, ihr Vorhandensein ist von vornherein sogar höchst wahrscheinlich. Sie ist aber ihrerseits ein so schwer bestimmbares Phänomen, dass unsere Untersuchung von ihr als einem Gegenstand sui generis keine Notiz nimmt. Zudem hat sich die Annahme eines Zusammenhangs zwischen ihr und der Schulweisheit als fragwürdig erwiesen. Grundsätzlich sei hier schon festgestellt, dass wir in diesem Zusammenhang unsere Aufgabe nicht darin sehen, hinter die Lehrdichtungen des Sprüchebuches zurückzufragen, ob sich vielleicht da und dort Formen einer viel älteren Weisheit abzeichnen. Wir nehmen die Stoffe so, wie sie von den Sammlern dargeboten.

¹R. N. Whybray, *The Succession, Narrative: Study of II Samuel 9-20; I Kings 1 and 2*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2d series, vol. 9 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1968); Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*; Hermisson, "Weisheit und Geschichte," pp. 137-48. Cf. R. N. Whybray, "Some Literary Problems in Proverbs I-IX," *Vetus Testamentum* 16 (October 1966): 482-96 and his *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9*, Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 41 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1965).

²Whybray, *Succession Narrative*, pp. 1-9.

werden, and in dieser Gestalt haben wir Grund,
sie als Schulweisheit zu verstehen.¹

Ought one so to limit a study of "*Weisheit in Israel*"? Can we understand a work in its present form without making judgments about its social and historical background? In other words, can we study school wisdom without asking where the school came from? We submit that an important dimension to our understanding would thereby be lacking, especially when working with such terse, seemingly independent and often ambiguous writings as the mashal literature.

Thus, we would add to Crenshaw's criteria a final one. Explanations of nuance and comparisons of content must rest upon a sound socio-historical foundation. At least, they should not conflict with what is already known, particularly when the latter has more certainty or conviction than the former. They should not require historical or social conditions or processes, alterations in our understanding of the socio-historical matrix, that are intrinsically improbable. We would submit that "improbable" can often be defined with sufficient (scientific) precision.

These remarks do not apply merely to the wisdom type of epic, ideal hero or (heroic) historiography. The

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 24.

same considerations apply to prophetic wisdom, especially in terms of the organization and stabilization of wisdom schools with refined systems of thought. When wisdom is connected to apocalyptic, rabbinism, sadduceanism, or priestly religion, the same kind of necessary, logical historical scenario seems appropriate, though in terms of wisdom's subsequent development instead of its origins. The socio-historical matrix, and the fundamental social processes at work in history, must be plausible, realistic and consistent. It should conform as well to what we know of human nature and the parameters of social organization, particularly the conditions and time frames that operate in the formation and evolution of social structures.

Possible candidates for epic wisdom include:

a) Adam. In connection with the J creation account, we have already mentioned the trees and the serpent. Pfeiffer has suggested that these function as symbols within a wisdom text.¹ Originally, knowledge is the distinctive prerogative of Yahweh; man is like the animals, in no way lord of creation. The story's theme is Promethean.

¹Thus, Genesis 1-11, though principally P, reveals a second Edomite source S, which has close affinities with Job. S is staccato and disparate in style. While S is early, perhaps from the Solomonic era, it has suffered late accretions (e.g., the Melchizedek episode). Its influence on Hebrew literature tends to be late and Exilic, first appearing in Ezekiel 28, 32; II Isaiah; then Deuteronomy.

Man steals knowledge in an attempt to achieve equality with god. He evokes the unlimited power of Yahweh in response.¹

Engnell revives the search for wisdom, studying both creation accounts tradition-historically. The Adam figure is variously *Urmensch*, *Urvater* and sacral *Urkönig*. The two accounts form part of the P-narrative or Tetrateuch; they stand in dialectical relationship to one another that is ultimately indivisible into documentary trees. While the narrative is not wisdom in the strictest sense, it evidences wisdom themes. Its view of nature is fundamentally negative,² “the earth and its vegetation are cursed, the lot of offspring is hard work, pain, destruction and death.”³ The *hieros gamos* and sacred king sacrifice are turned on their heads in an anti-Canaanite polemic. Wisdom means vitality or procreation: one cannot have eternal life and also procreate without then being a god. Adam's divinity must therefore be limited with respect to Yahweh. Adam's power of command is profoundly demonstrated

¹Robert H. Pfeiffer, "Edomite Wisdom," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 3 (1926): 13-25; his "A Non-Israelite Source of the Book of Genesis," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 7 (1930): 66-73; and his "Wisdom and Vision in the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 11 (1934): 93-131.

²So also Pfeiffer.

³Engnell, "Creation Story," p. 118.

by the naming of the animals.¹

Alonso-Shökel also sees a noetic concern underlying the J narrative of creation which he thinks derives from wisdom influences, over and above the obvious fabulous entities in the work. He cites a concern with developing an understanding of man, of his good and evil. The work reduces Yahweh to a human level, a character in a story. The fundamental questions of life and being are posed. Wisdom forms are repeatedly appropriated: *mashal*, *melîṣah* and *ḥidah*. While other, *heilsgeschichtlich*, themes predominate, the wisdom formulation of the work, albeit rather late, is evident.²

b. Moses. Certain wisdom heroic themes recur in the Moses stories--concern for fine speech, judicial sagacity, sound administration, oracular relationship with Yahweh and the like—but any association with wisdom would seem to be extreme.³

c. Joseph. Von Rad sets Joseph up as the archetypal wise man. He is an adroit speaker, humble, a competent administrator whatever the assigned task; he

¹Engnell, "Creation Story," pp. 103-19.

²Alonso-Schökel, "Motivos," pp. 295-316.

³Malfroy; Weinfeld, "Humanism in Deuteronomy," pp. 241-47; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, passim.

understands the signs which symbolically present Yahweh's will. He engages in divination and interprets symbolic dreams in accord with the will and understanding of Yahweh. He triumphs over adversity by self-discipline and acceptance/submission. He devises clever schemes to attain his, and Yahweh's, goals. Joseph knows the ways of the royal court, behaving impressively in the Court of Pharaoh and ingratiating himself by his speech, his insight and his observance of court etiquette.

Divination gives an interesting dimension to the concept of knowledge. Yahweh is ultimately above all human knowledge. He may make use of any person, any setting, to achieve an order, an objective, that he has determined by his will. Implicit here is internationalism and supernaturalism of a high order: everything bends to Yahweh's will. Inscrutability and ineffability are mixed through with the inevitable, inexorable. Yet, while Joseph cannot see into all Yahweh's plans, he has a divine charism which enables him to detect and interpret the divine signs, i.e. dream-interpretation and divination. Joseph makes use of every opportunity, no matter how adverse it may seem. Joseph's fidelity to Yahweh and his confidence in the reliability and rectitude of Yahweh's plans constitute important elements of his wisdom. Humility, know-how and initiative gain for him every superior's favor. Von Rad

contends that, for J, Joseph represents the quintessential wise man; he stands for an ideal. The narrative forms almost a single unified account, molded to the author's guiding purpose and the high-point of J's literary art.¹

To this portrait, Crenshaw dissents.

. . . it is a strange model of education that has as its hero one who has not been trained at a school, and a peculiar propaganda for courtly wisdom that has the ruler choose a man as his counselor on the basis of his "spiritualistic" qualifications.²

Consider also Joseph's distinct lack of tact toward his brothers both in the initial dream story and when he conceals his identity from his brothers. He is highly emotional, "passionate." Crenshaw cites a formidable number of non-wisdom themes in the narrative: (1) special revelation, theophany; (2) dreams and divining cup as mediating devices; (3) sacrifice; (4) genealogy; (5) *kashrut*; (6) the tax account during the famine; and (7) elements of Heilsgeschichte.³

d) Daniel. If Joseph follows the paradigm of the wise man, Daniel can certainly not be excepted. Divination,

¹Von Rad, "Josephsgeschichte," pp. 120-27; his *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 67-69, 257-58.

²Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 137.

³Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 137. Cf. Noth, "Bewährung," p. 232.

the triumph over adversity through loyalty and *savoir-faire*, divine charism, oracle wisdom, dream interpretation, court etiquette, royal counsellor motif, eloquent speech, the overarching but unknowable plan of Yahweh to which the hero may gain some limited access by interpretation of signs given him by Yahweh, all these mark both tales. This commonality of archetype forms an important bridge for von Rad from wisdom to apocalyptic.¹

Were it not for the von Rad hypothesis and its emphasis on Joseph and Daniel, the latter would be a comparatively poor prospect for epic wisdom. First, the objections Crenshaw raises to Joseph apply with even greater force to Daniel. Many of the themes cited can hardly be considered incontrovertibly those of wisdom, either apart or in conjunction with one another. Second, the two works are separated by an enormous social and cultural gulf, reflecting the years that separate their composition. Again, Crenshaw's notion of nuance applies. Do these motifs have the same essential meaning in and to a society whose circumstances and presuppositions are so drastically different? The Joseph story borrows themes and situations from international literature. Its protagonist is omniscient. Foreigners appear in a compassionate light,

¹Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 2: 301-15; von Rad, "Josephsgeschichte," pp. 120-27.

where suitable. Daniel lacks any formal association with wisdom beyond the paradigm figure, whose competence is principally that of dream-interpretation. The story is intensely nationalistic, even ethnocentric, which thereby restricts Daniel's capacity to function and presents his relationship to king and court as at best distant. Von Rad really constructs his bridge over the relationship of a divine charism. Is the divine charism of an epic figure, particularly when limited to favor and a skill at interpretation, wisdom? Disciplined conduct and steadfast trust in divine action are certainly not alone wisdom virtues. Third, in spite of the fact that the work falls during a period when wisdom manifests itself in literary and speculative form, perhaps in response to the dissolution of a social institution or class, Daniel does not evidence such wisdom. To use our earlier distinction, the use seems more adjectival than technical.

Taking the von Rad hypothesis into careful consideration, however, Daniel cannot so easily be dismissed. The evidence goes beyond the paradigm, even with its expanded understanding of the nature of wisdom and the wisdom figure, i.e., charism. Von Rad argues that a certain understanding of time, a certain historiography and a specific kind of dualism accompany this paradigm.¹ We

¹See *Wisdom in Israel*, pp. 337-63.

cannot deal adequately with the hypothesis here. In looking at the broader implications of our study, we would return to this argument and see whether the evidence of Proverbs offers any support. Von Rad's position is a logical extrapolation from the kind of developmentalism we shall want to consider underlying much of wisdom research.

e) The Succession Narrative, as "wisdom historiography." Earlier, we listed some of the elements which Hermisson thought represented a wisdom strand.¹ Whybray finds many of the same: the role of the counsellor and counsel, morally-neutral wisdom, retributionism, Yahweh depicted as the guide and determiner of human destiny, natural causation (i.e., inner-worldly), and a de-emphasis of the cult. The work, he argues, was written shortly after these events take place. Its style is novelistic. It is really a form of propaganda, intended to explain and support the Solomonic claim to the throne. He calls it "a dramatization of proverbial wisdom."²

First, it parallels the themes that appear in proverbs, as noted. Second, the account draws on typical

¹*Spruchweisheit*, pp. 11-36; "Weisheit and Geschichte," pp. 136-54:

²*Succession Narrative*, p. 75. He quotes Duesberg's characterization, a *comédie humaine* (p. 79).

proverb forms and devices--simile,¹ comparison,² *Zwillingsformen*, rhetorical contradictions,³ and wisdom motifs.⁴

Ultimately, Whybray summarizes the correspondences he finds between the Book of Proverbs and the Succession Narrative under three headings: wisdom and folly, the education of children, and the king. Various minor topics complete a sort of fourth category.

Under the first rubric, Whybray subsumes "patience and the control of temper,"⁵ "prudent consideration before taking action," "the ability to learn from experience," "avoidance of treacherous companions," "humility versus pride and ambition," and the exploitation of wise speech.⁶

¹E.g., the proverb at II Samuel 14:14.

²*Twb-mn* form.

³Inconsistent advice or counsel: explicit juxtaposed inconsistencies.

⁴She-bear robbed of cubs, death, knowledge, wisdom, love and hatred, father and son. Whybray, *Succession Narrative*, pp. 82-83.

⁵E.g., Absalom silently awaits an opportunity to revenge Amnon's rape of Tamar.

⁶A number of speeches in the account illustrate proverbial themes. Joab faces the dilemma of a faithful courtier who must tell the king what he needs but does not wish to hear. Joab does not know how his counsel may be received--with admiration and reward or with distaste and vindictiveness. The situation also illustrates the wise' propensity for juxtaposing alternative or contradictory counsel when no definitive answer is possible. Whybray, *Succession Narrative*, pp. 87-88.

Under the second, Whybray adduces the repeated concern of the Narrative with David's relationship to his children, their ultimate downfall,¹ and the father's "broken heart." David failed in discipline, *mûsār*, by failing to control his children. Under "ideal king," Whybray refers to a number of the aspects, of royal wisdom we have already mentioned: the king's own wisdom, his duties (i.e., justice) and his relationship to Yahweh, a God whose purposes go beyond man's freedom and power to determine or manipulate events, and the king's good courtier. That last category is a miscellany, including "friendship and enmity, idleness, rich and poor, humility, death, evil companions, quarrels, man's insecurity, messengers, old age, pride, treachery and loyalty."²

Again, Crenshaw raises the problem of using 'wisdom' in reference to such material. He argues that the basic criteria have not been met. Nuance is certainly problematic; there are historical difficulties.. The Narrative shows in a bad light a number of people who ought, ex hypothesi, to appear in a favorable light in a wisdom setting. These include David and Solomon themselves, not to mention the exalted and legendary figures

¹Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah.

²Whybray, *Succession Narrative*, pp. 88-95.

of Ahithophel and Hushai. For wise men, they are all, but especially the latter, remarkably ineffectual and disturbingly treacherous.¹

As we have before, we may ask whether the lengthy catalogue of emphases constitutes, *prima facie*, wisdom. Crenshaw says no. Many are commonplaces of Hebrew thinking, e.g., retributionism. Others represent a dubious interpretation of the intention underlying the text, e.g., David's dealings with his children (is the issue really discipline?). Still others are the *sine qua non* of any discussion of the human situation, e.g., death, evil companions, quarrels, old age. Finally, Whybray sometimes seems careless of the layers of the narrative. Wise women accounts may represent an entirely different type of wisdom whose presence does not argue for the wisdom character of the document as a whole.²

f) Other epics and historiographic settings:

Ruth, Esther, Tobit, Job, Noah, the King of Tyre, Danel. We mention the first two because of their novelistic style and purpose. Tobit is a fabulous tale involving such figures as the grateful dead, a divine charism, a

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 137-40.

²Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 137-40.

disguised angel (disguised divine purpose!), a mysterious dog, a woman possessed by a demon, and a certain measure of albeit magical *savoir-faire*. Ezekiel 14 ranks Job and Noah with Danel.

The Joban drama, not epic in its present form, belongs with speculative wisdom; perhaps one could rank the framework tale with the epics. This fabulous tale seems to confirm a form of retributionism, which is in itself hardly distinctive of wisdom. The figure of the divine wager, however, is fascinating. The *rīb* or *Streitgespräch* is important, though it is not a wisdom form exclusively. Job's apparent virtue and piety are significant, especially if the story really should have Edomite roots.¹ Like a true epic hero, Job is a super-human figure who is brought near sub-human suffering by arbitrary divine action; by divine action he is restored to epical estate, at least in the *Rahmenerzählung*. Whether possible charism or the fabulous character of the epic, at least the frame narrative, makes it wisdom on that account, might be debated.

In sum, epic wisdom deals with a hero, perhaps tragic, who displays virtues characteristic of one who is wise. That virtue may consist in part of a divine charism whereby the person's heroic virtues place him or her in

¹Cf. Pfeiffer, "Edomite Wisdom," pp. 13-25.

conformity with the divine will; God then acts to protect and favor that person in proportion to his faithfulness, submission and disciplined conformity. Such a charism gives the hero insight, albeit limited, into the divine plan, particularly in the form of divination or dream interpretation. Only exceptionally do the wisdom virtues of the hero manifest themselves in literary form (Job?); rather, what literary expression they receive tends to be in the form of the underlying historiography of which the epic may form a part. Thus, we may distinguish (i) epic wisdom from (ii) wisdom historiography as sub-categories of this wisdom type. The latter most frequently appears in the Hebrew literature as novellistic style or a novella-genre embedded within a more conventional interpretive historical account.

7. The Counsellor. More in motif than in office, the 'counsellor' stands intermediate between royal and scribal wisdom. On the one hand, the pharaoh's epic counsellor, Joseph, takes over the king's administrative duties, acting on his behalf and in his name. The counsellor seems to have held an official position in the Israelite royal court, as in the Egyptian, to advise both king and court. Other counsellors may have held office in the queenly retinue. Absalom, for example, becomes entangled in the advice of Ahithophel and Hushai.

Rehoboam takes counsel from groups of advisers.¹

On the other hand, precisely because of his learning and sociopolitical astuteness, the counsellor must be closely associated with scribal learning and the establishment of the scribal schools. In office, the counsellor would be the ultimate scribe: at once wise in the ways of the world, politics, and religion yet also intimately familiar with the day-to-day operations of the administration as executed by scribal bureaucrats. To counsel, he must be in touch with activities of principal interest to scribes. Indeed, the ethic of the counsellor seems to be that of the ideal scribe when he functions as a high administrator: *Standesethik*.

"Counsel," de Boer shows, is closely related to wisdom and knowledge. It pertains to the future with virtually the sense of an oracle. Counsel is an authorized decision; it leads to salvation, victory, recovery or security. Since "b" and "m" are applied to the counsellor and his counsel, de Boer argues that herein lies the basis of the so-called hypostasis of wisdom:

I wonder whether one can uphold theories on hypostatization and even on personification. Wisdom has been, for the period over which we have information, similar to the word of the prophet, the oracle of the priest. A wise word, counsel,

¹And the callow youth mislead him!

implies a counsellor, just as prophecy implies a prophet. Wisdom in Job (xxviii) is pictured as divine counsel, and hence every true counsellor is a figure with religious authority. Wisdom in Proverbs (viii) is Jhwh's counsellor denominated with her action, counsel, the wise word which is life-giving. There is, as far as I can see, no trace of speculation over unity and distinction in the world of God. A pluriformity is taken for granted. Jhwh's court numbers dignitaries, even older than his kingship. At the same time the world of God can be considered a unit.¹

Here, de Boer points out, is the function of the divine council: to carry out the word of Yahweh and to put his plans into action, even to the point of overturning worldly wisdom.²

We should be careful here to distinguish between the wisdom type of the counsellor and wisdom defined as advice. In the former case, we are dealing with a discernible, even stock, figure or role that may or may not be related to any formal wisdom movement or wisdom thought. While Ahithophel and Hushai represent the counsellor figure, there is little in the account that would entitle us to associate them with any wisdom thought, world-view, social class or movement. The issue becomes more complicated when the figure is used in the context of a framework, as for example in an instruction, but the figure or role is not per se the instruction. Indeed, the latter often

¹De Boer, pp. 70-71.

²De Boer, pp. 42-71.

appears as a genre embedded within a larger work of different genre with which the counsellor might in fact be associated.

In the latter case, wisdom defined as advice, we are dealing with wisdom as *savoir-faire* or *Lebensklugheit*, knowledge of how to live well, that is convincing because and only because it works. Its authority is pragmatic, its utility. Whether literary wisdom is to be taken as advice or whether members of a wisdom group or movement perceived their ideology to be advisory¹ is quite a separate question from whether counsellors give advice. To wit, is the advice that they give wisdom? And, is wisdom what advice-givers give? We are therefore still left with establishing a bridge from the counsellor figure to other types of wisdom, if such a bridge can in fact be built.

8. Prophetic wisdom. Consistent with attempts to find wisdom influences at work within other movements and genres, some scholars have argued that a kind of prophetic wisdom or wisdom influence on prophecy can be identified. Here, we are not interested in the evidence from prophetic literature for a growing wisdom class; here,

¹Which is most unlikely on sociodynamic grounds, since ideologies are authoritative, legitimate and definitive interpretations of why things are the way they are (therefore, authoritative hermeneutic).

we are concerned with influence, borrowing or integration of wisdom and prophetic world-views. Since the evidences for wisdom thought patterns are drawn from such incontrovertible representatives of prophecy as Amos and I Isaiah, our search for prophetic wisdom must be carried out with circumspection.

Fichtner dismisses a few slight verbal suggestions of wisdom in the eighth century prophets, arguing that these are strictly later additions. Also, the relationship between prophetic oracles and *blasons populaires* lacks any real significance.¹

On Amos, however, Wolff differs with Fichtner. He argues that Amos comes out of a tradition of tribal wisdom.² Amos uses its forms and themes to frame, articulate and express his messages. Where parallels exist between Amos and I Isaiah, they evidence the common origin of both in a special form of folk wisdom, tribal wisdom (*Sippenweisheit*), not in any borrowing from the former by the latter. Supporting his position, Wolff points to such forms and patterns of thought as the rhetorical questions

¹Johannes Fichtner, *Gottes Weisheit: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, ed. Idaus Dietrich Fricke, *Arbeiten zur Theologie*, 2d series, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1965), pp. 9-43.

²Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos*, pp. 51-52; Samuel Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, pp. 448-55.

which Amos poses to establish a cause-and-effect relationship in 3:3-6 and 8. Amos also makes use of comparisons and analogies with foreign countries. The woe-oracle recurs: like Whedbee,¹ Wolff wants to make this a distinctive wisdom form. Amos' *Zahlensprüche* which begin the book, the oracles against the nations, are also an adaptation of what seems to be a typical wisdom form.

The way in which Amos uses the admonition (*Mahnrede*) is decisive in Wolff's estimation. Such sayings are founded on an understanding of consequences, therefore on experience. The apodictic form is not the exclusive property of the priest; it is a form typical of tribal wisdom that has persisted to and beyond the time of Amos. Here, Wolff finds Gerstenberger's study of apodictic law quite persuasive.²

Wolff also looks at content for supportive evidence. Amos' viewpoint is indifferent to the cult, even in conflict, and his perspective is internationalistic. Amos stresses "*nkh*," straightforwardness, honesty, rectitude; I Isaiah does as well. He also emphasizes right order and right action, concern for the unfortunate in

¹J. William Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 111-26, 149-53.

²Gerstenberger, *Wesen and Herkunft*, q. v.; Wolff, *Amos'*, pp. 5-36.

society (noblesse oblige) and the ascetic life. He uses antinomies, *Zwillingsformen*, which contrast rich and poor.¹

Fichtner argues that the wisdom elements found in I Isaiah cannot be adequately explained by any confrontation that may exist between him and the wise. He uses the technical vocabulary of wisdom, adopts the parable and proverb forms,² and emphasizes divine counsel. Together, these suggest some common background. Fichtner hypothesizes that I Isaiah once belonged to a wisdom group, but departed it at the time of his call.³

Es scheint mir daraus hervorzugehen [i.e., from Isaiah's double position as opponent and participant of wisdom], dass Jesaja vor seiner Berufung zum Propheten dem Stande der "Weisen" angehört hat und in der Welt der Chokma, wie sie uns in den Sprüchen der Männer Hiskias (Spr. 25-29) und etwa in den Kapiteln 10-22 des Spruchbuches entgegentritt, gelebt hat. In der Berufung—die dadurch eine ganz besondere Note bekäme, wenn sie an Jesaja als einen Weisen ergangen wäre!—wird ihm deutlich, dass er sich von der bis zum gewissen Grade unverbindlichen Weisheit und ihren Ratschlägen zu trennen habe und sich als Gottes Bote senden lassen müsse mit dem eigenartigen Auftrage, so zu reden, dass die Menschen in all ihrer (menschlichen!), Weisheit seine Botschaft nicht begreifen, obwohl sie vernehmen.⁴

¹Wolff, *Amos*, pp. 37-52.

²Whedbee, pp. 23-79.

³Fichtner, *Gottes Weisheit*, pp. 18-26.

⁴Fichtner, *Gottes Weisheit*, pp. 24-25.

Isaiah has to counter the smug and self-secure attitude of established wisdom, which has led the nation away from reliance on Yahweh to concern for royal grandeur and involvement in international alliances. Hermisson agrees in part. He argues that Isaiah certainly is no wise man in his view of history, but he does synthesize two quite different Hebrew traditions.¹ To the extent that these arguments establish the existence of a synthesis of wisdom and prophecy, or an adoption of wisdom modes of thought and expression within Hebrew prophecy, we may speak of a prophetic wisdom type.

9. Hypostatic wisdom. Our discussion of this wisdom type need only make reference to our earlier examination of wisdom and mythos, above.² Under this rubric, we include both (i) hypostatic wisdom and (ii) personified wisdom. The former includes wisdom as the divine

¹Hermisson, "Weisheit und Geschichte," pp. 149-54. As an aside comment to this discussion, we should perhaps mention Ezekiel's plaint, "Ah Lord God! they are saying of me, 'Is he not a maker of allegories?'" (20:49 ET). Apparently, he is being taken for a 'proverb-maker' (**mšl* noun and verb), but the passage is obscure.

²We should keep in mind the possibility that we do not have here an elaboration or exaggeration of wisdom's role, particularly as a late result of theological and hermeneutic evolution, but an implicit and perhaps much earlier polemic against *hieros gamos* based on those very cultic images and myths. Cf. Proverbs 22:14.

ordering principle whereby Yahweh created the world, and which may also bind Yahweh with its principles of order. To the extent that Maat and *ṣdqh* are equivalents, and righteousness is the principle of order, world-ordering righteousness may be included with hypostasis even though it constitutes an inference from the material. Gese's argument for the Egyptian analogy is in many respects an argument for an early metaphysical principle, hypostasis, in Israel, though his defense of wisdom's authority per se does not of itself imply hypostasis.¹ The latter includes both early² and late³ arguments for a wisdom goddess. In either case, we should distinguish the presence or inference of a wisdom entity, being or (metaphysical) principle from a system of thought, even if the latter should emphasize the concept of order.⁴

¹Gese, *Lehre and Wirklichkeit*, pp. 11-50.

²Bauer-Kayatz, Albright; Cazelles (?).

³Rankin.

⁴Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*; Wilhelm Schencke, *Die Chokma (Sophia) in der Jüdischen Hypostasenspekulation: ein Betrag zur Geschichte der Religiösen Ideen in Zeitalter des Hellenismus*, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter: II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1912, vol. 6 (Kristiana: Jacob Dybwad, 1913); Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," pp. 1-15; Bauer-Kayatz, *Studien zu Prov. I-IX*; Cazelles, "Debuts de la Sagesse," pp. 27-40; Rankin, pp. 222-64.

Von Rad associates the development of the figure of Wisdom with important changes in hermeneutic perspective and self-understanding:

"Mit der Königszeit war ja die Epoche einer

10. Speculative wisdom. Under this heading, we include the largest body of wisdom writings, those which represent some sort of systematic reflection on life.

gewissen Individualisierung angebrochen, in der man viel angelegentlicher als in der Phase des archaischen Jahweglaubens nach dem Anteil des Einzelnen an Jahwe fragte. Der ältere Jahweglaube war aber auf diese vom Individuum aus gestellte Frage im ganzen wenig gerüstet, denn auch der Dekalog und verwandte Gebotsreihen waren keine Hilfe im Dickicht des Einzellebens und wollte das ja auch gar nicht sein. Diese Verselbständigung des Individuums mit all den Fragen, die damit aufstanden, lässt sich anhand vieler alttestamentlicher Texte einigermaßen verfolgen Einen Beitrag, gewiss nicht den unwichtigsten, zur Bewältigung der anstehenden Fragen lieferten die Weisen in der Lehre von der Selbstoffenbarung der Schöpfung. Bei ihrem Versuch einer Aufhellung der den Menschen umgebenden Wirklichkeit waren sie in der Tiefe der Schöpfung auf ein Phänomen gestossen, dem eine eminente Aussagekraft zu eigen war. Die Schöpfung hat nicht nur ein Sein, sie entlässt auch Wahrheit!" (*Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 214-15)

"In dieser Hinsicht könnte die Lehre von der sich manifestierenden Urordnung gerade als ein Modellfall weisheitlichen Tradierens angesehen werden. Niemand wird sich vorstellen, dass sie eines Tages von einem originellen Kopf zum erstenmal ausgesprochen oder gar von Ägypten übernommen wurde. Ihre Wurzeln sind auch in Israel alt. Sie liegen, wie wir sahen, in der Grundüberzeugung, von der schon die älteste Erfahrungsweisheit ausgegangen war: Es ist eine Ordnung in den Dingen und Abläufen, und diese Ordnung ist kein Geheimnis, sondern sie verkündigt sich selbst, womit sich die Lehre nahe mit Vorstellungen des Hymnus berührt, denen zufolge sich die Herrlichkeit der Schöpfung verkündet. Neu daran war zunächst dies, dass diese Ordnung, die in der älteren Erfahrungsweisheit im Wesentlichen noch unkritisch vorausgesetzt war, nun selbst zum Gegenstand einer eindringenden theologischen Ausgestaltung wurde." (*Weisheit in Israel*, p. 221)

Precisely because of its size and diversity, it would be difficult to detail exhaustively the literatures and world-views that fall under this rubric. Speculative wisdom is generally used to refer to that literature which grows out of individual thought and reflection about the world and one's relationship to it. Whatever wisdom may be--movement, social force, *Weltanschauung*--speculative wisdom is the literature of its maturity. Wisdom seeks to give a theological and ideological underpinning to itself, especially when its setting in the Hebrew social world changes drastically, with Exile and later restoration. It is no longer enough just to be. In fact, being, as the older wise understood it, may no longer be possible at all. What does it mean to be wise; what sort of wisdom is possible? Increasingly, wisdom becomes the output of individual thinkers setting forth their own specific and peculiar understandings of wisdom and being wise. Wisdom becomes more individual and personal. The literature loses its fragmentary and anonymous character. Forms expand, become baroqued. Thought is expressed at length, coherently, rather than briefly, tersely, ambiguously, enigmatically, when a coherent statement be made at all. The implicit becomes increasingly explicit. Thought becomes syste-

matic and ordered. In this light, much of the Hebrew wisdom literature is that of speculation. As wisdom turns to literary expression, it becomes literary.¹

The various now-redacted materials of Proverbs have a place here. Each of the mashal books and the initial series of hortatory discourses are arguably works of speculation, wisdom expression or ideological self-interpretation. Job, as a coherent dramatic work, belongs here. Qoheleth is the very archetype of speculative wisdom. We must also include ben Sirah, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Tobit.

This section includes both the sceptical literature² and that of rising religious nationalism. Most of these works make extensive use of proverbs and extended proverbial verse forms, most notably Qoheleth. His use is

¹Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," pp. 22-35; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 245 e.s. Speculative wisdom, the literature of reflection, can arguably be considered the logical, even necessary, outgrowth of a theological crisis in wisdom: see Schmid's *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*; Zimmerli, "Struktur," pp. 193-99; Aarre Lauha, "Die Krise des religiösen Glaubens bei Kohelet," in *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 183-91; James L. Crenshaw, "Popular Questioning of the Justice of God in Ancient Israel," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 82 (1970): 380-95.

²Johannes Pedersen, *Scepticisme Israélite*, Cahiers de la Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, Publiés par la Faculté de Théologie

so extensive, and often contradictory, that some scholars despair of finding any logical outline that will unify and explain the book as a whole.¹ Suffice to say that it is this material above all that scholars appeal to in establishing what constitutes the body of wisdom as a system of thought or (reconstructed) world-view. The prominence of sceptical literature in the middle period and nationalistic writings in the later eras has led to a number of postulated social or intellectual processes: theologization, the break-down of the doctrine of retribution, democratization, rationalization, privatization and the like. In most cases, the mashal books of Proverbs are taken to be normative wisdom, against which the speculative sceptics are reacting but which later wisdom theologians in modified form reaffirm.²

11. Apocalyptic wisdom. If von Rad has raised a number of provocative historical and methodological questions by suggesting that the Joseph story be regarded as some sort of wisdom, he has raised an even greater storm

¹Cf. Addison G. Wright, "The Riddle of the Sphinx: The Structure of the Book of Qoheleth," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (July 1968): 313-34.

²John F. Priest, "Where is Wisdom to be Placed?" *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31 (October 1963): 275-82; cf. Murphy, "Interpretation," pp. 289-301; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 1: 355-459.

by contending that the wisdom movement has an unlikely issue. He calls into doubt the traditional view that prophetic modes of thinking are preserved in early Judaism by apocalyptists. He carefully considers the historiographic principles of both wisdom and apocalyptic, concluding that the latter would represent a drastic inversion of the basic prophetic understandings of time, history, anthropology, theology and will that only wisdom could form the logical and socio-logical precursor of apocalyptic. While prophecy is thoroughly theological, apocalyptic--like wisdom--is largely devoid of any theology. For prophecy, saving history is now. Apocalyptic devalues the present and projects the saving history into the distant future. It concerns itself instead with an esoteric knowledge, a noesis. Its view of the world is international, even cosmic, in scope. Like wisdom, it is timeless because of its expansiveness: ordinary time is utterly devalued in the face of a majestic but overwhelming temporal dualism.¹

¹"The task of . . . priestly theology . . . consisted in linking the saving history with Creation, in drawing Creation towards the saving history, because this was the real position where this theology stood. The theological thinking of wisdom ran in exactly the opposite direction. It stood before the world as Creation, and its task was to find a *connexion* from there with the saving history, that is, with that revelation of Jahweh's will which was pre-eminently turned towards Israel. Its thesis ran:

Like much speculative wisdom of the later period, apocalyptic is basically pessimistic. The cause is inner-worldly: the nature of man and of his national orders bears the corrupt and corrupting seed of human/national

in order to understand Creation properly, one has to speak about Israel and the revelation of God's will granted to her. The rational determination to acquire knowledge which first caused wisdom to direct her attention to the world certainly saw many wonders in it, but it also saw that its real secret evaded her. . . . We should be justified in saying that only here was the demand to face up to Creation in its whole unmythological worldliness made upon Israel. But what was the connexion between Creation and Jahweh's will for revelation, of whose totality and penetrating power none had better knowledge than these same teachers of wisdom? Their theology masters this tremendous problem not only by relating the cosmic wisdom which is unattainable by natural knowledge to Jahweh's revelation which comes to man, but also even by identifying them! The word which calls man to life and salvation is the same word as that which as wisdom already encompassed all creatures at Creation. It is the same word which God himself made use of as a plan at his creation of the world. . . . The 'No' in Job XXVIII could not have come as a windfall to merely occasional questioning; it sums up the total of a long endeavour after knowledge of the world." (Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 1: 450-51)

"Will man hier von einer Soteriologie sprechen, so wäre es freilich eine, die in dieser Ausformung vom Standpunkt der traditionellen Vorstellungen vom Kultus and von den geschichtlichen Heilssetzungen fast als häretisch erscheinen könnte. Denn hier wird das Heil nicht von ether Deszendenz Jahwes in die Geschichte hergeleitet und nicht von irgendeiner menschlichen Vermittlung, sei es von Mose oder David oder einem der Erzvater, sondern von bestimmten Urgegebenheiten der Schöpfung selbst. Damit scheint eine theologische Spannung gegenüber dem traditionellen Jahweglauben aufgebrochen, wie sie schärfer kaum gedacht werden kann. Wohl, wir sahen die Lehrer

destruction. The wisdom to understand the world apocalyptically is a charism: it is a divinely blessed attempt to understand and systematize the rules governing the world, even the universe, however esoteric they may be. One prominent means to this comprehension is the interpretation of dreams.¹

The appearance of wisdom legoumena within apocalyptic has been noted by various scholars. Little study of them has been made outside of their relevance to debates about the von Rad hypothesis.² Clearly, wisdom language, forms and patterns of thinking seem to appear in certain apocalyptic works. What theological and literary role do they play? What is their socio-historical role? Even if we come to reject the von Rad position, the question of apocalyptic wisdom deserves careful study. The argument for wisdom influence on apocalypticism ought to be at

dann auch, etwa bei Sirach and in der sogenannten Apokalyptik, mit der Geschichte, ja mit der Weltgeschichte beschäftigt. Die Kompetenz der Weisen, die Zukunft zu deuten, hat diesen Stand in später Stunde noch einmal in einen Horizont neuer Aufgaben gestellt. Aber so riesenhaft die von der Apokalyptik erstellten Geschichtsentwürfe sind--die spezifische Bedeutung als eines Bereiches einmaliger heilsbegründener Setzungen konnte der Geschichte auch da nicht mehr zuerkannt werden." (Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 399)

¹Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 2: 306-07; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 358-59.

²Wied; Osten-Sacken.

least as strong as for many of the types of wisdom we have considered and stronger than some. Yet, of apocalyptic wisdom, we know little.

12. Legal or rabbinic wisdom. a) Gordis traces the development of the Sadducees and Sadduceic modes of thought from the wisdom schools.

There are important individual differences among the various products of the Wisdom schools, but underlying them all is the outlook which later crystallized as Saduceeism. This explains the absence of some of the most characteristic insights of Biblical thought, such as the concept of God in history, the passion for justice in society, the union of national loyalty with the ideal of international peace, the recognition of freedom as an inalienable human right, the unceasing dissatisfaction with the world as it is, because of the vision of what it can be.¹

Like the Sadducees who follow, the wise are members of the social elite: wealthy, privileged, self-confident and assured. They have the leisure to invest in the academy. While they seek to learn and to teach their young "how to live in a hard-headed, imperfect world, rich in pitfalls and temptations for the unwary," they approach life with the fundamental conservatism of the wealthy.² Those who speculate recognize the imperfection and limitations of human wisdom, leading to insoluble issues in

¹Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, p. 188.

²Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, p. 160.

life. Their consequent scepticism, however, is intellectual, for they make no effort to change the world or the social order nor do they project such change into the future. They can accept life as it is. The lower classes, without economic, social and political security, are impelled to action or to a theology of radical social transformation (apocalyptic, prophecy). They form the ultimate core of Pharisaism.

“As the *summum bonum* in life and the reward of moral conduct, the wisdom writers universally set up practical success, in which economic prosperity is central. Wealth is uniformly regarded as a great good and poverty as an evil.”¹

The wisdom moral code presupposes free will, like the Sadduceean ethic, “not by the theological difficulty involved in justifying reward and punishment if men's actions are determined, but by the psychological need to validate their superior social and economic status.”²

For Gordis, then, late wisdom gradually shades into the Sadduceean movement. While present canonical wisdom literature precedes the development of the Sadducees per se, the latter have a fundamental

¹Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, pp. 172-73.

²Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, p. 181.

intellectual, theological and socio-economic relationship to the former.¹ Thus, we can postulate and look for a Sadduceean wisdom, to the extent it may have survived Pharisaic and later rabbinic attempts to eradicate such thought and literature. We may hypothesize a sectarian type of wisdom.

b) It has been traditionally assumed, though never proven, that the decline of prophecy coincides with the rise of apocalyptic, which preserves prophecy's interpretation of the world and of experience in the context of a changed social milieu. The prophetic word can no longer be spoken openly because it has become a word of judgment against foreign oppressors; prophetic dualism and ethics persist.

Wisdom and priestly law have a natural congeniality. Both seek order. Both seek to understand the world as a consistent system which is derived from and expresses the nature of god. As wisdom becomes increasingly associated with revealed, rather than discovered wisdom, as the transcendence of god gains significance, as wisdom becomes increasingly nationalistic, it begins to accept many of the premises of priestly-legal thought. Exile set the latter free from a purely ritualistic

¹Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages*, pp. 160-97.

milieu. The development of the synagogue and Torah instruction makes priestly-legal thought, as proto-rabbinism, eminently compatible with wisdom. A democratized academy, the school, might even be the basis for the evolution of the synagogue: teaching rather than sacrifice becomes the form of worship and religious self-expression. This thesis tends to be more implicit than explicit in wisdom research

c) Where connections with legal modes of thinking have been sought, they have often been in the precursors of wisdom and law rather than their ultimate development in early Judaism. The best example of this is Audet's attempt to trace both law and wisdom back to *Sippenweisheit*. Both go back to the pre-monarchic pre-settlement family milieu in which the knowledge of how to live well was passed down in the family as instruction through quasi-legal maxims. Parental admonition has virtually the force of law, albeit casuistic. The distinction between apodictic and casuistic law, in light of the motivated admonition, can be taken as evidence for a *Sippenweisheit* that gave birth to both a form of legal thinking and a form of, initially, folk wisdom. This common social base would then provide a natural foundation

¹Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," p. 25; Audet.

for the later reunification of law and wisdom in rabbinism. Thus, one may search for an association of wisdom and law both in early wisdom and in its late successors.¹

Some New Testament scholars are now tentatively seeking evidence for the continuation of wisdom forms of thought and expression in later Judaism and early Christianity. Stendhal's postulation of a Matthaean school is one such instance.² Again, rabbinic modes of thought and interpretation would seem to be a necessary bridge for this thesis. The problem of the ultimate dissolution or reformation of wisdom is certainly worthy of more study and analysis than it has received.

13. Scribal wisdom; schools.

The wisdom of the scribe depends on the opportunity
of leisure;
and he who has little business may become wise.
(ben Sirah 38:24)

This quote demonstrates how natural it is to equate wise man with scribe. When we speak of wisdom as the specific intellectual and cultural property of a definable social

¹Gerstenberger, *Wesen und Herkunft*; Audet; cf. Richter, *Recht und Ethos*; Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 81-92.

²Krister Stendhal, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, With a New Introduction by the Author, American Edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968).

group, the wise, the almost invariable assumption would be that we are referring to the scribes. Not surprisingly, therefore, Duesberg and Fransen have devoted themselves to a massive study of Hebrew wisdom that is really a comparative literary and social history of “the inspired scribes.”¹ Since wisdom means their way of life, no further definition is necessary. Wisdom amounts to reflection on life from the scribal point of view, even if its theological implications are by no means class-bound.

The equivalence is natural enough. Ben Sirah has laid out many of the accepted reasons. The scribe is the preserver of written traditions from all segments of society. He mediates the oral and written interpretations of his time, culture, people and community. He has the training and the occasion to examine received literature, ferreting out all their meanings. Thus, he has the intellectual apparatus to penetrate the arcana of discourse and render them intelligible. This reflection on the implicit and explicit meanings of things is second nature. He travels. He serves the great, in their courts, their bureaucracies, their every venture; he administrates. Only the scribe has the leisure as well as the freedom to

¹*Les Scribes Inspirés*, q.v

pursue the literary arts, to learn and refine sophisticated literary devices. Life's order depends on peasants and artisans, but the wise contribute judgment, understanding and intellect.¹

¹Ben Sirah contrasts the scribe with the life and social role of skilled laborers in 38:31-39:11 (JB):

"All these put their trust in their hands,
 and each is skilled at his own craft.
 A town could not be built without them,
 there would be no settling, no travelling.
 But they are not required at the council,
 they do not hold high rank in the assembly.
 They do not sit on the judicial bench,
 and have no grasp of the law.
 They are not remarkable for culture or sound
 judgement, and are not found among the
 inventors of maxims.
 But they give solidity to the created world,
 while their prayer is concerned with what
 pertains to their trade.
 It is otherwise with the man who devotes his soul
 to reflecting on the Law of the Most High.
 He researches into the wisdom of all the Ancients,
 he occupies his time with the prophecies.
 He preserves the discourses of famous men,
 he is at home with the niceties of parables.
 He researches into the hidden sense of proverbs,
 he ponders the obscurities of parables.
 He enters the service of princes,
 he is seen in the presence of rulers.
 He travels in foreign countries,
 he has experienced human good and human evil.
 At dawn and with all his heart
 he resorts to the Lord who made him;
 [H]e pleads in the presence of the Most High,
 he opens his mouth in prayer
 and makes entreaty for his sins.
 If it is the will of the great Lord,
 he will be filled with the spirit of under-
 standing,
 [H]e will shower forth words of wisdom,
 and in prayer give thanks to the Lord.
 He will grow upright in purpose and learning,
 he will ponder the Lord's hidden mysteries.
 He will display the instruction he had received,

Ben Sirah sets out a late but humane and idealistic account of scribal life.¹ Khety's "Satire on the Trades" is its Egyptian counterpart.² Sjöberg presents a Mesopotamian reflection, "In Praise of Scribal Art."³

Literary endeavor requires a high order of literacy: acquaintance with the stylistic conventions and standard terminologies, assimilation of traditional forms, verbal creativity and flexibility, aesthetic sensitivity in terms of accepted canons, logical thinking within the framework of established patterns of valid reasoning, familiarity with classic literatures, and knowledge of alternative ways of life and the interpretations of life upon which they are grounded. Few have the time and means to undertake such learning in any society, let alone in the near-subsistence early agrarian

taking his pride in the Law of the Lord's covenant.
Many will praise his understanding,
and it will never be forgotten.
His memory will not disappear,
generation after generation his name will live.
Nations will proclaim his wisdom,
the assembly will celebrate his praises.
If he lives long, his name will be more glorious
than a thousand others and if he dies,
that will satisfy him just as well.

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 309-36.

²Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 432-34. Cf. "In Praise of Learned Scribes," immediately preceding, pp. 431-32.

³Q.v.

societies of the ancient Near East. Such sophistication could not have been wide-spread in Israel. Certainly, on analogy with Egypt, we may expect that rudimentary literacy may have gradually become fairly widespread among tradespeople, artisans and overseers, though probably limited to the reading, writing and reckoning skills essential to their occupations. Further, literacy in terms of oral standards is likely far more common than written literacy.¹ Still, the scribes were the custodians of writing, the people in the social position to be literary and transmit literature. For precisely these reasons, we should not hastily equate wisdom with scribal thought in general.

In Egypt, there existed advanced schools offering specialized training for apprentice scribes who had completed their basic education in writing and literature: particularly for specialists in cult (priestly scribes) and for future high courtly officials.² Analogous special advanced schools may well have existed in Israel, though we lack positive evidence of them.³ Thus we should not

¹Williams, "Scribal Training in Ancient Egypt," pp. 214-21; Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, pp. 38-55, passim.

²Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, p. 105; Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, pp. 10-105.

³Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 122-33; Gammie, "Israelite Pedagogy."

set scribes in general against the posited authors and custodians of specialized literatures. Certain common professional standards and training drew them together --though to what degree remains imponderable--professional jealousies to the contrary notwithstanding.

For Israel, it is probably fair to credit the scribes with being the preservers and transmitters of various literatures--prophetic, priestly-cultic, historical, no less than wisdom. Whether they were at all a homogeneous group, to what extent competing scribal schools of thought may have existed, are questions that relate to establishing an intelligible intellectual and literary history for the Hebrew documents which come down to us. In other words, even if Hebrew wisdom thought is obviously grounded most extensively and securely to the exclusion of (some) other wisdom types in the scribal class, we must still specify in what that wisdom consisted and how it was related to a scribal life whose interests evidently extended much beyond the bounds of wisdom, however defined. While the permeation of literatures of vastly different sorts by wisdom motifs, forms, and vocabulary cannot be disputed, what does that mean? Is wisdom dependent on, say, prophetic pleas for social justice, or deuteronomic humanism? Is wisdom their source? Or are these elements part of the professional milieu of

the scribe-writer or scribe-copyist/scribe-redactor that serve an independent artistic goal?¹ The breadth of scribal competence can be demonstrated by Papyrus Anastasi I. One Hori, an Egyptian scribe, writes his colleague, Amenemope (!), sarcastically implying the latter's low level of professional competence. Hori interrogates his friend with wide-ranging questions and problems assuredly drawn from the scribal curriculum. In form, the letter may imitate a sort of comprehensive examination given senior students at or near the conclusion of their formal studies--a basic test for admission to the guild.² The document has several important implications. Whether fictitious in situation or genuine, the letter underscores the scribal sense of humor and irony: wit and sarcasm constitute valid artistic and pedagogic devices. If our sense of humor be less than theirs, in addition to the inevitable cultural differences and their consequences, then our view of their world is liable to strange distortions. The letter evidences the variety of skills--mathematical, geographic, logistic, literary--the competent scribe should command.

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 129-42.

²"An Egyptian Letter: A Satirical Letter," in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 475-79.

It further demonstrates the place of questions (and the dialogue?), and the master's role as interlocutor, in scribal pedagogy. While we have no immediate analogue of this document in the Hebrew Bible, some scholars suggest that the interrogatory form may have been adapted to other ends in the Yahweh speeches of Job 38-40 and Amos' rhetorical questions.¹ We cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that some materials are organized as answers to such (unstated) interrogatories, thus explaining their disconnected and "oriental" logic.

If wisdom is not scribal thought per se, then what is scribal wisdom? If wisdom as a system of thought had its principal setting among scribes, the question virtually reduces to "What is wisdom?" We are back at the beginning, even considering the other analytic categories of wisdom. The problem, however, is not inherently circular and can be stated in another way.

While the scribes dealt with many varieties of written material, most of these served other ends. The scribe's relationship to documents of commerce could best be described as impersonal. The goods were never his; his role in the transaction was that of recorder and perhaps legal advisor. His power consisted of technical

¹Von Rad, "Hiob XXXVIII," pp. 293-301; Wolff, *Amos*, pp. 5-12.

acumen, expertise; not of wealth, nor capital, nor commercial guile. We could multiply the example.

In court, the scribe's function consisted in advising the king. Presumably court scribes were the custodians of the royal annals, therefore recorders and councillors of historical precedent. In Egypt and Mesopotamia, certainly, they kept alive the ancient tongues--though not without error and misunderstanding--and their literatures. These men also handled all correspondence, thus requiring fluency in languages, both diplomatic and national, and expertise in their legal, political, and commercial terminologies and forms. Again, however, their power in court did not consist of the decisive word, but in their ability to influence the king (or local ruler) by structuring his decisions.

The instructions of the scribal schools are rife with admonitions anent courtly conduct. Lofty speech, knowledge of court etiquette, reserve in non-essentials (influence used too frequently is soon dissipated), and decisiveness with insight in important concerns, all typify the pre-eminent concern of scribes as councillors with finely honing the skills they needed to affect the royal decision process.¹ The subtleties of courtly

¹De Boer, pp. 42-71; Humphreys; Gammie, "Israelite Pedagogy."

admonitions and aphorisms remind one of Machiavelli's "The Prince" or Castiglioni's "The Courtier,"¹ although we should not press the comparison. Just as these Renaissance works appealed to a small literate "middle-class" which stood outside but sought to influence the formal processes of political decision-making of their time, so, too, did ancient scribal works on the court and courtier. "The Prince," we might add, was written by a courtier, at once polemical and ironic, to explain (to his fellows) how a ruler governs (the ruler perforce already knows). We may also transmute Frankfort's dictum about proverbs: a prince would be the most implausible and impossible of rulers who followed without qualification his courtiers' judgments about how he should act, *pace* Machiavelli.

We note a caveat. We must keep the description of scribe as "staff"--councillor, advisor, historian, linguist, archivist--appropriate the historical setting. Terms like "administration," "staff," and especially "bureaucracy" have acquired special connotations in modern social history. Bureaucracy as presently constituted, with its distinctions between "line offices" and "staff offices" and its hierarchical structures of

¹Q.v.

power and communication, grew out of, among others, generalization of Prussian military organization to non-military objectives.¹ While the efficient and effective devolution of power as legitimate authority entails some essential commonalities of organization, we should recognize that such terms are strongly metaphorical, rather than simply descriptive, and treat them with due caution. Using this argument, however, we can begin to give useful meaning to "scribal wisdom."

First, we may state the matter negatively, by exclusion. Where wisdom serves other ends inconsistent with the life-situation and world-view of the scribe, even though the scribe may have been the preserver of that literature and even though the author may have been a master scribe, the term 'scribal wisdom' is inappropriate. Thus, prophetic-wisdom and torah- or priestly-wisdom form distinct kinds of wisdom, even if the higher priestly and prophetic echelons were trained in scribal academies. Wisdom themes in prophecy and priestly writings do not bespeak scribal influence unless, the specific

¹Cf. Max Weber's organization theory laid out in vol. 1 of *Economy and Society*. The allusion to Prussian military authority structures I associate with a series of lectures given by Arthur Vidich on contemporary American sociological theory in the Spring of 1969 at the Graduate Faculty of Social and Political Science of the New School for Social Research in New York City.

scribal setting is implicit. Similarly, poets, fiction writers, and speculative thinkers may have been drawn from the ranks of scribes, but we regard the creative work of individual authors as independent except insofar as the specific situation of scribal life comes through.

These remarks should be taken semantically, with respect to establishing a usable definition of scribal wisdom, and not sociologically. We do not contend that an author can absolutely transcend his culture and social background in the pursuit of some abstract goal such as wisdom. We do argue that 'scribal wisdom' should not be redundant but delimit a distinct and identifiable set of phenomena. This approach allows for 'the possible existence of scribal schools in which wisdom forms, thought and motifs can be either organized into a specialized and detailed world-view not shared by scribes in general or put at the service of what that group regarded as superior values and objectives. In both cases, while scribalism is the *sine qua non* of literary work, it may not be evidenced, except perhaps trivially, in the work or the world-view. It is taken for granted; the emphasis lies elsewhere.¹

¹See my "Contributions" for the theoretical foundations of this argument, which ultimately derives from

For example, if von Rad is right that the Joseph epic is wisdom, one would most probably regard it as scribal because of the theme of the counsellor, the importance of courtly etiquette, the emphasis on speech, the connection between intentionality and outcome under divine direction, and the suggestion of a certain *savoir-vivre*.¹ This argument becomes still more compelling with respect to Ahikar and Daniel 1-6.² On the other hand, Ruth, Esther, Tobit, Moses, Adam, the Tyrian king may display elements of epic wisdom, but the scribal elements are trivial (Esther) or absent.

The most important exclusion is royal wisdom. The orientations of the world-views and their relationships to the use of power are entirely different. The king rules with insight and the power of effective judgment; the scribe knows and imparts his knowledge. The word of the king is virtually equivalent to the deed itself; the courtier must take care with his speech that the ruler be attracted to the proposed point of view. The king mediates conflicting interests by compromise

the concept of taken-for-granted reality of Schutz and Berger-Luckmann, q.v.

¹Von Rad, "Josephsgeschichte," pp. 120-27.

²Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 359; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 2: 301-15.

decisions; the courtier only speaks when he can be reasonably sure of the security and effectiveness of his position, and he does not cross his superiors nor those with greater power and influence. The king seeks sage and competent men to advise him; the courtier has expertise with which to advise his lord. The wisdom appropriate to each should be quite different.

This distinction may help explain why both in Israel and Egypt the attribution of formal instructions to kings remains suspect. The Egyptian "royal" *sebayit* and the Hebrew tradition of Solomonic wisdom compositions both rest on materials much more congenial with scribal than royal wisdom--instructions, aphorisms and riddles were the teaching devices of the scribal schools.¹

These academies used and preserved the royal instructions in Egypt. We suggest therefore that in Israel and probably in Egypt traditions of royal wisdom as the insight to judge and govern and the power of decision were expanded to include literary and encyclopaedic wisdom--which properly was set in the scribal academies--to assert and legitimate the role of scribal expertise and academic learning in government. It justified the centrality of scribal wisdom in important aspects of the

¹Williams, "Scribal Training in Ancient Egypt," pp. 214-21; cf. Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*.

culture, particularly within the government.

Second, we may characterize scribal wisdom positively. At its most basic, 'wisdom' is what characterizes the good scribe. Therefore, scribal wisdom sets out the ideals and the world-view of the academies for the scribal profession. Certain motifs distinguish scribal wisdom: the wise courtier, the passionate-impetuous person versus the person of self-discipline, the rich versus the poor, the 'way of life,' the callow youth, the fool, the strong tower or fortified city, the man in surety.

Similarly, as thought, this wisdom carries a strong scribal ethic--*Standesethik*. Class-ethic may be either open or closed with respect to the world. It may refer to (1) a distinctive world-view common to a group; (2) an in-group morality which values actions differently depending on whether the agent and the context are within or outside the group; or (3) a professional code of ethics. Scribalism tends to be fairly open toward the world, though the fool rejects instruction and stands beyond the pale.¹ Both the passage from ben Sirah above² and the Instruction of Khety³ show the sharp revaluation

¹Kovacs, "Class Ethic," pp. 173-87.

²38:31-39:11.

³The Sebayit of Khety son of Duauf, "The Satire

of the scribal world that we would call 'in-group morality,' albeit a comparatively paternalistic one. The Egyptian *sebayit* show repeated evidences of scribal practices. The relative absence of such references in similar Hebrew works will be grounds for further discussion. Still, there are evidences of courtly etiquette and scribal discipline which suggest elements of such a professional code. Thus, scribal wisdom presents a world-view with an open class-ethic which is distinguishably scribal in any of several senses.¹

For the present stage of the discussion, however, the analytic category of form provides the most useful perspective on scribal wisdom. It includes:

a) Instructions. The Egyptian instructions generally begin with a brief *Rahmenerzählung* which sets out the conditions which led to the writing of the document. The earliest carry attributions to viziers and kings. They purport to be documents of courtly instruction intended exclusively or specifically to educate the crown prince. We mentioned earlier that certain inconsistencies cast doubt on the attributions: instructions from a dead pharaoh (though perhaps in a vision), scribal

on the Trades," in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 432-34.

¹Kovacs, "Class Ethic," pp. 173-87.

class-ethic directed at a lower official. By the time of the *sebayit* of Amenemope, perhaps 1200-1100 BCE, the *Rahmenerzählungen* credit middle-level officials, holding obscure or indeterminate positions. The late instructions in Egypt, for example Onchsheshongy, suggest a still broader perspective.¹ We might infer that the audience has a changing relationship to its classics over these centuries. Heredity begins to weigh less in the scales of scribal advancement and merit more; scribal ranks are filled from widening circles of potential candidates. If so, we should take invidious comparisons of other professions or crafts with scribal life as rather thinly-veiled threats rather than hortatory devices.

Following the statement of setting, these instructions generally state the purpose and objective of their teaching in a series of infinitives, paratactically and asyndetically related. The texts of the instructions appear random--the organizing principle, if there be any, does not involve bringing together logically-related situations in a systematic progression or argument. Admonitions and aphorisms, however, are not entirely independent but do frequently form short thematically-related units. Certain of the later *sebayit*, Amenemope and

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 51-150.

Papyrus Insinger, are divided into chapters or stanzas, but on stylistic grounds. The instructions usually close with a summary statement asserting the value of their teaching.¹ Ani, however, concludes with a dialogue between father and son (master and pupil) in which the father remonstrates with his recalcitrant son and affirms the youth's educability.² It also follows a wisdom pattern (compare the Egyptian "Dispute Over Suicide"³ and the Akkadian "Dialogue Between a Master and His Servant"⁴) of concluding paradoxically with what may be a play on weaning or the psycho-logic of man's natural drives.⁵ From Mesopotamia, we possess the Sumerian

¹F. W. von Bissing, *Altägyptische Lebensweisheit*, Bibliothek der alten Welt (Zurich: n.p., 1955); Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 421-25; Griffith; Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 8-84; František Lexa, *Papyrus Insinger: Les Enseignements Moraux d'un Scribe Égyptien du Premier Siècle après J.c.*, 2 vols.. (Paris: L'Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926), 2: 40-74.

²Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 420-21, see Wilson's introductory remarks; Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, p. 218.

³Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 405-07.

⁴Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 437-38.

⁵Cf. Ronald J. Williams, "Reflections on the Lebensmüde," in *Trudy 25. Mezdunarodnego Kongressa Vostokovedov: Moskva 9-16 Avgusta 1960* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnoj Literatury, 1962), 1: 88-95; Ronald J. Williams, "Theodicy in the Ancient Near East," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 2 (1956): 14-26; Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion*, pp. 69-84; *Sagesses du Proche-Orient Ancien*, q.v.; Eberhard Otto, *Der Vorwurf an Gott: Zur Entstehung des Ägyptischen Auseinandersetzungsliteratur*, Vorträge

"Instructions of Shuruppak,"¹ the "Counsels of Wisdom,"² and collections of miscellaneous proverbs.³ The form appears briefer but the evidence is admittedly limited. The key question, for our present inquiry, is whether Proverbs or any of its parts is an instruction in form--a question we shall defer for the moment.

The instruction must assuredly have had its *Sitz-im-Leben* in the scribal academies. In Egypt, the instructions were used to teach writing and the standards of the profession. Anywhere from a few lines to several pages (columns) of material would be copied each day according to the student's ability and level in the school; much must have been committed to memory. Since some of the materials were written in now-archaic forms of the

der Orientalischen Tagung in Marburg, Ägyptologische Fachgruppe, 1950 (Hildesheim: Gebr. Gerstenberg Verlag, 1951); Eberhard Otto, "Die Religion der Alten Ägypter," in *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. Bertold Spuler, Series I: *Der Alte und der Mittlere Osten*, vol. 8: *Religion*, Pt. 1: *Religionsgeschichte des Alten Orients*, Fasc. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), pp. 1-75; Eberhard Otto, "Der Mensch als Geschöpf und Bild Gottes in Ägypten," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie*, pp. 335-48; Aksel Volten, "Ägyptische Nemesis-Gedanken," in *Miscellanea Gregoriana: Raccolta di Scritti Pubblicati nel i Centenario dalla Fondazione del Pont. Museo Egl. (1839-1939)* (Rome: Max Bretschneider, n.d.), pp. 371-79.

¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, pp. 158-59.

²Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, pp. 159-60.

³Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, pp. 157-58; Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*.

language, instruction must have depended on rote memory and outright duplication of a master model. In fact, we know these instructions because of their pervasive preservation in student copies, however maladroit. The educational program in general must have been fairly constant throughout the ancient Near East as well as through time. Children of six to eight entered lower schools for elementary instruction lasting perhaps six years. Though the curriculum was wide, only the written portions, the instructions survive. The schools were small; the system was that of a master scribe instructing some few apprentices whom he had accepted. In the lower schools, training of a specific technical kind may have been provided for skilled artisans and over-seers who would need rudimentary literacy and mathematical competence in their work. Some students would continue in higher schools, perhaps organized by professional specialties, from their early teens to their majority. Here they were assigned the most rudimentary scribal tasks as true apprentices. In the lower schools certainly, and probably in both, the discipline was strict; the day was long; physical punishments were often threatened and sometimes invoked (but Ani's conclusion!). One's education resulted in employment as a journeyman in some minor state position until his mid-twenties when he became eligible for regular

appointment.¹ The system's paternalism is reflected in its technical terminology of 'father' for 'teacher' and 'son' for 'student.'

Historically, the schools seem, at least in Egypt, to have first been associated with the pharaonic court--to train princes and the sons of high officials. The school of the court began and seems to have remained in the palace itself. From this institution developed scribal institutions committed more to recruitment by merit which trained future officials of all kinds. These academies, both lower and higher, appear to have been decentralized: they existed in every major community.² Although we know virtually nothing about Hebrew pre-exilic educational institutions, many scholars are inclined to follow the Egyptian model for both organization and history.³ Ostensibly, the instructions are hortatory--the admonition, *Mahnspruch*, with a motivation clause, far predominates over the *Aussage*--and the *Rahmenerzählungen* frequently appeal to initiatory settings.

¹Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*.

²Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, pp. 10-55.

³See Gammie, "Israelite Pedagogy."

⁴Gerstenberger, *Wesen und Herkunft*; Richter, *Recht und Ethos*; Berend Gemser, "The Importance of the Motive Clause in Old Testament Law," in *Adhuc Loquitur*, pp. 96-115; Rudolf Kilian, "Apodiktisches und Kasuistisches Recht im Licht Ägyptischer Analogien," 185-202.

Thus, they may have been used or originated as material for scribal professional initiation rites. In Aḥikar, which should perhaps be treated under another heading anyhow, the setting is paradoxical, since in some versions the instructions constitute a judgment on Aḥikar's nephew and heir who then expires in shame.¹

b) Letters. The schools adopted various authentic and fictional letters to their didactic purposes, so that students might become familiar with epistolary forms and as settings for various academic problems. A few letters praise the wisdom of scribal life, hence forming the functional complement of instructions. Other letters, like Hori's "satirical" composition, serve as vehicles for scribal reflection and may be based on the forms of the academy.²

c) Annals; histories. Since the scribes kept the royal archives, they must be the custodians and composers of official histories. While history-writing itself cannot be regarded as wisdom, at least not without

Zeitschrift 7 (1963): 185-202; Anders Jørgen Bjørndalen, "'Form' and 'Inhalt' des Motivierenden Mahnspruches," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 82 (1970): 347-61; Hermisson, *Spruchweisheit*, pp. 137-86.

¹Cf. McKane, *Proverbs*, 156-82.

²See Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 431-34, 475-79; see Pritchard, *Ancient Near East*, pp. 623 ff.

leaving 'wisdom' a hopelessly vague concept, such adaptations as the novella can be considered artistic or polemical wisdom forms. Advocates of novella-wisdom base their position on the use of historical or quasi-historical materials to achieve a literary purpose. What appears to be simple historiography becomes on examination something quite different. The author reports conversations, feelings, by-play about which he could not possibly have been informed. The historical figures become protagonists in a literary creation designed to portray types of character and their (inevitable?) consequences in life. There is some interest in intentionality. The character types and the theory of retribution seem to be somehow beholden to wisdom categories.¹ Also, to some extent, "art for art's sake" may arguably be regarded as strictly a view of scribal wisdom. J's story of Creation would rank as a rather speculative wisdom adaptation of history;² the Succession Narrative may polemically assert the validity of Solomonic succession while criticizing the behavior of its cast.³ In Exilic and post-exilic

¹But see Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 52 (1955): 1-42; Kovacs, "Intentionality."

²Alonzo-Schökel, "Motivos," pp. 295-316.

³Whybray, *Succession Narrative*.

times, there certainly seems to have been a fashion of adopting traditional stories to literary ends. Job (depending on one's date for the work), Ruth, Esther, Daniel 1-6 could have been later scribal contributions to the novella or historically-grounded form [other possibilities: Jonah, Tobit, Aḥikar (mentioned in Tobit!)].¹

d) Epics; portraits of the 'Wise Scribe.' This form overlaps with the novella to the extent that the latter's subject becomes a heroic figure based on the idealization of his scribal character: Joseph, Daniel 1-6, Aḥikar. Since the form is virtually co-extensive with the epic wisdom we discussed earlier, we need add only a few further remarks. These character studies can go a long way toward filling in the gaps in our knowledge of that scribal wisdom not closely identified with the academies and their pedagogic, even if the portraits they present form a projected ideal rather than simple description based in actual experience, but only to the extent that we can locate these compositions with assurance in scribal wisdom circles.

Aḥikar offers few problems in this respect; its pervasiveness in the ancient Near East (copies were found

¹Whybray, *Succession Narrative*, pp. 96-116.

²Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 85-143; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 152-53, 156-82.

at Elephantine though the setting is Assyria) attests its popularity and probably the salience of its depiction in professional circles. Thus, we may infer broad commonalities among international scribes that justify a certain amount of argument from analogy from one culture to another.¹ That an instruction (perhaps two) forms an integral part of the epic, while the epic itself seems to be too intricate to dismiss as *Rahmenerzählung* (i.e., windowdressing for the teachings), may imply that our understanding of the instruction form is inadequate. Here the scribe is a high courtly advisor. The image reinforces inferences from the admonitions and aphorisms. The scribe depends entirely on the influence of his advice; power rests with the king. Character (intentionality) ultimately brings its own reward, and such personality is sufficiently innate that even the wisest of men cannot succeed in overcoming its deficiencies by the most intimate of associations and instructions. Further, such association works to the detriment of the sage; he becomes caught up in the working out of "retribution." Since the adviser's power is his word, he is vulnerable to counsels phrased more craftily (if not more elegantly), to intrigue, to manipulation of the king's good will. In

¹Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 85-143; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 152-53, 156-82.

the face of invincible royal wrath, the only hope rests in hiding until the mood changes and the king is again open to wise counsel. Still, the sage possesses the resources of friends and associates upon whom he may depend. He also has his wits, and the knowledge that justice will work itself out in time. The passionate impetuous fool will get his come-uppance. Importantly, the sages stand in for royalty in the international games of wisdom: scribal wisdom is credited to royal patrons. These games are interesting in themselves because of the association of riddles and outrageous word-play with wisdom. Notably, the games display striking visual realism which gives substance to the humor, unlike the impossibly inconsistent visions of many apocalyptists: the images are based in the hilarity of sensible men systematically going about doing the absurd. The notion of wisdom as game or competition among wise scribes acts as an important foil to treatments of wisdom as the purely aesthetic or didactic product of scribal reflection.¹

¹Foster, "Humor," pp. 69-86; Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965); Sheldon H. Blank, "Irony by Way of Attributions," *Semitics* 1 (1970): 1-6; D. F. Payne, "A Perspective on the Use of Simile in the Old Testament," *Semitics* 1 (1970): 11-125; James G. Williams, "Comedy, Irony, Intercession," *Semeia* 7 (1977): 135-45; Hans-Peter Müller, "Mythos, Ironie und der Standpunkt des Glaubens," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 31 (January-February 1975): 1-13; Johannes Hempel, "Pathos und Humor in der Israelitischen

The Joseph and Daniel stories, as we noted earlier, are problematic. They are not similar enough to Aḥikar in either form or content for the comparison to be decisive in determining whether they should be considered scribal or wisdom. Indeed, one appeals to the same elements of the stories in judging both aspects of the problem: if they treat of a projected ideal scribal figure, then perforce they are also wisdom. If they are not scribal, the professional elements being secondary or purely coincidental, they certainly are also not wisdom. As the comparison of von Rad's and Crenshaw's views suggested, the decision must be made at least partly on the relative weights the reader gives various elements in the stories.¹ We submit that two questions decide the issue.

First, what relationship existed between scribal wisdom and the cult? If we find that the wise regarded priestly practices with a distaste approaching on hostility, then the repeated elements of conventional religious practice in both stories would conflict with

Erziehung," in *Von Ugarit nach Qumran: Beiträge zur Alttestamentliche and Altorientalische Forschung* (Otto Eissfeldt zum 1. September 1957), Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 77 (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1958), pp. 63-81.

¹Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2: 300-13; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 355-63; Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," pp. 135-37.

the views of scribal wisdom. On the other hand, if right cultic practice is the *sine qua non* of advancement in wisdom, if one cannot become wise who does not practice the conventions of the faith (international scribalism: the practice of his country?), then these elements reflect scribal wisdom thought; one could not appeal to them in deciding the matter of wisdom.

Second, what relationship governs the influence of Yahweh upon the life and success of these heroes (Crenshaw--"spiritualizing")?¹ Both Joseph and Daniel enjoyed a divine charism, but based on what? If intentionality looms sufficiently large in scribal wisdom as against purely formal instruction, then Joseph's lack of formal instruction may diminish in significance. On the other hand, if the charism be founded in Yahweh's plans for the history of a people, scribal wisdom seems to be ruled out. Our conclusions in the study of aphoristic wisdom will apply directly to both these questions.

e) Word-games; riddles. If the Aḥikar setting applies, then we may locate verbal competitions and games in scribal wisdom as a kind of professional play, not scribal preservation of a folk genre. That these forms are associated with wisdom would hardly be worth disputing.

¹Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence," p. 137.

A series of numerical sayings follows the Agur collection near the end of Proverbs; another can be found at 6:16-19 in the midst of one of the admonitory discourses (instruction?). These sayings may well be the answers to riddles whose question form has not been retained but can presumably be projected directly from the response.¹

Several of the wisdom psalms seem to have originally been in riddle—or numerical-form.² Many scholars regard acrostic psalms to be wisdom by definition. The acrostic "Psalm of the Good Wife" which concludes Proverbs strongly counters the supposed misogyny of the wise. Whether the standards set for woman here are any more stringent or confining than those the wise men set for themselves remains to be seen. Psalm 119, 'torah-wisdom' demonstrates the elaborate--albeit somewhat tedious--lengths to which wordplay can be carried by sheer formalization. It should also remind us of the sophistication we may expect to find in wisdom word-play.

¹W.M.W. Roth, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament: A Form-Critical Study*, Vetus testamentum Supplements, vol. 13 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965).

²Sigmund Mowinckel, "Psalms and Wisdom," *Wisdom in Israel and Ancient Near East*, pp. 205-24; Roland E. Murphy, "A Consideration of the Classification 'Wisdom Psalms,'" *Congress Volume [of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament]: Bonn, 1962*, Vetus Testamentum Supplements, vol. 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), pp. 156-67; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 189-228, 71; Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 247-53.

On the other hand, whether these should be labeled 'scribal' is less clear. For formal word-play and riddles found in Proverbs, the matter hinges on whether one attributes the book as a whole specifically to scribal wisdom, since there is nothing in the sayings or their collection which is conclusive.

One might infer a common scribal background to these forms from their presence in such diverse literatures: proverb "collections," psalmbooks, history, prophecy (the numerical sayings and rhetorical questions of Amos, e.g.). While the writers betook themselves to different professional specialties, the forms they learned in their apprenticeship continued to hold fascination for them as rhetorical devices through which they could express their concrete ideas. This sort of argument, although eminently plausible, seems rather devious in the absence of clear evidence for an original scribal setting in the materials themselves.

Further, the problem appears in vocabulary. *'Hydwt'* and *'mlyšwt'* may indicate either riddles and word-plays, or scoffing and derision.¹ The only times the two words appear together in the Hebrew Bible are in Proverbs 1:6 where they seem to be in synonymous parallel and at

¹Müller, "Rätsel," pp. 465-89; Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 239-45; Kovacs, "Reflections."

Habakkuk 2:6 where they are joined together for intensification but with their other meanings:

Shall not all these take up their taunt against
him, in scoffing derision of him, . . .

A woe-oracle sequence follows based on a catalogue of injustices. *Mlysh* is used nowhere else. *Hydh* occurs frequently with respect to Samson's riddle. In Psalm 49:4 ET and Ezekiel 17:2 the word parallels *mšl*. Both are special uses. The former suggests a musical play:

I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre.

Whatever *hydh* is, music applies to its sense and resolution. In the latter, the term refers to the "Fable of the Cedar of Lebanon." Ezekiel, moreover, is notoriously replete with fabulous entities used in a quite prophetic-visionary manner. To treat the visions of Ezekiel as wisdom would leave that term utterly vacuous. Psalm 78:2 has the same terminological parallel, but the sense is closer to Numbers 12:8. *Hydh* seems to mean the mystery of divine word and deed in history. The first unveils the mighty deeds of Yahweh in history by rehearsing the accounts of his works; the second involves a Yahweh speech asserting the directness of his communication with Moses and implies the clarity of his acts. The two uses in I Kings 10:1 and II Chronicles 9:1 place the term in a context of royal wisdom that still reminds us of Aḥikar.

The Queen of Sheba intends to test Solomon's wisdom and insight by proposing *hydwt* to him. The problem of meaning here is no less acute than with *mšl*; the range is similarly wide.¹ The same situation obtains with fables--especially since the figure of the Greek Aesop invites so many interesting analogies.

We had best accept a more minimal stance in accord with the evidence. Certainly the scribal wise developed competitive verbal games. Riddles, word-plays, fables, all are common forms to many segments of society that were adopted by some scribes to their own special use.

f) Encyclopaedias: word-lists. To some extent, one must credit the quantities of, mostly multi-lingual, onomastica from Egypt and Mesopotamia to the scribal effort to keep alive accurate knowledge of "dead" languages as well as the proper symbolics and terminology of their own. Thus, they must have been encyclopaedic vocabulary lists, thematic rather than comprehensive, verbal in structure and not logical. Von Rad argued at one time that such lists lay behind the Yahweh speeches of Job 38-41, and perhaps ben Sirah 43, Psalm 148, the Hymn of the Three Young Men; he later doubted this theory.²

¹Müller, "Rätsel," pp. 465-89.

²Von Rad, "Hiob XXXVIII," pp. 293-301; von Rad,

Though we lack Hebrew onomastica in the biblical materials, the process suggests a scribal perspective with all its implications. They demonstrate an attempt to order and make sense of the world through naming, the use of the word. To name an entity is the first essential step in perceiving it adequately as an individual and describing its characteristics. Also, lists of things reflect a concern with nature, with entities of experience, broadly understood. The step to creation theology then is short: to give nature and order cosmogenic intelligibility. The god-listings fit such extrapolation.¹ A seemingly superficial activity therefore may generate profound implications; they permit us to include onomastica in scribal wisdom.

g) Codes of Decisions. Gemser, in his analysis of the role of the motive clause in Hebrew law, makes the suggestion that at least some aphorisms may have been used as legal summaries. He accepts at face value the humanism of Hebrew law. He finds that motive clauses, technically *Begrundungssätze*, sharply increase in frequency in the later codes. Since he accepts some kind of covenant renewal ceremony, he argues that the oral and popular nature

Old Testament Theology 1: 413-18; von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 288-92.

¹Von Rad, "Hiob XXXVIII," pp. 293-301.

of these recitations required social and theological reflection to justify and explain the laws as read. Hebrew codes are motivated because, unlike other ancient Near Eastern law-codes, they alone were of and for the people.

Tw^cbh sanctions indicate the cultic nature of this law.

He then suggests that early prophecy, wisdom, and law have a common origin in inspired law-givers of the community or tribe. As in some other cultures, proverbs constituted catch-summaries of legal principles and case-decisions. At the conclusion of a legal argument, the pleader would summarize his case with an accepted proverb, a legal maxim. Unsurprisingly, then, *tw^cbh*-sayings concerning identical issues appear in legal and proverbial biblical contexts. Some laws give a most aphoristic appearance in style and their balanced poetic form, using two-line structure.

While one may not wish to go so far as admit a quasi-popular nature to law or wisdom, nor find common history to three so different social groups, yet the suggestion that aphoristic wisdom at least partly stems from attempts to summarize cases in succinct generalities sets out a plausible ground for composing certain kinds of aphorisms. In *Mahnsprüche, Begründungssätze* are common.

¹Gemser, "Motive Clause," pp. 96-115.

One can readily imagine scribes coining maxims in pleasing but traditional form to help them negotiate the mazes of commerce, politics and the law. The later instructions in Egypt, however, possess far fewer *Mahnsprüche* in favor of *Aussagen*. In the four great mashal-collections, only C has significant numbers of motivated sayings. Still, the setting is eminently plausible and proposes a context for certain proverb forms.¹

h) Codes of ethics. In Egypt, the *sebayit* typically included references to the scribal art and its ethical code. While distinct codes did not exist, it seems to have been an important sub-form, which follows from its use in the school. Overt statements of such codes cannot be found in Hebrew wisdom much before the above passage from ben Sirah. Whether such a code may be inferred from other evidence is one of the questions to occupy us in our analysis of collection of B.

i) Ideologies. Narrowly understood, this form refers to explicit paeans to scribal wisdom. "In Praise of the Scribal Art"² and "In Praise of Learned Scribes"³ both display this concern to set in detail the legitima-

¹Gemser, "Motive Clause," pp. 96-115; Bjørndalen, pp. 347-61; Skladny.

²Sjöberg, pp. 127-31.

³Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 431-32.

tions of the profession. The value and meaning of scribal life is explored and explained. The "Satire on the Trades"¹ and the "Song of the Harper"² state the matter more negatively, though in quite different senses. The former justifies scribal life at the expense of other occupations. The latter suggests a pessimistic evaluation of all learning, not unlike the more speculative musings of Qoheleth. The passage from ben Sirah is strongly ideological, as demonstrated by the decidedly idealistic cast to its "ethic."

Ideology is not to be sharply distinguished from a professional code; elements of each may, as in the cited passage, appear together. We treat it separately because it can be important to differentiate the ethical and ideological dimensions of a given writing. Thus, apparently ethical statements may recur, not to re-assert their moral imperatives, but to serve some value-end. The weight of their meaning rests in the valued perspective toward life which they justify and affirm. The difference may seem abstruse here when stated in abstract terms, but it will prove important to our argument later, e.g., in terms of noblesse oblige and neo-naturalism.

¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 432-34.

²Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 467.

j) Other forms. Like all groups, the scribes not only preferred certain forms of their own invention or elaboration, but they turned other forms to their purpose, as we suggested was the case with riddles and word-games. In Egypt, we find two prophecies with important scribal elements and a wisdom dimension: "The Admonitions of Ipu-Wer"¹ and the "Prophecy of Nefer-rohu."² The latter is proleptic, looking toward resolution of the woes then besetting the land; it, and perhaps the other, is therefore taken to be anachronistic. In these, the triple affiliation, scribalism, wisdom, prophecy, clearly appears. Both decry the decline of morals, the collapse of order, and the impotence of government. They plead for justice and reform; the moral dimension stands at the forefront. To raise further the issue of wisdom and prophecy would lead us too far afield; however, we take note of the form.³ Whether aphorisms should be regarded as separate form in the sense of *Aussage* collections, remains problematic since it is in Proverbs that we find a distinction between instructions or admonitory discourses and simple

¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 467.

²Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 444-46.

³Cf. von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, pp. 359-60.

sayings-collections, at least in principle.¹ (Gordon attributes the Sumerian proverbs collections to [scribal] collocations of folk wisdom, however he does not argue the problem at length nor in detail.²) Thus, there persists the more basic issue whether the mashal-collections in Proverbs, which have few *Mahnsprüche*, should be regarded as in any sense products of specifically scribal wisdom. The analysis below should help clarify the relationship between the aphoristic literature and scribalism, but we should not prejudge the matter by now isolating an aphorism-collection form in scribal wisdom.

If we simply equate scribalism with wisdom, then a history of the profession in Israel can be written, although it remains somewhat speculative. The evidence for scribal development alone, however, is rather meager. The Golden Age of Solomon, which we discussed anent royal wisdom, may have seen the establishment of an educated administrative class founded on the Egyptian model and trained by imported Egyptian leadership (if Elihoreph is an Egyptian name).³ The legend of Solomon's wisdom

¹Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 229-39; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 1-208.

²Gordon, "New Look," pp. 122-52.

³McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, p. 28; Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 261-68.

could then be traced to his patronage of the academies, perhaps by the kind of attribution one finds in Aḥikar.

The attractive feature of this theory, in addition to the fact that it preserves a historical element in the biblical record, is that it establishes a linear and temporal relationship among royal learning or wisdom, the *‘śh* of counselors, and the traditional learning of the schools and professional scribes. We argued, however, that royal wisdom has an entirely different relationship to power and its use than does either counsel or scribal wisdom. The latter, however, have much in common with each other.

Recently, Scott has again underscored the caution with which we should approach the superscriptions that attest Solomonic wisdom, since their historical relationship to the texts that follow is completely indeterminable.¹ From a strictly institutional point of view, we know that David and Solomon already had men in offices called "sopher," "scribe," and "mazqir"--remembrancer or recorder. There is a possible reference to the office in the Song of Deborah, "wmzwbwn mšky m bšbt sfr," but the passage is doubtful.² The offices are mentioned regularly from Hezekiah's time on, though the precise duties involved

¹Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 272-79.

²McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 15-22.

can only be speculated upon.¹ McKane contends that they were royal advisors, and implies that the term "sopher" takes on a special sense like the English "Governmental Secretary." They were among the *śarim*, the cabinet of the king. The *śh* of Hushai and Ahithophel shows the learning and insight, thus *hkmh* with divine sanction, that accompanied their rise to position.²

While the prophets adopted a polemical stance against the advice of royal counselors, McKane also points out how they used the language of wisdom to their purposes.³ Whether the wise and scribes can be distinguished in this polemic is unclear. In Isaiah 19:11 ff., the wise are obviously the advisors of Pharaoh, and wisdom assumes a distinctly royal coloring. Elsewhere, the wise seem to be set as a distinct class, who possess however both *hkmh* and *śh*, against prophets, priests, mighty men, the wealthy. The prophet and the priest and the wise man appear in Jeremiah 18:18.

Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. . . ."

¹McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 23-36; Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 274-79.

²McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 23-47.

³McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 41-42.

Three classes are distinguished, with the wise having *ʿsh*. The wise, in these passages, seem to have secular advice to offer; theirs is a practical judgment of expediency that is in conflict with proper reliance upon Yahweh. While scribes are not mentioned, *ʿsh* is the counselor's attribute. These men seem to occupy positions where they can offer influential advice. The phrase, "wise in their own eyes," suggests a play on the wisdom view that arrogance can go hand-in-hand with folly.¹ One might, then, infer from the pharaonic reference that the wise and the scribal class are identical.

Yet, Jeremiah 8:8-9 raises doubts:

How can you say, "We are wise,
and the law of the Lord is with us"?
But, behold, the false pen of the scribes
has made it into a lie.
The wise men shall be put to shame;
they shall be dismayed and taken;
lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord
and what wisdom is in them?

Compare Jeremiah 2:8.

The priests do not say, "Where is the Lord?"
Those who handle the law did not know me; . . .

Lindblom thinks that the first informs the second--that the scribes are not to be regarded as identical with the wise but rather as the transmitters and scholars of the law who have falsified it. They are therefore "those who

¹McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, pp. 63-112; cf. Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 6-54.

handle" in the second quotation. Thus, by late in the monarchic period, the wise and the scribes were separate classes. Indeed, one group of professional scribes had become so identified with torah-study that they formed a distinct and recognizable social group, as they most certainly did in a later time when Ezra was a scribe of the Law.¹

The issue becomes still more complicated when we consider the passages of reinterpreted wisdom, where wisdom is what Yahweh used to order creation:

It is he who made the earth by his power,
 who established the world by his wisdom,
 and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.
(Jer. 10:12)

These quotations point up the difficulties that follow attempts to infer about one social group from the documents of another, and competing, perspective. Further, one scarcely knows how to take these few remarks--do they represent a "family feud," in-house radicalism that at once evokes and assuages guilt (if there were guild prophecy), or avidly competing contradictory views of reality?

We do better to work from within, to evoke the setting from content analysis of documents if possible. Thus, we shall address the question of setting and

¹Lindblom, pp. 192-204.

scribalism in our analysis below. We can say that Isaiah and Jeremiah attacked that practical view of life, which centered in the royal councils, that sought to cope with conflicting social and political pressures by relying on the collective judgments of pragmatic rationality alone. No counsel established on purely human wisdom can prevail against the divine word (spoken, presumably, by the prophet). The ultimate example which refutes attempts to build social histories from these prophetic oracles is the relationship of Jeremiah to his scribe Baruch. Should we infer a group of professional scribes associated with the prophetic guild? Or, is the relationship entirely personal? Is Baruch the faithful amenuensis or the deeply committed friend, counselor and historian, who preserves and edits? One can only speculate.¹

¹In addition to mentioning the royal offices of "sopher" and "mazgir," the deuteronomic historian also credits the royal council with recognizing the importance of the law-code found in the Temple, reading it over, and bringing it to Josiah's attention. On his order, they seek the (wise?) prophetess Huldah's validation of the document. Apparently this diligence of the *šarim* did not much redound to their credit in the eyes of Jeremiah. The Chronicler makes mention of a scribal family at Jabez. He locates scribes in the military and among the Levites, and expands the other offices of the cabinet. A reference in Psalm 45:1 ET is metaphorical:

"... I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe."

The text appears to be a royal wedding song. It introduces the term *mhyr*, which occurs only four times in the Hebrew Bible: here, in the Amenemope parallel, of Ezra ("skilled in the law of Moses"), and in an Isaianic oracle of promise (*mahir sēdeq*). It means at least scribal competence and perhaps legal facility (i.e., in torah).

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs without question is a composite work; still, our use of the term "collection" to refer to certain blocks of sayings within the Book somewhat begs questions of structure, form and composition. The sayings are diverse; a multiplicity of forms and sub-forms appears. The motifs are no less diverse than the themes, whether overtly expressed or merely implied obliquely. Some sayings are known from international wisdom (i.e., they appear in substantially the same form in other cultures or are "quoted" in the truly international works of wisdom). Foreign sages are quoted, and scholars have discerned at least one foreign work in Hebrew dress (the *sebayit* of Amenemope). The composite depth of Proverbs is an open question, since layers of material can be seen: within the larger "collections" one finds smaller thematic blocks; other sections are unified by form; similar and duplicate sayings recur. Further, the Book has been given a measure of structural and thematic unity by prefixing a preface and motto, use of superscriptions, and segregation of materials by form.

Clearly, editors composed and redacted the Book from a wide variety of resources. To speak of editors and their schools, however, still leaves us far from understanding their motives, the interpretation and use they gave the Book--not to mention its constituent parts, and their contribution to the artistic unity of the work. To the extent that certain groups of the wise demanded that the sage be steeped in the authoritative and traditional words of his fore-bears, the poet-sage could draw extensively upon the intellectual, artistic and verbal resources of his class while remaining in every sense an artist and author in his own right.

In other words, among a class which lays great stress upon learning some formally-defined and -refined literature--whether oral or written is immaterial--and which uses a highly sophisticated and stylized mode of expression, the question of composition is a murky one. In such a case, as with Proverbs, interpretation, rather than the evidence alone or as such, becomes quite difficult. For this reason, we shall not pursue the tangled skein of structure at great length--a vital question, it would nonetheless lead us far afield from our principal concerns. Rather, we shall sketch the location of II-B in Proverb's larger apparent structure, and respond to certain questions which fundamentally affect the validity of our approach.

Superficially, Proverbs presents the appearance of the instruction form. It begins with a superscription that could be interpreted as the *Rahmenerzählung*, generally quite brief, which sets the occasion for the teaching; the *Rahmenerzählung* appears most consistently in the Egyptian *sebayit*. The next five verses state the purpose of the book in a series of paratactic infinitive phrases (construct form); the infinitive is implicit in the second half of the 3 plus 3 synonymous parallelism but expressed in v. 2. V. 5. is the exception, employing imperfects with jussive force in both halves. A similar statement of purpose follows none of the other superscriptions, so these verses may have been intended to apply to the entire work. V. 7 states the motto of the work:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge:
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The preface and motto set out the purpose in the technical vocabulary of wisdom. The terms are not defined, but rather reinforced by the repetition of functional substitutes. They rehearse wisdom's most fundamental beliefs. Wisdom is a discipline that can be intelligibly stated in words. Wisdom can be learned and taught, and therefore manifested in a pattern of sensible and prudent conduct. The simple can learn wisdom's caution, but the youth especially (?) is amenable to instruction in wisdom.

The wise man can amass learning and further guidance in conduct. The word is the instrument of teaching and learning.¹ V. 6 then focusses on the role of sayings in instruction. The Amenemope section duplicates a portion of that work's statement of purpose, though the infinitives appear only briefly toward the end in the Hebrew version, in preference to an imperative series.

From 1:8, the first nine chapters are given over principally to a series of hortatory discourses in which imperatives and vetitives figure importantly, though by no means exclusively. The exact number of discourses depends upon what strictures are employed to distinguish them, especially since several seem otherwise to be quite short. It is possible to reduce the number to seven, to reach the number of pillars in wisdom's house in 9:1, but the reduction is necessarily speculative.² Overtly, there are some twelve whole or partial blocks of instruction plus a number of independent blocks of material conjoined. Most begin with a vocative, *bny* or rarely *bnym*,³ followed by an injunction in the imperative to hear attentively these words (of the father-teacher) and work to

¹Würthwein, *Weisheit Ägyptens*, p. 8.

²Skehan, *Studies*, pp. 9-45.

³Prov. 4:1; 5:7; 7:24; 8:32.

retain them diligently--or conversely not to forget them
--and concluded by some statement of purpose, consequence,
or motivation.¹

The terms *'b* and *bny* presumably reflect the technical language of the school in which the master addressed his apprentice, and was addressed in turn, in familial terms, apparently reflecting the ideal of intimacy and obedient respect that bound or ought to have bound them together. Occasionally the mother, *'m*, is mentioned which does not however argue in favor of a *Sippenweisheit* interpretation of this hortatory wisdom. De Boer has shown that this term too can have a (school) wisdom application.² Moreover, the teaching for King Lemuel (Proverbs 31:1-9). is explained as issuing from his mother: *mś' 'sr-yšrtw 'mw*.

To the extent that instructions were utilized by some social caste, for example a hereditary scribal or official class, these familial terms could have served a dual function. Schmid's paradigm traces Egyptian wisdom back to a patriarchal setting in which these words would have had their literal meaning The technical later

¹Bjørndalen; pp. 347-61; Whybray, "Literary Problems," pp. 482-96; Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*; N. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," *Interpretation* 26 (1972): 131-56; Richter, *Recht und Ethos*, pp. 46-47.

²De Boer, pp. 62-71.

derived as the transmission of wisdom and the institution of the school came to be divorced from the (royal or aristocratic) family.¹ Brunner argues for a progressive democratization of the Egyptian school. He contends that originally the apprentice bound himself to a master as a kind of adopted son. The familial terms applied to the personal and intimate relationship of chosen teacher and student who lived together and worked together in a non-institutional setting. As the later school grew and formalized these relationships, while recruiting from a far wider and less nepotous circle, the familial terms became technical.² Thus, analogy would lead us to conclude that the instructions of chapters 1-9 belong to a teaching setting, and perhaps to the school. The terms alone may be literal, or metaphorical i.e., technical), or for the caste both.

The discourses are brief but tend to be thematically consistent, if not unified, hence composed of multi-lined sayings and admonitions. While some discourses are largely composed of individual two- or four-line sayings connected together by a common idea or phrase, others consist of much larger syntactic unities. For

¹Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 8-84; cf. Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, pp. 1-55.

²Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, pp. 10-32.

this reason, it is difficult to establish with certainty the relationship of what otherwise seem to be independent blocks of material that intrude into the framework of discourses. These include the extended references to personified and hypostatic wisdom as well as the extended metaphor of the "foreign woman," the *ʾyśh zrh*. Two factors further complicate the question, one theoretical and the other an artifact of translation.

First, the characterizations of the foreign woman seem to involve some inconsistencies so that none of the four major interpretations offered is free of difficulties: the foreign woman is a common prostitute, hence the passages reflect the pragmatizing asceticism of the wise and the Hebrew concern for controlled sexuality; she is the hierodule, so the wise like the prophets inveigh against allegiance to foreign-originated cults of sexuality; she is foreign, perhaps legally the Hebrew's wife, and is attacked out of late Hebrew national exclusivism; or, she is Astarte, or some other fertility goddess, humanized and personified, and the imagery is intended to support Hebrew yahwistic exclusivism. Personified wisdom

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 262-412; Gustav Boström, *Proverbiastudien: die Weisheit and das Fremde Weib in Spr. 1-9*, Acta Universitatis Lundensis, Nova Series, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, Ny Följo, Avdelningen 1: Teologi, Juristik och Humanistika Ämnen, vol. 30, no. 3 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1934); Habel, pp. 131-56.

is obviously a foil to the foreign woman, whether wisdom's figure be original to these passages or a later addition; so, the two interpretations and their textual and tradition history are closely intertwined. The last case could be used to support the argument for an early Hebrew wisdom rnythos, deriving from a Canaanite wisdom goddess Hokmot.¹ If Wisdom is a polemical figure directed against the fertility cult, it can also be fairly early (i.e., early to middle monarchy), derived either by direct analogy or by extension from Egyptian hypostatic wisdom.² Bauer-Kayatz rejects the speculation of Rankin and others that Wisdom is a Persian figure derived from one of the Amesha Spentas: with Egyptian influence, the figure need not be late.³

Second, English translations like the RSV and JB use feminine pronouns liberally, begging the question which passages actually demand it. Ringgren distinguishes hypostasis (treating a characteristic of a deity as an independent agency) and personification (giving it the

¹The unusual form *hkmwt* appears in 1:20 and 9:1, at 14:1 (of women? construct), in the discourse section 24:7, and in the wisdom psalm 49:3 (4).

²Albright, "Canaanite-Phoenician Sources," pp. 1-15; Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9*; Boström, *Proverbiastudien*:

³Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1-9*; Rankin, pp. 222-64.

attributes of a person).¹ Personified wisdom appears irrefutably only in 1:20-33; 8:1-31 and 9:1-6. These passages seem to be independent of the discourses.² Four: 1-9 demands at most hypostasis;³ certainly the personification of RSV and JB is excessive. The foreign woman and Wisdom as person are interpretive cruces.

The discourses, however, are not *prima facie* post-Exilic. They have classic instruction form and could conceivably have originated in a Hebrew (monarchic) scribal milieu influenced by Egyptian didactic techniques. Conversely, there is no reason why that milieu need be monarchic since doubtless scribal activity continued in Judah after the Kingdom's fall as the *sine qua non* of effective domination. In sum, the Wisdom figure of these sections cannot be used to prove conclusively any thesis about the date of Proverbs 1-9 (and by inference the rest of the Book) on the basis of present knowledge--let alone prove the hypothesis that wisdom is generally late.

Seams are prominent in the text, both MT and LXX. The last discourse concludes with 8:36. Nine:1-6 presents

¹ Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*; Schencke.

² 8:32-36 is an embedded incomplete (?) discourse independent of the Wisdom image.

³ Though the verbs in Vv. 8-9 may not even require that much: *ntn*, *mgn*, *h̄bq*.

the Wisdom figure and her (astral?) house (related to ch. 8, presumably). Vv. 7-12 are a collection of unrelated sayings, except v. 11 (in the first person!) which ostensibly belongs to v. 10 but may actually belong with v. 6. Vv. 13-8 are an isolated passage on the foreign woman with no clear tie to the preceding verses. This assemblage of diverse and unrelated materials here (as elsewhere) suggests a seam, which is confirmed by the superscription at 10:1, as does the addition of sayings in the LXX at vv, 10 (1), 12 (3) , and 18 (4 additions).

Chapters 10-5 are composed exclusively of dystichs, most of them showing antithetic parallelism, and the majority in 3 plus 3 rhythm. The LXX has a number of additions scattered through this collection. Fourteen:1 may be a reference to personified Wisdom if one is prepared to emend *nšym* to *tšym* or delete it *metris causa*. As it stands the verse would support the motif of the good wife and counter the otherwise misogynic picture of wisdom. The emendation of *bnth* to *b'yt* then gets rid of the double verb problem (an emendation necessitated by emendation, let us note) and produces interesting syntax. As is, there is no personification, and personified Wisdom appears nowhere else in collections A through D.

In support of this point, we note that the foreign woman (*yšh zrh* or *nkryh*), apparently the antecedent (?) and foil of Wisdom, is at most suggested at 20:16 and 27:13. Both passages are difficult; both deal with surety for foreigners. Both are intelligible without, and context seems to support no, reference to the foreign woman. Hence, the four mashal collections make no clear reference to either figure, and most probably make none at all.

In collection A, 14:13 clashes with the supposed naive optimism of the antitheses. Fifteen:25 is a key saying for those who seek some doctrine of immortality, apart from Sheol, at least for the righteous. Whatever poetic structure unites collection A, the content and themes of the sayings appear quite random except for short groups of aphorisms and the unity offered by catchwords.

Collection B differs from A in form, shifting from antithetic to synonymous and synthetic parallelism. Evidence of the change appears to some extent in chapter 15, and from 16 on antithetic parallelism is uncommon.¹ Otherwise, the two-line balanced form with 3 + 3 meter predominating continues. The LXX also evidences a seam

¹See Appendix, Table 7.

through a series of omissions and a different sequence of verses from 15:27 to 16:10. Collection B does not begin unmistakably with 16:1, although that is the point commentators almost invariably choose. Their decision is probably dictated by the fact that the verse asserts the intervention of Yahweh between intention and deed.¹ This theme recurs with some emphasis in B, while A seems to put forth the conventional doctrine of retribution; witness the distinction between the two collections drawn by Skladny.² Not only does the LXX's mingling of these early verses of chapter 16 with the end of chapter 15 raise some questions about this division, but the decline of antithetic parallelism and the presence of several Yahweh sayings toward the end of 15 in the MT along with the continuing pattern of catch-words and assonance all suggest considerable imprecision in the precise point of division between the two collections.

In the LXX, 16:6 appears as 15:27a; 16:7, as 15:28a; 16:8 and 9, as 15:29a-b. Fifteen:31 is omitted entirely, along with 16:1-3. A few LXX MSS give 16:1 followed by ben Sirah 3:18, generally with a star and obelus. The LXX then gives a saying not found in MT,

¹See Appendix, Table 8.

²Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 7-46.

then 16:5, then two more unique sayings, 16:4, followed by 16:10 *et seq.* without further notable disruption.

For Scott, this fluidity evidences the hand of a redactor, hence the transitional section should be treated with care. He argues that a yahweh-redaction has inserted a section exalting the active power of Yahweh to precede the undisturbed king passage, and that certain king-sayings have been transformed into references to Yahweh.¹ While the LXX does not present the primordial text, it does evidence a different tradition without a long beginning block of yahweh-maxims. The following two verses precede 16:10--the first is unique and the second follows 16:4 MT which we give for comparison:

He who seeks the lord finds knowledge in accord with
righteousness;
and the ones who seek it rightly will find peace.
All the lord's works are in accord with righteousness,
but the unrighteous will come into the evil day.
Yahweh has made everything to its purpose,
even the wicked for the evil day. [B.K.]

This evidence, however, is amenable to more than one interpretation. First, while the LXX provides clear indications of separations in the text, by dislocations

¹Scott, *Proverbs*, pp. 16-27; Scott, *Way of Wisdom*, pp. 48-71; R. B. Y. Scott, "Wise and Foolish, Righteous and Wicked," in *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*, vol. 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 146-65. See Appendix, Table 9.

and especially through the sites where a number of additions to the text were permitted to appear together, Gerleman has shown that the translator of Proverbs had distinct poetic and philosophic interests that limit the usefulness of the LXX as evidence against the MT.¹ The LXX substitutes more acceptable Greek poetic forms for Semitisms which, in excess, would be unpalatable to the Hellenic reader. For example, the translator significantly reduces the number of instances of synonymous parallelism. Where the MT is obscure, he often substitutes proverbs from his own milieu or he provides a harmonizing line from his own repertoire. He also is inexact in his translation, using Greek technical terminology, *dikaio sunê* especially, in place of more neutral alternatives. From his practices, Gerleman concludes that the translator, while not necessarily a Stoic himself, must have had sympathies with the stoic point of view and its modes of expression. Insofar as the material and his own superseding religious commitment allowed, he conformed his translation to a quasi-stoic point of view. Thus, we should be chary about postulating

¹Gillis Gerleman, *Studies in the Septuagint*, vol. 3: *Proverbs*, Asta Universitatis Lundensis, Nova Series, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, Ny Följo, Avdelningen 1: Teologi, Juristik och Humanistika Ämnen, vol. 52, no. 3 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1956).

alternative manuscript traditions, even when we assume that some alternatives must have existed though they remain unknown to us, on the basis of the LXX. The Syriac and Targums offer no help in this matter since they seem to be derived from the LXX; other versions are no less derivative.

Second, there is a poetic unity to the materials that is too easily overlooked--it certainly has not been adequately studied. Vv. 29-33 at the end of chapter 15 almost certainly form a distinct unit.¹ *Lb* of v. 28 is echoed in vv. 30, 32; 16:1, 5. *šdyq* in v. 28a parallels *šdyqym* in v. 29b. While the evil mouth pours out evil in 28b, the prayers of the righteous are heard according to 29b--parallel structure. The root ^c*nh* may form an inclusio in v. 28 and 16:1--or the term could refer both backwards (to v. 23) and forwards, if the B collection were to begin still further back. Catch-words include also *mwsr*, *yhw*, ^c*sm*, ^c*rs*, *twkht*, and *hkmh*. "Eyes" and "ears" are in parallel in vv. 30-1. There could conceivably be a play on the terms "heart," "life" and "spirit" which successively conclude the first stichoi of vv. 30-2--further all three have an introspective concluding stich, especially vv. 30 and 32. V. 33 shares

¹See Appendix, Table 9.

four catch-words backwards. Forwards, it shares *yhw* with the succeeding block in 16; *°nwh* echoes *m°nh* in 16:1, *°ynyw* in v. 2 (?), and *m°nhw* in v. 4. Interestingly, the phrase *yr't yhw mwsr* parallels 16:6b's *wbyr't yhw swr mr°* (note the chiasmic play of consonants from *mwsr*). Further, 15:33 can be interpreted in line with the active role of Yahweh in 16:1--especially since 33b is a verbless stichos. This view is reinforced if *mwsr* is in construct and not paratactic (Beer so emends¹) relationship with *hkmh*; *kbwd* would then be an understood reference to the divine. Also significant is the fact that while 15:23, 24, 30, 31, 33; 16:3-7 are synonymous, 15:25-9, 32; 16:1-2 (!), 9 are antithetic (16:8 is a *twb-nn* saying). Yahweh-sayings appear at 15:25-6, 29, 33 and in the first nine verses of chapter 16 with the curious exception of v. 8.²

Since the first LXX 'dislocation' follows 15:27, and since 15:28 anticipates 16:1 in somewhat "secular" fashion (the distinction between thought and deed, the balance between plan of heart and speech), we could begin collection B as early as 15:28 on solid poetic

¹BH³ [G. Beer, "Libros Iob et Proverbiorum" in *Biblia Hebraica*, ed. Rud. Kittel, P. Kahle, A. Alt and O. Eissfeldt, 3d ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), pp. 1173.]

²See Appendix, Table 8.

grounds. Certainly, the collections also are joined by catch-words, so this kind of reasoning is never certain --especially since the fortuitous assonance between ends of collections is far easier to contrive by judicious editing than the fortuitous paronomastic assemblage of an entire work of divers sayings. I could also see a plausible argument for beginning B with 15:23 since it, too, anticipates 16:1 and is the verse one can relate to v. 28 by assonance. Its notion of the proprieties of time would be a hint of the active role to be assigned Yahweh. The assonance structure of these verses is somewhat looser than those at the end of the chapter, so somewhat weaker and more ambiguous; thus there is little more than the possibility in favor of any still earlier separation, and the evidence of the LXX against it.

Third, and finally, we have a block of ten yahweh-sayings in the MT. On the basis of Occam's Razor, no advantage accrues to us from postulating unnecessary redactions. Whether there is a difference in the implicit world-view between the Yahweh-sayings and the rest of the collection, is a question for the next chapter to answer. In favor of the integral relationship of these sayings to collection B¹ are the patterns of parallels and

¹Aside from trying to explain why a redactor who otherwise chose to scatter his additions and revisions

paronomasia which bind them together and the terms and concepts which cannot be a re-write of some earlier saying (e.g., of the king).¹ To the former, we point to the elaborate structure of catch-words and assonances that continues from those noted above. V. 1a and v. 2a are chiastically related (*'drm m^crky; drky-^cyš*). The word *m^cnh* is echoed in assonance in three following verses (vv. 1-4). Vv. 2-4 begin *kl-gl-kl* and v. 5ab has *kl*. Other catch-words and word-plays: **kwn, hsb, r^c, drky-^cyš, qm, lb, yhw, 'dm*. Vv. 5a, 6b., and 7a are a cycle dwelling on relationships with Yahweh (abomination, reverence, pleasure). Vv. 4, 5 and 6, 7 are virtually synonymous, with the b stichoi of the last two carrying forward themes from the first two sayings. V. 8 is far less closely tied in poetically with the yahweh-sayings, having perhaps the slightest of similarity of sound between 7ba and 8ba, but it anticipates the vocabulary of the king-sayings by suggesting the catch-words *sdqh* and *mšpt*, and it may play on dividing by inference the hendyadys of v. 6--thematically, it constitutes an extension of the reasoning in v. 7 (defining *šlm*) and a

randomly through the text chose to assemble a block of sayings before this group of king-sayings and this group only--let alone explain why the secondary source, the LXX, is evidently more disrupted than the MT primary.

²See Appendix, Table 10.

qualification on the king-sayings. We should also not miss the periodic pattern of *twb-mn* sayings which this verse begins (about every ten sayings).¹ Sayings which involve concepts only applicable to Yahweh include vv. 1-4 (determiner of acts, creator, establisher of plans, weigher of the spirit), 6 (the language is all but cultic and technical), 7b (?), and 9.

We would argue, therefore, that the shift in sayings like 16:9 LXX (16:4 MT) is a creature of the philosophical commitments of the translator made possible by the shift of technical vocabulary (*dikaiosunê* for *lm^cnhw*, e.g.) from which any retroduction is exceedingly hazardous. To shift many of these sayings from profane to sacred or vice versa, in Hebrew, is no less complicated than simply writing new sayings to serve the purpose. In a potentially ambiguous phrase like v. 7a, the term *yhw* or *mlk* gives the phrase its impact: syntactic identity is not semantic identity. A single author may use this shift as a poetic device, and indeed the writer(s) of these sayings use this device of catch-phrases repeated (shorter duplications). Duplication can serve artistic ends and is of itself proof only that a phrase is "stock" not that it has been somehow edited

¹See Appendix, Tables 11 and 12.

post facto. This argument's principal force is to poetry, like that of Proverbs, where the phrases are terse and therefore ambiguous and open to multiple meanings. Meaning depends on precise syntactic relations; each word contributes a high proportion of the saying's meaning.

The seam between B and the Amenemope section is clear, by virtue of the literary dependency of 22:17-23:12 on the Egyptian work. *Dbry-ḥkmym* may be a superscription. The Hebrew shortens the original considerably, hebraizes it, and uses the brief portions selected out of sequence. How one is to get thirty chapters or sayings, even by using the nondependent portions which follow, is not clear. Twenty-three:13-4 are found in *Aḥikar*. Twenty-three:15-24:22 includes a series of discourses addressed repeatedly to *bny* but without the formulaic pattern of the early chanters of Proverbs. The hortatory form of the admonition is used frequently, and the sections are of moderate length. The vetitive 'I with a motivation clause (often beginning *ky*) recurs. The foreign woman is suggested (23:27-8) as is hypostatic wisdom (24:2-7). The theology is somewhat more pragmatic, at least on the surface, in this section. Witness the following:

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let
 not your heart be glad when he stumbles;
 lest the Lord see it, and be displeased,
 and turn away his anger from him. (24:17-18)

Vv. 21-2 express similar cautions toward dealings with Yahweh and with the king, "and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?" At 24:22, the LXX adds five sayings and then appends 30:1-14, the sayings of Agur. The MT has a new superscription and some eleven-and-a-half verses of admonition and development of the theme of the sluggard. Thirty:15-31:9 follows in the LXX.

The superscription at 25:1 in the MT, even though the relationship of superscription to text remains imponderable, is a *crux interpretum*. We earlier reviewed Scott's arguments on Solomonic wisdom versus Hezekiah: it is far easier both historically and sociologically to imagine an established traditional scribal wisdom late in the period of the Judean monarchy than under Solomon himself--if only because of the difficulty of forming a solidified didactic (school or oral) teaching in the space of a single (originating) monarchy.¹ The verb **^ctq* is a hapax in the sense of "copy," which does not help clarify what the superscription intends:

These also are Solomonic proverbs which the
 men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied. (B.K.)

¹Scott, "Beginnings," pp. 262-79; Scott, "Wise and Foolish," pp. 146-65.

The LXX has for the first part "hautai hai paideiai[!] Salomōntōs hai adiakritoi," which reflects some of the tendencies noted by Gerleman.

Collection C begins with a series of king sayings; it starts with only a single reference to God in the first stichos, using the infrequent term *'lhym*. This fact is an interesting counterpoise to the thesis of a yahweh-redaction at work in the block from 16:1 (or 15:33). C differs from the other four major mashal collections in its use of longer groups of thematically-affiliated sayings. The meter and the number of lines composing a saying vary considerably. The parallelism continues synonymous and synthetic; two-line sayings are by no means entirely absent. Vetitives and imperatives with motivational clauses occur, especially toward the beginning of the collection. B and C have the only use of the school vocative *bny*, each only once, at 19:27 and 27:11. C is distinguished by its frequent references to the king, to courtly behavior and paradoxically, by its use of agricultural, husbandry and natural language. In fact, the collection closes with a block of such materials.

D differs from C in returning to the preferred two-line form; like A, it predominates in antithetic parallelism. Like the seam between A and B, the seam

here is identified by the change in form. Unlike the former, at the beginning of chapter 28, there are no LXX dislocations or added sayings to point up the change. Collection D, though fairly unremarkable as to form, does present some departures from the other collections in content. It includes four torah-sayings at 28:4, 7, 9 and 29:18; only A, at 13:14, among the four collections has a similar reference (there, however, as *twrt-hkm* which JB and RSV both give as "teaching," obscuring the-term).¹ References to law are not uncommon in the opening discourse passages; there is a single use in the concluding psalm (31:26 recalls the mention in A). The discourses, use *twrh* for the instruction of the father or mother which the student must retain.² In 28:3, there is a reference to natural evil; 28:13 may indicate a view that overt recognition of transgression (RSV "confession" for *wmwdh*) is essential to their rejection and one's deliverance. Twenty-eight:17 asserts bloodguilt. Twenty-nine:3-decries harlotry, but without any suggestion of the foreign woman. In 29:18, law and prophecy (*hzwn*) appear in parallel. It is the only reference to prophecy in Proverbs under either **hzh* or **nb'*. Twenty-nine:24

¹Cf. 31:26.

²1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20, 23; 7:2.

brings up the robber's code of silence, or "honor among thieves."

Although both are based on antitheses, D differs from A in its number of striking and significant (from the view of theology and ethics) concrete sayings. The banality which Skladny remarks in the routinized vocabulary of A is therefore not essential to the antithetic form of aphorism.¹

Both B and D are distinguished as separate collections on form-critical grounds; as we have seen, smaller blocks of material can be discerned at places in the text. Thus, the exact number of collections one could theoretically discern depends on the criteria for distinguishing changes in form and content--what threshold one adopts for saying that the change in material is so great that clearly one is dealing with an independent unit.²

Bryce, for example, proposes to find a separate collection in chapter 25:2-27.³ He argues that Egyptian

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 57-67.

²Presumably meaning at least "written at another time" or more likely "written or redacted by someone else."

³Glendon E. Bryce, "Another Wisdom-'Book' in Proverbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (June 1972): 145-57.

wisdom often includes a statement of theme in the middle of the work, in addition to one at the beginning and end. By an ingenious emendation of v. 27, admittedly a difficult text, Bryce finds a collection of court wisdom with the theme emphasized by a central transitional rubric in vv. 16-7. Vv. 2-3 introduce the theme of the king; vv. 4-5, the wicked man. V. 15 concludes the king section with a renewed mention of the ruler. Vv. 16-7 restate the theme of the second half, the wicked man. V. 27 recalls both v. 2 (searching out the hidden things) and v. 16 (moderation with honey as an instance). V. 2, in presenting the world as the hidden order of god in his glory, frames the entire collection theologically. The brief work, Bryce argues, both recounted useful points in courtly life and served as a didactic text presenting a diversity of literary forms.

Whether or not one accepts Bryce's argument and emendation in full, he points out the problem of distinguishing the minor structure of the four central *mashal* collections. The gross seams are easily discerned; the finer separations are in part a function of the ingenuity of one's methodology. Clearly, too, a finer structure is there to be discovered.

Following collection D, the MT gives the Words of Agur, son of Jakeh, of Masseh, while the LXX concludes its sequence with the acrostic psalm. Curiously, the LXX

treats the names in the superscriptions at 30:1 and 31:1 as words to be translated; i.e., as text. With the word *ms'*, the LXX could be right; on the other hand, the LXX may be influenced by the (also usually prophetic) term *n'm* in v. 1b. The stichos in 1b is almost hopelessly obscure, though most commentators try to find some declaration of despair or pessimism in the phrase to lead to the *ky* and statement of ignorant futility in v. 2. V. 4 suggests the first Yahweh speech in Job 38-9 or the paean to the creator in Psalm 104. Probably Agur's wisdom, remarkably pessimistic, extends only some four verses, if that. Lemuel and Agur are commonly taken to have been Arabian sage-kings, already legendary to the Hebrews. Agur is followed by a collection of numerical sayings (vv. 7-9, 15-6, 18-9, 21-3, 24-8, 29-31) that seem to be the poetic answers to riddles.¹ The adulteress is mentioned once (v. 20), filial piety twice (vv. 11, 17). Vv. 11-14 are each begun with *dwr*, forming a unit. The others are mixed sayings.

Chapter 31 actually emphasizes wise women. Lemuel's wisdom comes from his mother, and he is addressed by name (a hortatory vocative?) in v. 4. The advice emphasizes a royal asceticism, circumspection in sex and

¹Crenshaw, "Wisdom," p. 242, who points out that this interpretation goes back to Herder; cf. Roth.

drink, and wise governance (i.e., justice and equity for the *déclassé* in terms customarily used by kings to affirm their royal stewardship). The acrostic psalm, a wisdom form in most cases, would seem to have been attracted to this setting by the common theme of the wise woman (cf. v. 26). For the most part, her wisdom consists in the diligent performance of her wifely duties, her speech and reverence (*yr't-yhwh*) mentioned only briefly in conclusion.

Since the proverbs seem to be nothing so much as a random assemblage of unrelated sayings, the four collections are often treated, apart from isolated observations, as two works or even as an essential unity throughout. Skladny points out that systematic analyses of content in support of form-critical distinctions have heretofore been lacking. On the basis of his examination, which relies heavily on statistical comparisons between the collections, Skladny concludes that a clear pattern of historical development emerges. The evolution of aphoristic wisdom appears in the milieu presupposed by the sayings, the role Yahweh is assigned, and the relationship assumed to obtain between deed and consequence. These collections, he argues, do indeed go back to the period of the Hebrew monarchy and are, as had been held by many recent scholars, among the oldest wisdom materials

in Israel. Thus, an interest in them is consistent with the continuing search in wisdom studies for the origins of wisdom among the Hebrews. Skladny arranges the collections A, D, B, and C in a proposed historical sequence.¹

Collection A concentrates on the *Zwillingsformen*, in particular the contrast between the righteous, *šdyk*, and unrighteous man, *ršc*. To the first follow rewards; to the second, misfortunes. “Was *šedākā* aber bedeutet, bzw. wer ein *šaddīk* ist, wird nicht direkt definiert; die meisten, Aussagen erwecken den Eindruck, als handle es sich hierbei um feststehende Begriffe, deren Bedeutung darum ohne weiteres vorausgesetzt werden könnte.”² While one can amass a list of synonyms, the specification of what it means to be righteous or what benefits follow from right action remains obscure:

Es werden verhältnismässig selten konkrete Taten, *Handlungen* erwähnt (wie etwa in 11,26b), meist sind die Sprüche allgemein gehalten und charakterisieren an Hand von Abstrakta wie *tōb* oder *'emet* eine ganz bestimmte *Haltung*: die Haltung des Gerechten. Die Haltung hat für den, der sie vertritt, *positive Konsequenzen*, d.h., der guten Lebenshaltung folgt Heil.³

Reward, and misfortune, follow in this world.

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 76-82.

²Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 7.

³Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 8.

Righteousness brings life or its prolongation, preservation from untimely death, contentment, honor, inheritance, property. An opposite list accompanies the doing of evil. Alongside this complex of opposite terms stands another concerned with the wise man and the fool. A similar series of rewards and penalties follow from each, and they are similarly vague about the specific kinds of acts proper to each.

Skladny concludes that wisdom is an ethical quality, not intellectual, which follows from *yr't-yhwh* and results in knowledge of what is pleasing to Yahweh and therefore right. Wisdom and righteousness are virtually synonyms, but wisdom derives from righteousness. "Nicht der Weise ist der Gerechte, sondern der Gerechte ist zugleich auch der Weise."¹

This analysis leads Skladny to conclude that collection A does not postulate a *Tat-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*. The emphasis lies with general ways of acting, with disposition and attitude rather than specific right or wicked deeds. Further, this disposition is keyed to life, its fortunes and goods. One should therefore speak of a (*Lebens-*) *Haltung-Schicksal-Zusammenhang*. "*Schicksal*" reflects this wisdom's concern with the outcome of one's

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 12.

life, not a specific reward keyed to some prior action. Honor, long life, fortune, contentment are general returns which "*Ergehen*" would make seem far too particular. The locution "*Haltung-Schicksal-Zusammenhang*" also avoids the juridical implications of "retribution" (*Vergeltungs-dogma*) which seem far more external and imposed than the actual ethical and religious emphasis would justify:¹

. . . ein "Gerechter" ist, wer die von Jahwe gesetzte und garantierte Weltordnung und Jahwes absoluten Autoritätsspruch in freiwilliger Unterordnung anerkennt, wer sich also in diese Ordnung einfügt und damit "in Ordnung" ist. Dabei geht es ganz selten um konkrete *Handlungen*, fast immer aber um die *Lebenshaltung* eines Menschen, die für den Gerechten einen Heilszusammenhang, für den Frevler einen Unheilszusammenhang in Kraft setzt.²

In this sense, the usual translation "fear" for the *yr't-yhwh* misleads. What is referred to is not an emotional stance nor some basic human experience. The better interpretation is "honor," since it positively reflects man's insight into and recognition of Yahweh's created order, his absolute express authority, and man's free, independent acceptance of a right disposition in his life.³ A does not concern itself with god's grace;

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 13-24.

²Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 22.

³In "Becket," Jean Anouilh has Becket respond to King Henry's question whether he has begun to love God, "I have begun to love the honor of God" [Indeed, the play is titled, "Becket, ou l'Honneur de Dieu"!].

it is interested in man's will and insight into the divinely-guaranteed order. A displays no effort to uncover the nature of Yahweh. It emphasizes his role as guarant, so that his *rswn* and *tw^cbh*, acceptance or detestation, are both evaluation and consequence (*Beurteilung* and *Verurteilung*)--judgment in both senses of the word. A treats the king seldom, but positively, as also guarant with Yahweh of the *Haltung-Schicksal-Zusammenhang*.

A's content reveals a concern for the discrepancy between poverty and wealth. It recognizes that one may be unjustly rich or poor. The righteous poor stand under Yahweh's protection; the unjust rich are no less condemned than those poor by their own fault. The former may anticipate deliverance; the riches of the unjust wealthy will be their windfall. A asserts individual responsibility at the root of his fate. But A also shows a concern for collective responsibility, so that a community's fortunes ride on the individual dispositions of its members. Person and community form an indissoluble unity and share a common fate. Righteousness precedes wisdom, so the emphasis is on conduct in everyday life.

Since cult is a special circumstance, one should avoid drawing many conclusions from the few references to cult. It stands outside the area of principal interest, and seems to have been the *sine qua non* of righteousness.

While A evidences a positive concern for agriculture and husbandry, some for artisanry, and little for trade or city life, we cannot easily locate the collection in Hebrew society. It mentions student and teacher alike, but without obvious didactic intent. It seems to have aimed at reaching no narrowly definable social group. A is an excursus depicting the broadest implications of righteous and unrighteous patterns of conduct into which even the most seemingly ethically neutral sayings fit inseparably.¹

Collection D, by contrast, seems to have been a *Fürstenspiegel*, to instruct young men in right life and right governing. This characterization is supported by the peculiarities of this collection:

1. das starke Hervortreten von Rechtsfragen und, gesellschaftlichen Problemen,
2. die ausserordentliche Hochschätzung des Armen, der geradezu mit dem Gerechten (Weisen) gleichgesetzt werden kann, and vor allem
3. die sich *an den Herrscher selbst wendenden Königssprüche*.²

Over half of all the sayings are directed toward a ruler or some rich high-placed personage, and the others are consistent with such an intention. These sayings concern legal problems of particular significance to the king, responsibility for the poor and for society in general,

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 7-24.

²Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 66.

warnings against the misapplication of wealth, against acts of violence, usury, extortion and partisanship. Skladny finds useful similarities in content to the *Regentenspiegel* in II Samuel 23:1-7 and Psalm 101, and infers a relationship to the royal wisdom attributed to Solomon (i.e., "richterliche Regentenweisheit," a hearing heart, ability to govern the people well).¹ He concludes that the collection addresses that young aristocrat who is destined to gain power and to rule, to acquaint him with what he must know in order to discharge his office or the kingship successfully and competently.

Special emphasis is placed by D on the ruler's responsibility toward the poor. While D continues to assert the view that the poor and the rich generally are individually responsible for their station in life, D sharpens the poor man's status as a creature of Yahweh to whom God will be merciful. To Yahweh, riches have no meaning; he is interested in man's integrity and uprightness. Especially at law, the ruler or high official must adopt a similar stance. D displays considerable sympathy for the poor, but it also warns against the avariciously rapid acquisition of wealth. Such greed leads to poverty, death, and even despoliation of the land.

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 67.

In D, the antitheses recur. Again, prime emphasis rests on the opposite pair righteous-wicked, for which wise-fool are virtually synonyms in actual usage. As in A, wisdom is ultimately ethical, not intellectual. The language supports the imputation to D of a similar *Haltung-Schicksal-Zusammenhang* to that in A, of which Yahweh is once more the guarantor. The same tension exists, too, between individualism and collectivism. While one is primarily responsible himself for what he experiences in life, whether fortune or misfortune, wealth or poverty, the community shares a common fate. The ruler in particular bears responsibility for the well-being of his society.¹

In collection B, the differences are of quite another order. This material evidences a change in the relationship of action and outcome, a modification in the understanding of Yahweh, a sharp decline in references to the righteous man, and a new group to whom it is directed. This collection, argues Skladny, can legitimately be compared with the Egyptian instructions. He compares the themes and reviews the problematic relationship of wise man and scribe. He concludes that B was written to educate young men for vocations in the royal service, and

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 57-67.

that B constitutes a *Beamten-* or *Diplomatenspiegel*.

Sicher handelt es sich bei ihr [i.e., a Sitz-im-Leben] um eine *Unterweisung*, die den von ihr Angeredeten--ausgehend von den sich auf alle Lebensbereiche erstreckenden Forderungen Jahwes und von der Anerkennung seiner Souveränität--an vorwiegend negativ geformten Bildern und Beispielen ihre Verantwortung im Alltagsleben deutlich machen soll. Dafür, dass B eine bewusst zusammengestellte Unterweisung ist, sprechen die Vielzahl der in B behandelten Themen und die dominierende Stellung der Jahwe-Königssprüche.¹

As soon as one says "instruction," then Egypt becomes the relevant and obvious point of comparison for this collection more than any other. The role of Yahweh has changed, too, based on two experiences: on

1. der Erfahrung des Qualitätsunterschiedes zwischen Mensch und Jahwe und dem daraus erwachsenden Schuld-bewusstsein auch des Gerechten,
2. der Erfahrung Jahwes als des souverän Schöpfers und Lenkers der Welt und des Menschen, der den Weg des Menschen dirigieren kann, ohne den Menschen deshalb aus seiner Eigenverantwortlichkeit zu entlassen und ohne den Zusammenhang zwischen Guttat und Heil bzw. Frevel und Unheil aufzulösen.²

First, B has discovered an unbridgeable gulf between human and divine righteousness, so that no man can stand fully just before his creator. Man's responsibility to god, the cosmic order and his fellow men rests upon his recognition of his createdness vis-a-vis god. This qualitative separation between Yahweh and people does not lead

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 43.

²Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 28.

the B writer(s) to pessimism or despair as in some other wisdom literature; B retains the optimism, though not perhaps the naivité, of A and D. Further, Yahweh is now more than guarant. He does not transcend the synthesis of retribution so-called, but he does intervene between the thoughts and schemes that arise in the human mind and their enactment so that he emerges as the director and implementer of a person's life. There is still no doctrine of (free) grace. For B as for the other collections, the cult should remain considered the sine qua non of right life and action.

The role of the king, however, has become more elevated consistent with the rising view of god, so that he is almost more divine than human. The king's characteristics to B are quite positive, for he is identified with righteousness, goodness, truth, and wisdom. He remains under the superior dominion of Yahweh, though.¹

B speaks about the wise man and the fool, the righteous person and the wicked, in strikingly concrete terms when compared with the previous two collections. Here one can list specific actions which identify these people. Righteous and wicked now take on a distinctly juridical coloring, which Skladny believes is secondary

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 25-29.

to the earlier ethical meaning. B concentrates on the negative terms and pays close attention to the effects on others beyond the consequences for the evil-doer himself. Of course, generalizations and abstractions do not disappear. In discussing wisdom and folly, B displays a rich vocabulary without discernible preferences. Here, too, the ethical sense has declined and wisdom acquires the implication of cunning or wit.

A considerable overlap between wise and righteousness, evil and folly continues. For B, the fool is virtually ineducable. There is a kind and depth of folly in the face of which no amount of (corporal) punishment or censure will avail. The "callow youth," on the other hand, can be taught; there is a fundamental difference between ignorance and folly.

Finally, B's interest in concrete acts may mean a growing scepticism toward the absolute invariability of the *Lebenshaltung-Schicksal-Zusammenhang*—as evidenced by the mounting concern for the poor in A and D and the sharp distinction between divine and human righteousness here. B concentrates on specific acts and their consequences; one must speak of a *Tat-Folge-Einheit* now predominating, qualified by scepticism:¹

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 25-46.

Typisch für diese vorsichtigere Beurteilung der Tat-Folge-Einheit ist die grosse Zahl der Sprüche (in B), in denen eine Tat durch ein einfaches "tōb" (bzw. "l'ō-tōb") charakterisiert und gewertet wird, ohne dass von einer *konkreten* (Heils- oder Unheils-) *Folge* gesprochen wird, sowie vor allem auch ein Spruch wie 19, 10, in dem eine positive Folge als zu einer negativen Handlung "*nicht passend*" beschrieben wird. Hier bleibt also die (schnelle) Durchsetzung der Tat-Folge-Einheit völlig offen, denn das "Unpassende" kann durchaus (zumindest zeitweilig) geschehen--wie die Erfahrung den Weisen gelehrt haben mag.¹

Finally, collection C orients itself toward simpler folk, while god and king stand at the greatest remove. C is manifestly, at least in Skladny's mind, *Bauernethik*. References to nature, to the weather, to plants and animals as well as other natural entities, and to the agricultural life, along with an emphasis on many kinds of artisanry, support this view. Little mention is made of trade, but city life recurs. Legal sayings cover the same topics as other collections. Importantly, the king and his court are treated with the highest respect and deference—the mind of the king seems no more searchable than that of God.

Yahweh is virtually never mentioned except in passing as guarant of the Tat-Folge-Einheit in a simple kind of proof-text saying. Instead, C concentrates on practical grounds for right action, presumably in accord

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 36.

with the interests of its hearers. Peasant and artisan have little use for vaunted theologies; concrete validation of wisdom is required beyond the simplest sort of religious justification. Yahweh, therefore, is still more remote and unsearchable than in B, his mind the more unknowable.

The distinction between the ineducable fool and the educable but ignorant youth appears here as in B. Further, the explicit contradiction at 26:4-5 suggests that the wise man-teacher had to thread a path between extremes, using his judgment in applying his learning and insight.

C is searching for a middle path, not simply giving concrete action over to absolute freedom. Wisdom as such is scarcely mentioned, but the fool appears often. Folly is now an intellectual defect, not an ethical one. Still,

[d]ie meisten Aussagen über den *Klugen* bzw. den *Dummen* haben jedoch überraschenderweise ein *sittliches* Verhalten zum Inhalt (wie Treue, Verschwiegenheit usw.) und verwandeln es erst durch die hinzugefügte Begründung für das Bewusstsein dessen, der so handeln soll, in ein *kluges* und darum anziehenderes Handeln.¹

The righteous man is mentioned only once. Much more emphasis is placed, à la B, on negative than positive

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, p. 52.

characteristics.¹

Skladny's recognition that his evidence leads to two opposing chronologies and scenarios is prophetic, for Schmid actually reverses the processes Skladny postulates. Skladny argues that C cannot be the oldest collection, in spite of its superficial secular tone and more simplistic setting, because of form-critical considerations: the fairly heavy use of *Mahnsprüche*, the presence of many contrasts. If one neglects tone, moreover, one can argue that a process of progressive abstraction led from an emphasis on the individual deed and its specific consequence to broad patterns of life.

Skladny contends that the A and D collections clearly display a naive and optimistic tone. Pattern arises not from abstraction but from a failure, or perhaps better unwillingness, to distinguish the activity of the mind--plans and intentions--from acts and outcomes. While A obviously, to Skladny, must be placed early in Hebrew history, D represents a wisdom that has already become affiliated with the royal court. Otherwise, they are quite similar in content and form; thus, they must reflect a process of courtly appropriation.

B reflects the expansion of courtly wisdom to a

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 46-57.

system of education for the official administration.

Wisdom has expanded of necessity to meet the demands of government. At the same time, B represents a growing dissatisfaction with the rather naive "retribution" of A and D in the face of disconfirming experiences. B sees a requirement for more personal relationship with god and a more active role for Yahweh in the working out of events. The B writer(s) finds this possibility in a (newly-found) space between reflection and action. The validity of a basic doctrine of recompense remains, but Yahweh may act to block plans and motives, barring their fulfillment for purposes of his own. The intention never comes to deed. At the same time, Yahweh becomes increasingly remote ethically. The assumption that one can simply be righteous implicit in the earlier dichotomies declines. Yahweh's' righteousness is so higher than man's in qualitative terms that by comparison man is sinful by any divine standard.

C, on the other hand, reflects a movement of wisdom in the later monarchy, or at the very least before the time of Ezekiel (whose view of the righteous man living individually by his righteousness and whose pessimism could not but have influenced this wisdom if it had already been disseminated), away from the royal court and into the smaller communities of the country. It reflects an

increasing democratization of wisdom, a decentralization of wisdom institutions, and a concern for natural life as the sphere (for whatever reason, perhaps political difficulties) in which one can still be wise. Nevertheless, the position of the king remains that of the regent of god and guarantor with Yahweh of the worldly order. His position becomes increasingly exalted, alongside that of his god.¹

Skladny's arguments counter Schmid's analysis of space and time in wisdom, at least with respect to the aphoristic literature.² The more inner-worldly wisdom is later; the naive systematism by comparison is early. Wisdom finds its place in the world through various historical and social processes: democratization, decentralization, the quest for personalization of god. Naive-optimistic wisdom was first appropriated by the court; only later did it become historicized. Perhaps, though, depending on what predecessors one finds for collection A, early and late wisdom were far more historical in Schmid's sense (i.e., "genuine wisdom" *soi-disant*) than intermediate but not through any process of re-historicization. Further, there is no scepticism equals pessimism

¹Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 67-95.

²Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 79-84.

equation.

Skladny definitely finds evidence for sacred space in the distinctions made among righteous and wicked, wise and fool, educable and ineducable. This language reflects distinct social gulfs, class distinctions and bounds for (divine?) righteousness. The difference between fool and ignorant youth is particularly important. There are gradients of wisdom in "space" (i.e., social space) that suggest an analysis along the lines of van der Leeuw's sacred space.¹ Skladny finds no proleptic wisdom, but he also places any activity of Yahweh prior to deed so as to preserve the doctrine of recompense, rejecting "retributionism" as too legalistic and mechanical. Skladny's view of late wisdom is far more oriented toward the present than past or future. The longer view of time, with less emphasis on the immediate present, is that of early, not late, wisdom. Synthesis breaks down; it does not build up.²

Collection B is a vital clue for Skladny because

¹G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, trans. J. E. Turner with Appendices to the Paperback edition incorporating the additions of the second German edition by Hans H. Penner, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), 1:43 ff. Cf. his concept of sacred word, 2:403 ff.

²Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 67-95.

of its particular attention to the role of Yahweh. It will be our text for examining these proposals about space and time to see if they square with the evidence. It should be evident that Proverbs represents an admixture of forms. On the basis of our earlier discussion of the varieties of wisdom, we may infer that, whether or not a single group was behind the production of the materials later incorporated into the Book, the Book as we have it has been assembled cut of different kinds of materials with varying purposes and literary objectives. From this, scarcely profound, observation, one can move further to two possible positions. The most extreme is to regard this material as an assemblage of essentially unrelated materials. In this sense, the sections we discern as collections are spurious structure--they should actually be taken to point to the still greater unrelated character of the materials. This view does not mean that the materials are absolutely random nor that various kinds of sayings cannot be delimited. Rather, it says that these distinctions are essentially immaterial to the Book in its present form, however important they may be for the history of wisdom thought. The second position states that while blocks of materials may have come together, they have been heavily redacted to reflect the views of a later time--specifically, that essentially secular wisdom sayings have been theologized.

Two versions of the first view have been asserted with respect to the four mashal collections A through D. The first is the folk-wisdom position we have already rejected on form-critical grounds. These sayings differ systematically and sharply from what we know of folk wisdom in Israel.

The second has more recently been set out by McKane. He rejects Skladny's theories, and himself uses the word "random" in relegating the poetic and paronomastic devices to strictly secondary significance.

. . . I do not place a very high value on the concept of a 'collection' as applied to the sentence literature, and I am sceptical of Skladny's efforts to discover in 'collections,' of wisdom sentences such a coherence of theme and consistency of artistic intention that he can describe a 'collection' as if it constituted an architectonic unity.

In such literature there is no context, for each sentence is an entity in itself and the collection amounts to no more than the gathering together of a large number of independent sentences, each of which is intended to be a well-considered and definitive observation on a particular topic.²

To this position, McKane adds an extremely restrictive definition of mashal--as the statement of a striking image with "high representative potential" and "openness to interpretation"--in terms of which few of

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, p. 10.

²McKane, *Proverbs*, p. 413.

the sayings in these collections qualify as meshalim!¹

Since the sayings are random, McKane contends that they are best understood through a classification system which respects the self-contained nature of such sentences, but uses their content to ascertain the changing historical circumstances from which they come. Thus, McKane accepts Gese's position that one cannot draw marginal historical distinctions between collections, while rejecting his agreement with Skladny that *Mahnsprüche* are derivative from *Aussagen*.² In Gese's discovery of alternative wisdom interpretations, McKane finds the basis for arguing that the classifications reflect a progressive process of reinterpretation of wisdom that went on in Israel. Statistical analysis of the collections in terms of these classifications confounds Skladny's distinctions --materials from various periods in Hebrew wisdom thought stand side-by-side.³

In fairness to Gese, we must point out that McKane's interpretation of his remarks anticipates conclusions McKane wishes to draw from his own evidence.

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, p. 414.

²See Appendix, Table 13.

³Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 37-33; Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 159-63; McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 13-16; Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 67-95.

Compare the following:

The distinctive element in Gese's account is that he supposes a secondary Yahwistic interpretation to have operated on certain of the verses in which there is an explicit mention of Yahweh's action, and that with this reinterpretation the sentences are no longer compatible with the concept of order characteristic of the older wisdom in Israel and comparable with the Egyptian *Maat*. According to Gese, these sentences (10.22; 16.1, 9, 33; 20.24; 21.1, 30, 31; 25.2) emphasize the freedom of Yahweh from any metaphysical order and are evidence of a tension between Yahwism and old wisdom which ultimately precipitates the crisis of wisdom in Job and Ecclesiastes.¹

Es ist uns unmöglich, diese . . . Sprüche chronologisch von den übrigen zu scheiden. Sie kommen verstreut in den ältesten Sammlungen vor und sind sicher nicht sekundär eingetragen. Im Gegenteil, sie bilden mit den anderen Sprüchen zusammen ein, wenn auch spannungsgeladenes, Ganzes: Es ist wohl die Liebe zum Paradoxen, das man--wenigstens in der Formulierung--auch in der Sprichwortliteratur findet, die das Nebeneinander zweier Welten in der israelitischen Weisheitslehre möglich macht.²

Actually, McKane historicizes and expands the differentiation made by Gese, on the basis of linguistic confirmations of his classifications. Concepts and words treated positively in one kind of saying are regarded pejoratively in another, within the same "collection." In other cases the change is less drastic, but necessitated by a growing Yahwism--certain wisdom claims must be reserved to Yahweh. In one case (13:14 versus 14:27),

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 15-16.

²Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit*, p. 49,

this change works a substitution. McKane contends that these differences are less well explained as the result of conflicting contemporaneous viewpoints (schools) than as a process of historical reinterpretation--that theologization is in fact the minimalist hypothesis.

McKane distinguishes three classes of sayings representing different stages in the process of reinterpretation found generally throughout Proverbs' sentences:

Class A: These sentences are set in the framework of old wisdom, and concerned with the question of the-individual for a successful and harmonious life.

Class B: Here, the centre of concern is the community rather than the individual, and the sentences in this class have, for the most part, a negative character, in that they describe the harmful effects on the life of the community of various manifestations of anti-social behaviour.

Class C: These are identified by the presence of God-language or by other items of vocabulary expressive of a moralism which derives from Yahwistic piety.¹

McKane's use of the term "sentence" reflects his view that most of these sayings are instructions in form; they are self-conscious literary products intended for mundane instruction, modeled on the true *mashal*, which had a strictly popular origin, Class B, like A, is non-theological, but concerned with this-worldly existence. B sayings have interiorized the Hebrew mythology of death. For this reason, McKane thinks they are the sayings

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, p. 415 (cf. p. 11).

the modern reader finds most attractive: death becomes alienation. Its implicit theological foundation remains its concern with the life of the Hebrew community.¹

We raise two objections to this line of argument. First, Proverbs in its present form is a literary document with a literary history (whether it was originally oral or written literature is immaterial). Somehow this document came together into its present form. While McKane contends that the differences among many of the collections so-called are small, we hold that small variations are not therefore to be disregarded. Some principle of selection must have been at work to produce the present document, just as another principle of selection was at work, however implicitly, in the process by which the wise selected those aspects of their experience on which to reflect and comment. In-selection and out-selection do reflect views of the world. McKane refuses to consider or discuss the principles of selection that led in chapters 10-15 to a dominance of antithetic parallel form, while 16-22:16 emphasize synonymy and synthesis. Some process of composition is going on. If McKane wishes to argue that the material originated in a diversity of settings, he still must deal with the editorial act that

¹McKane, *Proverbs*, pp. 21-22.

brought together certain materials to form a written and transmittable (because it was in fact transmitted) work. However inadequate the term "collection" may be to express the process whereby the literary compositions of the wise came into being, surely he does not wish to argue that the Book is the product of an entire class over time--some person or small group imposed its views on the material. It seems methodologically unsound to deny that the selective principles are recoverable pre-analytically though he might be correct post-analytically (as a matter of descriptive fact). Interestingly, McKane can argue that although these materials are, like "real" meshalim, self-contained, they reveal enough of the circumstances of their composition and use that one can, in part on the basis of form, distinguish the instructions from true meshalim. They do in fact reveal something of themselves.

Our second point follows from this observation. McKane hauls in the back door what he tosses out the front. The classifications amount to historical descriptions, in spite of the term "reinterpretation." That these classes are strewn through the Book in no way vitiates the implication that at least three separate historical traditions existed that came to be, by processes unknown, interleaved with one another in a single document. If the sayings were truly random, self-

contained and descending from a variety of settings, then any simple systematic classification would be at best doubtful and at worst unsound.

These two points are methodological; to them, we add a practical consideration. McKane's classifications are, by his own admission, intuitive. Hence, his statistical analysis is essential to their validation, to the extent that any such analysis--Skladny's included--can be valid with such numbers and types of data. His figures show sharp differences in proportions of sayings from chapter to chapter, lesser variations from "collection" to "collection." While the figures disagree with Skladny, they do not as such prove themselves. Why do C and D differ so significantly from the norm? What do the numbers mean? Classification after all is not theory. For example, the apparent randomness of the classes could mean that McKane's types are in fact arbitrary. Being arbitrary, they appear without notable pattern, except for the normal variations within an admittedly small sample. In other words, McKane's methods demand the kind of theory he eschews.

Recently, Scott has sided with McKane in rejecting the collectional approach to aphoristic wisdom in Proverbs, but without adopting the view of randomness uncritically. Thus, Scott represents the second option:

that the present work reflects a long process of accretion of materials from diverse sources.

These bodies of material are not homogeneous, and there is overlapping between them in subject matter, phraseology and literary forms. The differences among them are mainly differences in proportion of the several elements of their contents.

To call these divisions of the text "collections" is again to beg the question. . . . The present Book of Proverbs is better seen as the end result of a centuries-long process of composition, supplementing, editing and scribal transmission, a process which has blurred some lines of demarcation between its constituent parts.²

We discussed Scott's evidence for these statements earlier: the uncertain and unreliable relationship between superscriptions and text, apparent displacements of the Hebrew text, and the occurrence of duplicates and variants in a pattern that does not match the supposed structure of the collections.

Though Scott underplays the significance of his modification of McKane's position, the emphasis on the accretion process is critical. Scott postulates no random and incomprehensible processes. While the redactional process is not known with any certainty, it can and should be studied--presumably therefore the evidence for that study is in the text. While the present theoretically obtained structure of Proverbs is spurious, Scott argues

¹Scott, *Proverbs*, p. 17.

²Scott, "Wise and Foolish," pp. 146-65.

that we can make progress toward understanding the text through a more elaborate set of classifications than McKane's. Scott first rejects McKane's B class. He then postulates the following:

A. Secular sayings (Religious belief is not expressed or implied, though the writers may have been religious men).

1. Folk sayings (or literary couplets based on folk sayings) which are more suitable to exchanges between adults "meeting in the gate" than to authoritarian instruction of youth in home or school.

2. Folk sayings or their derivatives which seek to impress on the hearers the moral standards and values of home and community, but without any indication that these are grounded in an unseen order of reality.

3. Teaching proverbs in literary couplet form in which wise men and fools are characterized and their opposite fortunes are emphasized. The apparent setting is that of schools for youth who aspire to a "higher education" than was received in the home or tribal community.

4. Teaching proverbs more specifically directed to the professional training of scribes and public officials.

B. Sayings which make use of specifically religious language or relate teachings of wisdom to those of religion.

5. Sayings which exhibit the contrast between the *ṣaddiq* and the *raša*^c as in the third group the *ḥakam* is contrasted with the *k^esil/^ewil*.

6. Sayings which portray Yahweh as a present, active and determining factor in the life experience of individual persons.

7. Sayings which introduce the phrase "fear of, Yahweh" with the meaning "piety, religious belief."¹

Categories three and five explain, for Scott, the noticeable lack of overlap between these two vocabularies--the

¹Scott, "Wise and Foolish," pp. 154-60. This chart summarizes Scott's distinctions which he elaborates in considerably more detail.

antitheses were opposite in their own terms and not interchangeable, except perhaps in the area of "moral rectitude."¹

Two important points should be noted. First, Scott recognizes that instructional wisdom may make use of folk forms modified, so he allows for imitation or modification in the first two classes (i.e., a redaction process). Second, at least the last two kinds of materials may reflect later processes of redaction and annotation of an already solidified work. Again, Scott accords redaction a place; McKane denies it.

Both these views undermine our approach by arguing that no view unites any collection, though McKane's view, if correct, would be the most unyielding. The final validation of our inquiry must await our conclusions—its proof is its applicability and informativeness. We can however state some grounds for assuming that some consistent world-view is discernible within potentially diverse materials, though the final proof of some points would require an independent, and perhaps lengthy, inquiry to establish with greater confidence. We base our work on eight points.

First, a long tradition of scholarship, from

¹Scott, "Wise and Foolish," p. 161.

Casanowitz to Boström, has shown the importance of paronomasia, assonance and catch-words to the structure of Hebrew poetry and particularly to the Book of Proverbs. Not only are word-plays and puns, repetitions of sounds, uses of different forms from the same root, spurious (for poetic effect) roots, and multiplication of synonyms employed to form individual sayings, but the same poetic devices appear to tie together successive sayings into a whole. The importance of such a pattern should not be minimized; we saw one application at the seam between collections A and B. Paronomasia clearly establishes editorial intent when used as systematically as in Proverbs. The pattern cannot be either random or fortuitous; to contribute it to abstract verbal association or the mnemonic associative process of oral literature begs the question. Again, one faces both the issue of selection and the problem of the selector. We submit, further, that the extensive pattern of verbal

¹Immanuel M. Casanowicz, "Paronomasia in the Old Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 12 (1893): 105-67; H. Reckendorf, *Über Paronomasie in den Semitischen Sprachen: ein Beitrag zur Allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann (vormals J. Ricker), 1909); Gustav Boström, *Paronomasi i den äldre Hebreiska Maschalliteratur: med särskild Hänsyn till Proverbia*, Acta Universitatis Lundensis, Nova Series, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, Ny Följo, Avdelningen 1: Teologi, Juristik och Humanistika Ämnen, vol. 23, no. 8 (Lund: -- C. W. K. Gleerup, 1928); A. Guillaume, "Paronomasia in the Old Testament," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9 (1964): 282-90. See also *Semitics* 1 for several related articles.

association demonstrated in our discussion of the A-B seam is typical of Proverb's structure. While Boström has adequately shown the catch-word structure, much further work remains to be done on other paronomastic verbal associations, which would, I think, buttress claims of systematic compositional or redactoral activity. That certain blocks of material are related by theme and poetic structure, therefore form, can scarcely be denied--it is far too well documented by scholarship.¹ One may take issue with the term "collection" for describing the process whereby these blocks and other materials became a written document, but that such units existed seems as certain as anything in literary history can be. We argue, therefore, that paronomasia establishes a pattern of association of sayings. Poetic system added to thematic organization (of blocks) suggests a determinable organization.

Second, neither Scott nor McKane takes sufficient account of the known rhetorical devices of the wise which would provide an alternative and less drastic explanation of some of their evidence. The wise, for example, clearly prefer in the context of brief sayings to state matters in general terms, without regard to exceptions and cases.

¹See Appendix, Table 9.

They speak generically and at some level of abstraction. The antitheses are definitely general and generic.¹ Since a number of sayings clearly emphasize a propriety of occasion, sayings which conflict may be resolved by appealing to relevant differences in situation--the wise man does not respond to life through the rote application of formulae to experience.² Part of being wise may be the ability to sense the relevant characteristic of a situation so that he may know how to make use of his stock of experience. Descriptions of the functions of proverbs, McKane's included, stress the power of the saying to structure and interpret experience. We should recognize the confirmatory dimension to this application. Citation of the relevant saying confirms, proves, demonstrates with authority the validity of one's interpretation. Part of its "oracular" power is its affirmation, "this situation now makes sense and I understand it in (approved) terms by which I can effectively respond." The suggestion that some proverbs may have been cited as case-decisions in law makes sense in this connection. The battle of wits in *Aḥikar* suggests the not-unfamiliar battle of the proverbs from our own milieu: and the appeal to conflicting

¹See Appendix, Table 7.

²See Appendix, Table 14.

authorities is well-known in virtually all movements. Further, repetition of sayings, the use of stock phrases, and repetition of sayings with small but all-important variations, all are known poetic devices in Israel as elsewhere. That the wise should use them in poetry scarcely requires resort to the atomization of wisdom writing and composition. The replacement of some phrase by a theological statement may represent theologization; it may also reflect *qol-waḥomer* reasoning. If due piety be the *sine qua non* of wisdom, the irony of such substitutions would be obvious to the hearer. While one of the two sayings must be original nevertheless, a long historical separation or some nationalization process is not essential. In other words, failure to recognize rhetorical devices in wisdom, where the use of such devices is widely attested, may be the creature of our historical presuppositions about the developments of wisdom thought.

Our third point follows from this statement. We have seen that some accepted theories about the development of wisdom are dependent on Hegelian philosophical commitments and conclusions grounded in Germanic studies. The nationalization of late wisdom cannot be disputed, but a similar shorter process is hard to prove. One depends heavily on the analogy from Egypt and on certain assumptions about the theological character of international

wisdom. One cannot easily prove whether Israel ever had an essentially secular court wisdom confined to the elite and their heirs that was a-theistic, so-called, in tone because so much of the development of early court wisdom and the official "bureaucracy" is tied up in the legend of Solomon. Blocks of court material in Proverbs are really too brief to give assured judgments. McKane's Class B certainly recognizes the possibility of an implicit community theology. The association of royal and elite wisdom is ill-founded because of the fundamental difference in relationships of power (in support of which, witness the dubiety of "royal authorship" in early Egyptian wisdom). In brief, we should be careful not to historicize our philosophical pre-commitments, however useful they be in formulating research hypotheses and analyzing data. We are always in danger of finding what we expect to find. We should be careful not to make 'wisdom' so rigid and inflexible, so dogmatic in its assertions of retributionism, that it becomes a caricature, particularly in light of the humanitarian elements some scholars see as so bound up with the essence of wisdom thought. We should preserve the wit, sympathy, and perhaps "sense of distance from self and world" that makes a world-view attractive to its adherents. To wit, we should preserve our methodological sympathy and

empathy for a view, even when it does not find in us an elective affinity.

Fourth, in line with Point Two, we should recognize the relationship between language and context. For example, the antitheses provide two (or more) opposing vocabularies, each appropriate to its context. The same may apply to other dimensions of wisdom, specifically the yahweh-sayings. Pre-analytically, references to a god seem to call for a different kind of discourse than references to people. Hence, what does it mean when we find that certain views about Yahweh find equivalents in no non-Yahweh contexts?--The more, if the wise do in fact rely on rhetorical generalization. To the extent that, for the wise, Yahweh limited or conditioned experience, one would expect these qualifications to appear only within the relevant generic statements, those about Yahweh himself, and typically not within sayings about the events conditioned. Further, Yahweh presents a special dimension to life, since he cannot be compassed within the same kind of antitheses as many other (generic) aspects of experience. While we might propose a functional antithesis --wholly implicit--on theoretical grounds as a contrary to the sacred, in these four mashal collections there is scarcely the barest suggestion of personalized evil. That suggestion exists only if one so interprets the

‘*yšh-zrh* of chapters 1-9 and then reads that interpretation into the very occasional mentions of harlotry. In the absence of an explicit dualism, the language used to comprehend Yahweh should naturally differ from that used other circumstances by the wise. If Yahweh is discussed in generic terms, the qualifications of experience must find some other mode of expression than in antitheses. Further, if Yahweh stands entirely above the worldly order, as guarant, rather than within it (so Würthwein), then he stands outside or above the antitheses as such--the same kind of generic balanced discourse does not apply to him that applies to the rest of life. To conclude that the theological language represents a later redaction on grounds of content, one must show that they present a world-view fundamentally at variance with that of the sayings-context in which they appear.

Fifth, the aphoristic literature is terse, McKane emphasizes the objective of this literature to open or unveil experience, its metaphoric character. The sayings are quintessentially poetry, to be related and understood in poetic terms. One can hardly dispute their use of poetic devices to achieve their literary purpose. Though the parallelistic approach of Hebrew poetry enables us to ferret out many of the technical terms of a particular literature, these sayings' brevity and their poetic rather than thematic associations plus the enormous

diversity of experience that they reflect, all mean that we discern clearly only some of the technical terminology, quotations, and stock phrases of the literature. Brevity and openness limit our ability to specify even those terms we do know with assurance to be technical. Typical of this problem is the dispute in wisdom studies over.

Vergeltung--precisely what relationships did obtain among intent, act and consequence in the Hebrew wise man's mind? Here again we must be governed by a certain empathy which enables us to appreciate the wholeness of the material without caricature. Still, the poetic structure of the sayings also means that redactional efforts should be fairly apparent through inconsistencies and problems in the text. The problems of "seamlessly" redacting a poetic text are nothing short of notorious. The traditional division of Proverbs into "collections" is founded on precisely such problems. Alternative, hypotheses of the composition of the Book should present us with similar kinds of evidence to be convincing. In sum, the aphoristic literature, amounts to poetic, not just "rational," modes of thought given poetic forms of expression. Poetry imposes certain kinds of limitations on attempts to comprehend it in terms of another non-poetic logic. On the other hand, understood poetically, the literature yields itself both to properly poetic interpretation and

to techniques of form-criticism proven in dealing with other poetic materials.

Sixth, however we understand the proverbs, we should offer an intelligible redaction-history of the Book. For example, the catch-word and paronomastic patterns which connect various proverbs simply cannot be adventitious nor accidental. They are intrinsic to the literature and require explanation. Groupings of sayings must be accounted for, along with disruptions and incursions into the text we mean by "intelligible redaction-history" more than just our earlier point that the document came into being, selections were made, patterns do appear, and the Book must at some time have served some literary purpose which "random" outrightly ignores. Rather, the sequence of events whereby the document came into being should be historically plausible, consonant with our understanding of other events and circumstances of the period, and should present a likely and understandable state of affairs and set of social processes to account for developments. Hence, we question the citation of the LXX against the MT to show that the yahweh-sayings near 16:1 come late.¹ The poetic interrelationship depends on Hebrew word-plays and assonances which have few corresponding Greek equivalents--a sequence of puns,

¹Boström, *Paronomasi*, p. 162.

synonyms and sounds would be difficult to represent in any language without detailed explanation. The Greek translator is known to have omitted and substituted when it served his purposes. The disruption is as or more easily understood as occurring at the point of translation or subsequently than in the Hebrew through redaction. Scott and McKane both depend heavily on a process of theologization to explain the motives of the redactors or contributors. Yet, how does one explain the seemingly arbitrary pattern of revision which allowed duplicates and variants to remain in the text, which in one place respected the text by assembling sayings at the seam and yet elsewhere strew them willy-nilly, and which worked at cross-purposes in different parts of the text. Thus, Skladny bases his marginal differentiations upon (to him) discernible differences in the treatment of Yahweh in the text. Would not the yahwizing editor-contributor at least be consistent with himself? Further, some blocks of material serve clear purposes. The hortatory discourses at the beginning and middle of the Book are clearly formal instructions: they belong to a didactic setting. Foreign wisdom is quoted, not accreted--some group preserved it. The psalm scarcely came from a folk milieu; its association with a group possessing a formalized poetry and tradition of wise women is obvious. The four

mashal collections depart from the instructional form and must have served some other purpose. Nevertheless, they are an organized, sophisticated and fairly rigid poetry with a restricted and quite precise vocabulary (a point essential to Scott's argument) which is intrinsic to its view of the world. Whether or not its inspiration may have lain in folk expression, the materials before us are neither folk in form nor folk in use. Von Rad may be too pessimistic when he thinks the distant past of wisdom thought lies unrecoverable at present, but he points out the need to deal, as first order of business, with the (traditional and historical) form of the materials in front of us.¹ Blocks of distinctly-formed materials are recognizable in Proverbs and should first be understood as such.² The classification approach, therefore we submit, jumps a step in the analytic process.

Seventh, one may doubt whether we have any significant amount of the literature of radicalism which has come down to us from ancient Israel. Were the prophets religious reformers, or "reactionaries" in search of an idealized (and never existent) by-gone day? Certainly, both priest and wise man held tightly to tradition. The

¹Von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, p. 24.

²See Appendix, Table 9.

authority of both rested on an approved transmission of the right word in a correct lineage. Though their forms of social expression differed, both stood upon inherited words and a sedimented pattern of teaching and learning them. Both were men of the book. This typification of the wise applies no matter what the scenario we adopt. One expects, as a consequence, that they would early-on value the retention and correct transmission of their traditions, in this case the wise sayings of learning and instruction. We know that the latter were preserved; should the former not also have been? If we credit the wise with having preserved much of Hebrew literature, then the preservation of sayings in written form becomes almost a historical necessity: would they preserve the learning of other social groups without preserving their own? If they did preserve it, or may be assumed to have done so, then the notion of "collection" becomes far less objectionable. At the same time, one would become more hesitant to admit that they would heavily and perhaps heavy-handedly (albeit erratically) redact their own literature--and certainly not more than others'. Points Six and Seven join here. We should be sensitive to a fundamental potential conflict between the theories of democratization and theologization through wisdom's early and middle periods (what we called the "shorter history").

While the tradition of an early royal wisdom may be erroneous, certainly wisdom moved from the court elite and their offspring to the group we anachronistically would call the "merit bureaucracy." The growth of effective military and government required trained secondary leadership. Economic and trade viability required a certain minimal literacy, along with an expanded record-keeping and communications class. Since the higher ranks of priests must have been included (certainly in Egypt and presumably in Israel as well) in the court elite, theological language would seem to have been appropriate more to court cult and priest than to the ideology of a "meritocracy." If Smith is at all right about the fundamental conflict of parties in Israel,¹ and he must be at least partially right, exclusive dedication to Yahweh could have served the partisan political purposes of the wise and court priests. Such partisanship in a more democratized wisdom is harder to explain. Thus, democratization suggests a growing, rather than declining, "secularism" and "pragmatism" in line with the social applications of wisdom. Finally, early Yahwistic wisdom would accord with an early and growing nationalism to wisdom which came to full flower in post-Exilic wisdom. Is

¹Smith, *Palestinian Parties*.

pessimistic wisdom also a conflict over growing nationalism? Preuss, however, would reject this interpretation of nationalization.¹ The important point is this: in a movement of conservatism, moving from a hereditary elite to encompass the "managerial classes," an increasingly strict Yahwism seems at variance with the social demands of the situation. If the early court circle included the priests, must any postulated theologizing, if it exists at all, be late? Contrariwise, given the increasing sedimentation of ideologies with time, is the increasing theological inclusiveness of wisdom under the monarchy consistent with increasing theological exclusivism? We submit that certain hypotheses about wisdom postulate sociological inconsistencies.

Finally, perhaps Hebrew wisdom really does not differ so much from other ancient Near Eastern wisdom theologically after all. Preuss concludes that the same views of god as the creator of the cosmos, guarant of world-order, and upholder of the complex of behavior and consequence can be found throughout ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature.² Even in its uses of *ršwn* and *tw^cbh*

¹Preuss, "Theologischen Ort," pp. 393-417; Horst Dietrich Preuss, "Das Gottesbild der Alteren Weisheit Israels," *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 23: 117-45.

²Preuss, "Theologischen Ort," pp. 414-17; Preuss, "Gottesbild," pp. 117-45.

vis-à-vis Yahweh, Israel does not depart from the theological world of its neighbors in wisdom. Clue to this commonality, of course, is the oft-remarked absence of normative Hebrew theology from wisdom:

. . . Erwählung und Bund, Verpflichtung und Gebot Jahwes, Väterverheissung, Landverheissung, Davidverheissung, Zion, Tempel, Gottesstadt, Geschichte als zielgerichteter Ganzheit, Eschatologie, Gottesvolk usw.¹

Even the view that Yahweh may interpose himself between the intent and the act to bring about his own purposes rather than man's is in no wise peculiar to Israel.

Preuss' citation of parallel quotes from Egypt is detailed.² The absence of normative theology and the presence of common theology lead one to the conclusion that Hebrew wisdom, though set within the social world of Yahwism and based on it, even in that respect did not differ from the similar relationship of wisdom to culture elsewhere in the ancient Near East:

In der Weisheitsliteratur wird vielmehr Theologie zwar nicht als Anthropologie, wohl aber als Phänomenologie versucht. Daher gehören die Texte mit theologischen Themen auch kaum den Volkssprüchen an, sondern sie sind eher Kunstsprüche. Käme die alte Weisheit Israels wirklich vom Glauben an Jahwe, vom Kultus und vom Wissen um die Gebote her und hätte sie aus diesem Grund ihre begrenzte Thematik, müsste dieses von den ähnlichen Texten der Umwelt

¹Preuss, "Gottesbild," p. 119 n.

²Preuss, "Gottesbild," e.g., pp. 128-31.

des alten Israel auch gelten, was betr. Jahwe unmöglich ist und wofür es auch in analoger Fragestellung keinen Anhalt gibt. Der Jahweglaube wird zwar insofern (ohne dass irgendeine Heilstat zitiert wird usw.!) auch vorausgesetzt, als er verwendet(!) wird, als er Motiv menschlichen Handelns werden kam, jedoch eines sehr eigenständig geprägten Handelns, das mit der weisheitlichen Weltsicht des Alten Orients eng verbunden ist.¹

The same analysis applies to the *yr't-yhwh*. Since the concept is not often found elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern wisdom, though sometimes elsewhere in the sense of cultic fulfillment, it is often taken to be the peculiar contribution of Hebrew religious thought. However, when one considers the actual application of the term, rather than its postulated history, one generally finds that it means the realization of wisdom and the confirmation of the (optimistic) doctrine of retribution. Only very rarely does one find a hint of more--a personal relationship to Yahweh, the numinous--principally in the revision of Amenemope (22:19), and even there the interpretation is less than certain. Hence, one need hypothesize no yahweh-redaction. The concept is entirely consistent with early wisdom, whether Hebrew or ancient oriental. Preuss' evidence certainly cannot be lightly dismissed. He suggests that the reasons adduced for

¹Preuss, "Gottesbild," pp. 144-45.

postulating either the random accretion of sayings or their redaction from changing theological needs are essentially phantom.¹ Certainly, the question of harmony between classes of sayings--between yahweh- and non-yahweh-sayings--should be considered in the analysis which follows.

For these eight reasons, we hold that there is ample ground for considering Proverbs II-B as a unit. While the sayings may not all come from exactly the same social situation, there should be sufficient consistency of perspective to make analysis and conclusions possible. Whether certain classes of sayings are incompatible is a separate, redactoral, question. That the material can be studied, recognizing the question of consistency where relevant, seems to be justified.

¹Preuss, "Gottesbild," pp. 136-45.

CHAPTER V

THE SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL MATRIX OF PROVERBS 15:28-22:16

Introduction

Social and conceptual worlds--whether of individuals or groups or communities--can be interpreted as and in terms of a gradient structure of saliences. Some entities, ideas, symbols and relationships fit closely into the experiences of person or group. They receive special attention, detailed examination and thoughtful interpretation. Fine distinctions are made which reflect differences in the life interests of that individual or that particular group. Meanings and values are not givens; they are interpretations of experience. A social world is not an epistemological or ontological given. It is the construction of a group over time.¹ It is a selection from the virtual infinity of experiential elements that impinge on one based in the life and work of the group. Incongruent interpretations die cut: they lack salience,

¹Schutz, *Phenomenology of the Social World*; Schutz and Luckmann, *Structures of the Life-World*; Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality*.

the power to give meaning and value to the everyday. Especially congruent concepts are adopted, driving out the less compelling with which they compete. The relationship is not one-to-one; it is not predictive. Given a particular setting, one cannot predict the conceptual and social system that will give it meaning for that group to the exclusion of all others. On the other hand, one can generally outline the dominant features of a successful and durable system that is likely to be adopted and retained. Conversely, one can predict features that are unlikely to persist for lack of congruence. People obviously, have a stake in the meaningfulness of their world, thus in its interpretation. They will not devote time, work and physical and emotional resources in a conceptual system that has little relevance in terms of their actual experiences. Indeed, devotion and investment--stake--vary directly with the degree of salience. Similarly, conceptual worlds transform relationships. By conferring meaning and value, these systems conform experience to the interpretation over time. Thus, congruence is a function of social interpretation and social

¹Weber, *Protestant Ethic*; Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, which lays out his sociology of religion in terms of his interpretation of 'elective affinities,' *Wahlverwandtschaften*.

action alike. The process is dialectic.¹

This congruence or salience is reflected in the proximity of elements of experience to the individual or group. Social proximity appears as an interpretation of space and time. Whatever objective reality we confer upon space and time, if any, these categories have an intensely metaphorical character, which amounts to and reflects an interpretation of existence.² What is real for the wise of this proverb collection is what seems self-evidently close-at-hand in time or space. In looking at their interpretation of relationships, we look also at the temporal sequence of relevant circumstances, motives, actions and consequences that give sense and meaning to their own acts and those of others. Thus, we are interested, not in describing the world of these wise, but in seeing its relative proximities to them. What differentials divide, distinguish, order and relate their conception of the constituent elements of experience? We do not look just for

¹Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality*, develop their sociology of knowledge in terms of a dialectical methodology drawn from Schutz.

²Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 12-32; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. This realization, within the German intellectual tradition, goes back to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and informs a variety of dialectical theories: Phenomenology, various existentialisms, Critical Theory and neo-Marxism, hermeneutic theory, and much Structuralism.

what they conceive but how they conceive of and order it. Indeed, order is a good term for what we call saliences, congruities and proximities, except for its other technical meaning in wisdom studies. Social-conceptual worlds are spatio-temporal worlds. To give order is first to give sequence and proximity.¹

In what follows, we are not concerned only or principally with cataloging the linguistic usages that delimit space and time for these wise.² Rather, we seek to infer and project categories of space and time that have this metaphorical and interpretive character from what the wise say about their world. Hence, our work is inferential rather than descriptive in the strict sense. Such projection is founded in the principle that people take for granted that which is most fundamental in their experience. They do not discuss, much less defend, what they assume as the fundamental or social *sine qua non*. Indeed, what is defended and discussed in detail is no longer taken for granted as such. In a sense, assumptions which must be argued for have already lost what makes them effective: their pre-interpretive, pre-linguistic,

¹Schutz, *Phenomenology of the Social World*;
Husserl, *Internal Time-Consciousness*.

²Cf. Wilch.

pre-conscious character. To discern at least the crucial lineaments of this taken-for-granted structure, we must project and infer. Descriptions are the consequence of interpretations; they are not the interpretations themselves.¹

From such projections, we may begin to be able to make distinctions among various hypotheses about the social setting of these wise. For the literature to have warranted formulation and preservation, it must have been salient in some respect not only for the writer-collectors but also for the collector-preservers, however we may interpret these roles. Thus, our projections have some validity not only for the setting of particular sayings but also for that which preserved them as part of an intellectual and symbolic aesthesis. Thus, the broad and metaphorical understanding of space and time becomes all the more important. How does this world of space and time become a congruent symbolic reality? How does it make experience intelligible and plausible? How does the everyday experience of the life-world acquire (an order of)

¹What Schutz calls the epochē or "bracketing" of the natural attitude, a form of phenomenological reduction, leads to the "appearance" (showing forth as 'phenomena') of the taken-for-granted as uncritically-accepted ground. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1962), pp. 51-60.

meaning and value?

Space

Under the rubric of space, certain recurrent themes emerge that reflect the independent and distinctive value system of these wise. Though they likely formed an integral part of the intellectual and social elite of this period, we shall see that the wise evidence in these sayings a symbolic social hierarchy that is far from being the existing social system writ large. Their criteria of judgment are their own, at times supporting, at times differing from the values we would associate with a privileged elite. Their value system neither naively defends nor seeks to justify the status quo and privilege per se. They know power; they live their lives in its shadow. Still, it is not power that they value. They apparently had to live and work in the public view, yet that publicity remains subordinate to other things they esteemed more. They do not justify a style of life they serve but do not experience themselves, though in justifying their own way of life they produce a kind of class ethic. Personal, rather than power, relationships count for much. They concentrate on a person's disposition, what we might loosely term 'character,' in making ethical judgments. Here, the ethic is not founded in a direct synthesis of deed and consequence,

but in a manner of deportment to which particular deeds must be referred before they can be interpreted and assessed.

Theirs is an ethic and an ethos of propriety. They observe a congruence or appropriateness of person, place, time and event that forms the basis of 'aesthetic' evaluation.

These people value reserve. They esteem restraint and discipline of character and action, an aesthetic of economy reminiscent of *μηδεν αγαν*. They remark the coherence and sufficient intelligibility of one's life, not the comprehensibility of the cosmos as such. With propriety goes what we shall call 'demesne,' that realm of experience and action over which one has effective control. To be restrained is to recognize the boundaries of one's demesne and observe them. To overreach those limits is to court disaster, the more when it is done with (foolish) confidence.

To say that the experiences of life make sense for these wise is to say that one can conceive their pattern. The recognition is *Gestalt*--one perceives the interrelated whole or one does not perceive at all. Thus, the demarcations within their social-intellectual world tend to be sharp. These compartments of experience are not purely intuitive. What can be known and understood can be expressed. The wise do not rule out the ineffable. They perceive limiting conditions and crucial boundary questions

in their experience, as we shall discover. Still, the word has its propriety and cannot be made properly to overreach itself either. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof must one be silent," to quote Wittgenstein.¹ At most one can say that the world, too, observes the proprieties, each domain unveiling itself in an appropriate way. While the crucial temporal boundary question for the wise is that demesne bounded by death, spatially, it is the power to know and by knowing to control. In each case, the question becomes freedom and justice. In each case, the mystery of that which is in principle beyond human demesne, Yahweh, is implicit. On an individual basis, the spatial limit becomes adversity, confronting an irreconcilable conflict of values which cannot be realized without sacrifice. These wise perceive these experiential dilemmas and integrate them into their aesthetic of value. The distance and objectivity that come with reserve and restraint produce a sense of irony in the ethically sensitive observer of life.

In order to project what we are calling the spatial dimension of the social and intellectual world of these wise, we shall analyze five aspects of wisdom. We

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Kegan Paul, 1922), Sentence 7.

shall begin by considering the nature of wisdom as they perceive it. "Where is wisdom to be found?" What does it mean to be wise? How does wisdom differ from a simple legitimation and affirmation of the social status quo?

Second, we shall consider the life-world and its structure. What features of experience occupy the attention and concern of these writers? How do they stratify society: who fits where in their view? What sorts of people are there, in terms of the value criteria that most concern them, and how does these people relate to the life of the person who is or strives to be wise? Third, we shall consider the concept of "demesne"--that realm of experience which an individual can control and "master." What can one know and, knowing, control? What is the proper and appropriate range of individual competence? What is relevant in assessing ethical accountability? How does individual demesne relate to the life of some distinctive social group of which the wise person is a part (*Standesethik*)?

Next, we should consider the implications of the wise' rhetorical style here. The word is the vehicle whereby the world of experience becomes intelligible for one who is wise. The capacity to master and then transmit that mastery to others rests in the ability to verbalize what is. To order is in part to state. In the way in which they present this understanding here, we may find some

evidence of how that experience is organized. Since what is taken for granted is implicit, rhetoric becomes relevant to the problem of projection. Rhetorical style is at once implicit and commonly understood. Finally, we shall consider the limits to their experience and their control. To have a demesne--as we shall argue the wise here believe they have--is also to have limits beyond which one cannot act, certainly not with impunity. What limits do these writers perceive? Where and what are the crucial boundaries in experience?

"Wisdom"

The obvious point of departure for any discussion of the world of the wise has to be what that wisdom might be. Our earlier attempts to define wisdom were not altogether satisfactory in the sense that we confronted irreconcilable multivocality in the term. Thus, we have been forced for the moment into such rather inelegant circumlocutions as "these wise" and "wisdom as evidenced by these sayings" to refer to the wise and their wisdom who appear in and through the B proverb collection. These phrases beg the question. Further, we find no clear reference in these sayings to the existence of an identifiable (self-identified) and coherent group whom we could unarguably call the wise. The closest we might come is

15:31, which we include in the introduction to B though it traditionally has been assigned to A:

He whose ear heeds wholesome admonition [*'zn šm^ct*
twkht]
 will abide among the wise.

Since "abide" is used figuratively, the context does not require a specific group: the sense may be "reckoned among" and thus categorical rather than appellative. References to wisdom tend to be general and disconcertingly abstract. We look in vain for a proverb we might quote as a simple, satisfactory, unambiguous definition of wisdom, particularly one which does not lead us into a thicket of other equally technical and equally difficult terms.¹

Consider 18:15,

An intelligent mind acquires knowledge,
 and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

Here, we must pursue *lb*, *nbwn*, *d^ct*, and *'zn*. This wisdom and the group to which the author(s) who produced it belong exist by and as an inference from the work. The B composition, like early Hebrew wisdom generally, makes no unambiguous references to the technical implements of scribal class or school--a point already made. For clues then, we must turn to the semantic field of "wisdom" and related

¹See Appendix, Tables 15 and 16.

terminology.¹

The word **hkm* appears seventeen times:² nine times as a noun or adjective froth *hkm*,³ three times as a verb, and five times from *hkmh*.⁴ An essential condition for the acquisition of wisdom is the ability to learn from instruction.⁵ The fool lacks the capacity to benefit from wisdom's discipline:

Why should a fool have a price in his hand to buy
wisdom, when he has no mind? 17:16

If we were to include the last verses of ch. 15 in this collection, then the person's appropriate relationship to Yahweh is a second precondition.⁶

The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom,
and humility goes before honor. 15:33

Certainly, other sayings also suggest this interpretation.⁷ We shall argue below that righteousness is the necessary precondition for attaining wisdom.

Wisdom involves learning, the ability to generalize

¹See Appendix, Table 15; also Tables 1-5.

²See Appendix, Table 15, Part A.

³Also, 15:31.

⁴Plus 15:33.

⁵Cf. 17:10; 19:20.

⁶Cf. 18:12b.

⁷Cf. 22:4; 19:23; perhaps 16:6, 20; 22:12.

from experience:¹

Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom for the future. 19:20

Wisdom is cumulative. It is not a closed body of information that is acquired once for all time. While wisdom is associated with *d^ct*, knowledge, it is not knowledge-about or knowledge-of.² It is insight which is gained progressively.³

When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise;
when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.
21:11

Throughout the B composition, there are repeated references to the mind or heart, with the word *lb* appearing some twenty-three times.⁴ Wisdom has the quality of depth, hence the analogy of the fountain or flowing waters,⁵ "Wisdom is a fountain of life to him who has it".⁶

The words of a man's mouth are deep waters;
the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream. 18:4

To have this quality, wisdom must even be more than knowledge-how, though it may also enable one to deal

¹Cf. 18:15, quoted above.

²See Appendix, Table 15, Part C.

³19:20; 18:15

⁴Not counting 15:28, 30, 32. See Appendix, Table

17.

⁵See Appendix, Table 16, Part D.

⁶16:22a; cf. 20:5.

competently with demanding situations in life.¹ Wisdom, then, is a quality of mind or heart. It is insight, perceptiveness and depth of spirit which is only reflected in the way that one acts and interacts with others.

The wise of heart [*lhkm-lb*] is called a man of discernment,
and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness. 16:21

The parallelism is synthetic; the rhetoric is consequence.² Wisdom is valuable in and of itself, not for the sake of some more distant goal; hence, "virtue is its own reward" in 16:22 and in

A man of understanding sets his face toward wisdom,
but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. 17:24

One does not pursue wisdom for some objective to which wisdom is the means, though having attained wisdom, one may gain consequent things as well:³

To get wisdom is better than gold;
to get understanding is to be chosen
rather than silver. 16:16

This saying is a variant on the *twb-mn*, lacking the distributive negative middle term which customarily produces

¹16:14, 21, 23.

²I.e, the second stichos gives an implication of the general principle stated in the first stichos; 17:20; 20:18; 15:33; cf. 16:23 (climactic parallelism without consequence);. 19:8(!).

³Cf. 19:20 *b'hrytk*.

a comparative dilemma or conflict of value. Here, *twb* appears internally, and inversion of the form produces a synonymous intensification.¹

Wisdom is achieved through a discipline of instruction, and this discipline continues to characterize the life of the wise individual through an ethic of restraint and self-control:²

Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise;
when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

17:28

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler;
and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. 20:1;

Part of this discipline is the ability to verbalize insight³ economically, effectively and persuasively.⁴ Two references to wisdom appear in the context of king-sayings. In 20:26, the king's wisdom is that of wise governance, not necessarily the insight and perspicacity we associate with wisdom tout court. At 16:14, the wise person is threatened by the king's passion; wisdom provides the possibility of dealing with that inevitable characteristic of power. The reference to the emissary of death suggests the

¹See Appendix, Tables 11 and 12.

²21:11; 15:31, 33; 17:28; 16:14(?).

³An essential presupposition of wisdom, e.g. 19:27.

⁴16:21, 23; 18:4.

relationship of wisdom, sound governance and the ethic of restraint to the purposes of Yahweh.¹ The power of wisdom is such that might alone does not avail against it, which implies wise governance in the plans of battle or conflict.²

Ultimately, however, whatever wisdom one may acquire through the discipline of instruction, that discernment is bounded by the power of Yahweh to pursue and establish whatever purposes he will. Thus, while wisdom is acquired as a process, by implication one never fully attains it. The limit on the one hand is demesne--wisdom's value on self-control, restraint, (self-)governance --and on the other is Yahweh and his wisdom:

No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel,
can avail against the Lord. 21:30

The word *dʿt* appears nine times, twice in 18:15.³ The latter emphasizes the cumulative acquisition of wisdom through hearing; it is the pursuit of the intelligent mind.⁴ The association of knowledge with hearing, with the verbal and transmissible character of wisdom, appears in 19:27, an admonition and the B collection's only use

¹Cf. 17:11 cruel emissary; 16:4 evil day; 16:25 ways of death.

²21:22; 20:18.

³See Appendix, Table 15, Part C.

⁴*Lb nbwn* (cf. 15:14a).

of the vocative *bny*:¹

Cease, my son, to hear instruction
only to stray from the words of knowledge. 19:27

This verse and 21:11, when compared with 17:16, already point up the distinction between ignorance and folly.²

While the ignorant (typically represented by the stock figure of the callow youth) person can err and act foolishly, that folly is not a fundamental part of his disposition, i.e. his character. Through instruction, it may be driven from him; hence, cf.

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.
22:15

The fool, however, acts foolishly out of his basic character; his mind lacks the capacity to acquire the discipline of wisdom.³ Thus, wisdom, ignorance and folly represent three distinct human dispositions. The ignorant can learn through-*mwsr*;⁴ the wise person can benefit from counsel and reproof; the fool stands beyond wisdom's reach. In these sayings which refer to knowledge, we find the same themes that emerged earlier with respect to wisdom. It is

¹Cf. 27:11 in C.

²See Appendix, Tables 18 and 19.

³See Appendix, Table 20.

⁴See Appendix, Table 21.

valuable in itself, more than any precious possession.¹

Passion is rejected² in favor of restraint:

He who restrains his words has knowledge,
and he who has a cool spirit is a man of
understanding. 17:27

Knowledge implies control and economy of speech.³ Finally,
the demesne of an individual's wisdom is described and
delimited by that of Yahweh:

The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge,
but he overthrows the words of the faithless. 22:12

Note again the verbal basis of knowledge, and thus wisdom.

The word *tbwnh* occurs five tithes; *byn* or *bynh* six.⁴

These sayings also emphasize the deep association of wisdom
and mind, drawing out implications in that notion:

Whoever acquires insight loves his basic nature
[*qnh lb 'hb npšw!*]
he who keeps understanding will prosper. 19:8 BK

The purpose in a man's mind [*šh blb*] is like deep water,
but a man of understanding will draw it out. 20:5

They continue the emphasis on the wise person's capacity to
learn, discipline for the ignorant, and the life of re-
straint.⁵ The fool's disposition bars him from wisdom:

¹20:15; 19:2a.

²19:2b.

³20:15b.

⁴See Appendix, Table 15, Parts B and D.

⁵17:10, 24; 19:25; 21:29.,

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing his opinion. 18:2

Here, too, is the demesne of human wisdom:

A man's steps are ordered by the Lord;
how then can a man understand his way? 20:24

Among other terms, *mwsr* appears four times, all among passages dealt with above;¹ *nbwn*, four; *sh*, five.² **škl* occurs ten times, though at least one use seems to play on its alternative meanings of pondering and prospering.³ Verse 16:20 emphasizes the precondition of reliance on Yahweh. In 19:14, a "prudent" wife comes from Yahweh, though "house and wealth are inherited from fathers." At 21:16, the word *drk* appears ("way of understanding") as it frequently does in relation to adhering to wisdom, a point we shall investigate further below. Finally, the term appears in reference to what we shall argue is another disposition, righteousness, in the sense of reflecting on or pondering the experience of others, to learn from it:

The righteous observes the house of the wicked;
the wicked are cast down to ruin. 21:12

The saying in 17:2 points up the precedence dispositional state takes over social conventions, in what amounts to a

¹Plus 15:32, 33.

²19:21 of Yahweh parallel to *mḥšbwt* of man in the sense of demesne.

³17:8 the bribe!

rather iconoclastic re-assessment of social as against wisdom values:

A slave who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts
shamefully,
and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers. 17:2

The word *tm*, integrity, appears twice, arguably in relation to the disposition of the righteous rather than wisdom per se.¹ The former saying is a regular *twb-mn* saying which weighs poverty and integrity against perversity of speech and folly. *Twšyh* for "sound judgment" appears in 18:1, whose interpretation is obscured by the exact rendering which should be given to (1) *t'wh* (own desire? pretexts?). The word *ʿrm* does not appear to mean wisdom or knowledge so much as wit, cunning or prudence in its two occurrences. Once, *ysr* appears in an admonition to instruct the callow youth:

Discipline your son while there is hope;
do not set your heart on his destruction. 19:18

In 18:11, *mškyt* may mean "imagination," though its application here would be tangential in any event, confirming insight as something more than a specificable body of actions or information. Admonition, *twkht*, appears in 15:31, 32 and as the verb at 19:25. *Yr't-yhwh*, the fear of the lord which is a pre-condition for wisdom is associated with *hsd*

¹19:1; 20:7.

w'mt, hyym, swr mr^c, ^cnwt, kbwd.¹ There are certainly a number of other words which appear in these contexts, but an exhaustive analysis of the vocabulary of this passage lies outside our purposes. The implications of many of these terms--*drk, lb, rwh, šm^c, nr, twb, ksyl, pty* and others--will become clear as they fit into the course of our discussion.

The B composition seems to delimit a clear realm of wisdom. It is associated with the mind. The principal emphasis lies on its inherent value, not any specific consequences which might follow. To be wise involves the capacity to heed instruction, restrain and control one's passions in the disposition of a cool spirit, ponder and learn from experience and from verbal instruction. Wisdom is attained through discipline, but it seems to supercede any particular act or teaching. Since wisdom is cumulative, and since some dispositions bar one from attaining it, by implication the wise sustain and expand their wisdom through mutual recognition and instruction as well as by the disciplined instruction of youth. While there are no clear references to a group of wise, the nature of that wisdom virtually demands that those of like disposition interact, while excluding these (fools) who simply cannot

¹16:6; 19:23.

hope for wisdom. Wisdom is the highest intrinsic good, but it is bounded by the power, dominion and (presumably) wisdom of Yahweh who at once sustains and limits the effective power of knowledge. The wise person's command of life is qualified, not absolute, hence the folly of pursuing wisdom instrumentally (as if that were possible).

The life-world: power and position

Given this description of wisdom, how does the life-world manifest itself to the writers of the B composition? We begin by looking at the conduct and activities of the wise person himself, which to some extent we shall have to infer from stated values.

We have already remarked that apt speech figures prominently in their thought. Wisdom leads to parsimonious but effective speech.¹ While wisdom is communicated in part through verbal instruction, silence is often preferable to speaking:

He who keeps his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself out of trouble. 21:23

To speak is to expose oneself to the consequences of having spoken.²

First, one should attend to instruction: these

¹16:21, 23; 17:27.

²18:20-21. See Appendix, Table 22.

sayings place a premium on listening, the attentive ear, and heeding admonition:¹

The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
the Lord has made them both. 20:12

In addition, restraining the tongue gives one time to consider what should be said and present it cogently and effectively.² In speech, one conveys the depth of his mind—that is how instruction is possible—and reveals himself to those with the insight to perceive.³ Thus, the gravest failing in speech may be haste:⁴

If one gives answer before he hears,
it is his folly and shame. 18:13

Consider the consequences:

From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied;
he is satisfied by the yield of his lips.
Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits.
18:20-21

The latter saying is not without a certain sense of irony.⁵ Certainly, the expression of knowledge leads to life, so that speech is not per se evil. In fact,

¹18:15; 19:20, 27; 15:31.

²15:28; 17:27.

³18:4.

⁴15:28; 20:9, 22, 25; 17:27.

⁵Cf. Appendix, Table 23.

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
 sweetness to the soul and health to the body.
 16:24

Compare 15:30, and

There is gold, and abundance of costly stones;
 but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.
 20:15

The menace in speech is that it exposes one to the power and control of others; words go out beyond the demesne that one can control. Thus, speech is the vehicle for gossip, quarreling, strife and conflict;¹ whoever gossips cannot exercise control or discretion, therefore no secrets are safe when one associates with him. Further, attractive and effective speech is more than idle flattery or the puffery of a facade. It requires a measure of insight and perspicacity in the audience to appreciate.² One who is not wise will find the speech of the foolish or wicked enticing; it has its own attraction, and its own reward.³

An evildoer listens to wicked lips;
 and a liar gives heed to a mischievous tongue.
 17:4

The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
 they go down into the inner parts of the body.
 18:8

¹16:28; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19.

²Perhaps this explains the emphasis on corporal forms of discipline with the ignorant (19:20, 25, 29; 22:15).

³Cf. 18:7.

Thus, speech, too, is tied to disposition. To each type of character, a certain speech becomes appropriate. From that kind of speaking flow consequences appropriate to the disposition, not just the speech itself. This distinction applies to social station and to disposition as measured against the wisdom scale of values.² Significantly, these sayings assume the capacity of the king to appreciate and reward speech that is both righteous and eloquent:³

He who laves purity of heart
and whose speech is gracious,
will have the king as his friend. 22:11

Reception by the king as friend has special significance in these sayings. Verse 16:10 seems to attribute divination, the Revised Standard Version has "inspired decisions," to the king, which would affirm both his close association to insight and wisdom through speech and its appropriate disposition and his favor with Yahweh who limits but sustains wisdom.⁴

The B collection's concern for the courts,

¹A source of some ironic observations by the authors (17:7; 18:23; 19:7(?))

²16:27; 17:20; 19:1.

³16:13; 17:7(?).

⁴See Appendix, Tables 10 and 24.

especially truthful testimony and just administration, closely follows this problem of speech.¹ The parallel sayings in 19:5 and 9 affirm consequences of false testimony:

A false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who utters lies will not escape
[v. 9: will perish].

Such sayings seem to confirm a doctrine of retribution,² although its nature is remarkably unspecific.³ Yet, other sayings recognize the fragility of justice when it is perverted, either by lies or by bribery.⁴

It is not good to be partial to a wicked man,
or to deprive a righteous man of justice. 18:5

This saying and 19:28 can be interpreted to reflect the inherent difference in character between righteous and wicked which results in a radically different relationship to the judicial and administrative system.⁵ In that light, justice becomes the product of perspicacity and just procedure, the difficulty of which is keenly presented in 18:17:

¹See Appendix, Table 25; cf. Tables 22 and 26, Parts E and R.

²21:28; cf. 21:6; 20:17.

³See Appendix, Tables 8, Part E, and 27.

⁴See Appendix, Table 26, Parts N and R; cf. Table 16, Part F.

⁵Cf. 21:15.

He who states his case first seems right
until the other [*r^chw!*] comes and examines him.

righteous are not assured deliverance from all in-
justice:

To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good;
to flog noble men is wrong. 17:26

The saying confirms the proprieties that attend differential social status,¹ but it would be irrelevant were not such injustice both possible and an actual fact.² Similarly, if simple retribution could be taken for granted, there would be no need to affirm it. Thus, sayings like 19:5, 9; 21:28 need to be viewed circumspectly. While they may well confirm a doctrine of retribution, though we shall argue they do not, they may also deny such a doctrine by confirming the need to uphold and defend the value system of this group.³ In that light, the general statement of consequences becomes important: compare the statements which make each dispositional state its own reward.⁴

The courts and administration generally receive a relatively large amount of attention in this composition.

¹See Appendix, Table 14.

²However infrequent, compare 17:23.

³See Appendix, Table 27.

⁴See Appendix, Table 28.

We find reference to cases,¹ testimony,² examination,³ decision,⁴ and punishment.⁵ We include administration because several sayings extend the references to lying and deceit beyond the situation of the law court. Sayings 20:17 and 21:6 are general, but imply favorable economic transactions for the liar while affirming that such deceit will not bring enduring gain. Verse 19:22 presents a conflict of values, esteeming fidelity, even with poverty, over false speech.⁶ The sayings on bribery, however, provide a much clearer focus.⁷ They apply to law and administration alike. It would be too much to say that the wise advocate the use of bribes--though such an interpretation has at times been given such sayings in arguing for the worldly orientation of this wisdom. Rather, these sayings seem to condone them, though with some ambivalence and a sense of irony. As we shall see, the wise here favor

¹18:27.

²19:5, 9, 28; 21:28.

³18:17.

⁴17:26; 18:5; 20:8; 21:15.

⁵17:26, 23; 21:15; 19:29(?).

⁶See Appendix, Table 29.

⁷See Appendix, Tables 16, Part F, and 26, Part N.

generosity in those of means.¹ They recognize the influence wealth has over the actions of others.² Verse 19:6 may well play on this theme by equating wealth, power, social status and generous inclination all through the ambiguity of *ndyb*:

Many seek the favor of a generous man ["noble"?],
and everyone is a friend [!] to a man who gives gifts.
19:6

In a world where one must deal with those who have power, this kind of "generosity" can be quite helpful:³

A man's gift (*mtn 'dm*) makes room for him
and brings before great men. 18:16

Still, 17:23 voices disapproval toward accepting a bribe for the sake of influencing the dispensing of justice.

What is wrong is not just the acceptance per se, since 17:8 places acceptance in a far more ambiguous light. Perhaps one could argue that perversion of the judicial process is what is at stake,⁴ but 20:17 and 21:6 clearly have broad application in denouncing false speech. There may be some clue for us in 17:8,

A bribe is like a magic stone
in the eyes of him who receives it;
wherever he turns he prospers.

¹See Appendix, Tables 30 and 31.

²See Appendix, Table 32.

³Compare 21:14.

⁴*'rhwt mšpt* 17:23b.

"Prosperers" renders *yškl* which may play on its technical sense. That would suggest a less favorable and more ironic stance toward the bribe. Resolution of this conflict must await the elaboration of more evidence. For now, the bribe sayings indicate clear concern for relations with legal and administrative power. Their focus seems to be at least as much on the use of gifts to manipulate influential people as on the taking of bribes by those who have power. This emphasis again suggests that these wise must deal with powerful institutions and influential people whose favor has a material effect on their life situations.¹

The saying at 16:14, mentioned earlier intimates a gift as a possible means for diverting the anger of the king. Verse 20:8 explicitly relates the royal court to justice, in distinguishing the righteous and the wicked. King-sayings recur throughout the B collection, as they do in the mashal literature generally.² We find a block of royal king-sayings at 16:10-15. The king's throne is founded in righteousness and fidelity (*šdqh, ḥsd*):

Loyalty and faithfulness preserve the king,
and his throne is upheld by righteousness. 20:28

¹Note how 17:16 suggests that wisdom instruction requires the payment of a fee or price.

²See Appendix, Table 10.

The institution of the monarchy has a special relationship to Yahweh that must be respected and preserved, certainly by the king himself. Thus, "It is an abomination to kings to do evil."¹ When the king issues a pronouncement, it has the status of an oracle and is synonymous with justice.² The righteousness of the royal institution, if not of the king himself, is divine, giving royal authority a divine warrant. Still, the king's power devolves from Yahweh, and Yahweh may do with it according to his own purposes.³ Even the authority of the king has a demesne that is bounded by the power of Yahweh:

The king's heart is a stream of water
in the hand of the Lord;
he turns it wherever he will. 21:1

Here the appearance of the water metaphor with the reference to heart suggests a quality of insight that goes beyond competent governance.⁴ Royal insight is virtually wisdom by definition. Several sayings seem to confirm this interpretation. The king seems to recognize and prefer righteousness, to esteem true speaking,⁵ to perceive and focus upon

¹16:12a.

²16:10.

³See Appendix, Table 8, Parts A and G.

⁴See Appendix, Table 8, Part L.

⁵16:13.

evil in his midst,¹ and to separate righteousness from wickedness while calling the latter to judgment.²

A wise king winnows the wicked,
and drives the wheel over them. 20:26

This divine favor may help explain the reference to the emissary of death in 16:14³ along with the choice of *kpr* for "appease" there and the use of ."purity" (*thwr*), "fidelity," "righteousness," "faithfulness" all in connection with the king. Certainly, since the king possesses great power, we probably should not read over much into statements about his wrath. The B composition suggests by its concern with royal favor and the hazards of dealing with royal power that such matters were an important concern for these wise. More, the special status afforded the king in relation to Yahweh, to the extent that it manifests itself as wisdom or insight, suggests a social condition in which the wise group would support and defend the royal establishment in spite of its hazards.⁴ To evoke the wrath of the

¹20:8.

²"Winnows" (20:8, 26).

³Cf. 17:11.

⁴16:14; 19:12; 20:2 (the first stichoi of the latter two sayings differ by one word).

king is to court death;¹ his favor brings (forth) life.²

There also appear references to princes or nobles. Except for 19:6, which involves a possible play on words already noted, sayings dealing with the nobility are propriety sayings.³ That is, they set forth separate standards of conduct and treatment, depending on one's social class (as here) or disposition. It is not appropriate for princes to be impoverished, subject to social inferiors, dealt rough justice.⁴ One expects cultivated discourse but also veracity of a noble. If 19:6 should apply to the prince, then he should also be generous, while dispensing powerful favors, not unlike the king himself. Again, such statements suggest an environment where the privilege of the nobility is taken for granted by the wise group underlying this composition. The latter seem to observe and cultivate the social proprieties.

The B composition gives considerable attention to the influence of the powerful, particularly when that

¹20:2.

²19:12; 16:15; cf. 22:11.

³See Appendix, Table 14.

⁴17:26; 19:10.

⁵By implication, the fool is a social inferior, as would be appropriate if royalty have a special relationship to Yanweh founded in righteousness (17:7).

influence results from wealth.¹ Power as such is ambiguous. While the wise here seem to respect it, they often deem competing values to be superior to it. For example, in wisdom resides the potential to overthrow self-confident might:

A wise man scales the city of the mighty
and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.
21:22

Presumably, the saying is metonymous or synechdochic--"by wise guidance wage war"²--and the setting is political and military. Where powerful forces are in conflict, the wise concern for restraint comes into play:³

The lot puts an end to disputes
and decides between powerful contenders. 18:18.

Security is implicit in wealth, which fact makes riches most desirable. With wealth comes entree to other rich and powerful people.⁴ It brings new company.⁵ One propriety saying reflects the new freedom of the well-to-do:

The poor use entreaties,
but the rich answer roughly. 18:23

¹See Appendix, Tables 32 and 33.

²20:18b.

³Cf. 16:33.

⁴18:16.

⁵19:4, cf. 7

Still, the wise view skeptically the loss of restraint and self-control that can come with power.¹ They vehemently condemn the vice of arrogance and overweening pride which surely invites ruin.² When wealth or, one assumes, other sources of power lose their distinctive value as security from the manipulation or control of others and become the basis of one's own obtrusive or coercive activity, then this wise group rejects them because they entice one to overreach his demesne into (potential) destruction.³ In addition, wealth can induce sloth,⁴ hedonism,⁵ greed⁶ and perhaps even a measure of folly in the unwary.⁷ Power, especially wealth, is valuable not in and of itself, but instrumentally. Its ethical valuation by the wise depends on setting, the context within which it is used. For that reason, the extensive references to generosity, direct and implied, suggest at least one way

¹21:24

²16:18; 18:12.

³16:18-19; 15:33; 16:5, 8; 17:19.

⁴20:13.

⁵21:17.

⁶21:6; 22:16

⁷21:20.

in which riches are to be used wisely:¹

All day long the wicked covets,
but the righteous gives and does not hold back.
21:26

He who has a bountiful eye (*twb-^cyn*) will be blessed,
for he shares his bread with the poor. 22:9

While economic inequity is clearly a major concern in the B collection, the wise here are not so close to either pole of the issue that they become strident and humorless. Their sense of ironic distance remains,² implying that they do not identify themselves completely with rich or poor. Distance, irony, ambivalence, ethical concern, all suggest that this composition issues from a group that has not become accustomed to inherited wealth or privilege even if they have it,³ is subject to the vagaries of power, but is sufficiently confident in its station that it may at least subtly "lecture" itself and others on their moral obligations. Further, poverty is more than a theoretical possibility for them,⁴ the adversity sayings seem to confirm this,⁵ without becoming a

¹See Appendix, Table 30.

²18:23, 18; 20:14(?); 19:7, 4.

³19:14.

⁴See Appendix, Table 29.

⁵22:1-2; 19:22, 1; 17:5; 16:19.

fixation. Wealth and poverty are both "existential" realities in the B composition.

As we shall shortly see, privilege brings obligation, "noblesse oblige":¹

He who oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth,
or gives to the rich, will only come to want. 22:16

The poor become a special moral concern of those who have.

Restraint remains a feasible strategy for those who are comfortable, but not well-to-do. With the attainment of wealth and influence, one can no longer be self-contained.

Riches and power affect others simply because one has them.

To some extent, they breach demesne in rather the same way that situations which demand that one speak, and do so effectively, serve to breach the confines of demesne.

Benevolent use of this influence restores balance, therefore quiet confidence in one's position.²

He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor
will himself cry out and not be heard. 21:13

If wealth and generosity are a concern in B, so is poverty along with its implications.³ Two themes recur in these sayings. First, the poor are subject to the

¹See Appendix, Table 31.

²19:17; 21:13; 22:2, 9; 18:11; 21:26.

³See Appendix, Table 34.

focal point of sayings concerning power, altruism and the dilemmas of the wise' ethics, these alternatives should likely have been more than purely theoretical. Both wealth and poverty, gain and loss of social station, seem to have represented real and plausible possibilities in the lives of this wise group. Thus, the B composer considers the relationship of ethics and its intrinsic system of values to social position. While 17:6 equates want or low station (*rš*, cf. *dl* elsewhere) with personal calamity (*yḵ*), it also reflects an "iconoclastic" trend in these sayings:

He who mocks the poor insults his Maker;¹
 he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.
17:5

The B composer evidences a special concern for the poor that goes beyond what we call noblesse oblige. Rather, it seems to reflect a concern for the possibilities of virtuous life irrespective of social station. The wise assess position by a standard which departs from that of their society²--disposition, personal integrity within one's appropriate social role, is what is ethically relevant, to the extent that social fortunes may be overturned by one with proper character.³ They aspire to such social

¹Cf. 14:31a.

²See Appendix, Tables 36 and 37.

³22:4; 21:13; 17:2.

transformations, knowing that they may not come about.¹ Ultimately, virtue is its own reward.² Note that poverty itself is not ennobling; it is a social calamity. Disposition, not station, counts. The virtues of upright character realized in conduct supercede the positive, or negative, benefits of social position. Allegiance to Yahweh, humility, integrity, reputation, esteem, diligence and good marriage all mean far more than an one's station in life.³ In sum,

The rich and the poor meet together,
the Lord is the maker of them all. 22:2

The B composer seems to reflect a wise group who are not mere custodians of the social status quo.⁴ They are sufficiently close to wealth and want, socially and intellectually, to perceive the ethical ambiguities inherent in each and to chart their own course through them independent of their society's values as such.

While the B composition treats the pledge or surety relationship, it does not consider it as an independent status.⁵ One saying⁶ points up the influence inherent in

¹16:19; 19:1, 22.

²17:5, 16:16; 22:1, 4.

³16:19; 19:1, 14, 22; 21:5; 22:1, 4.

⁴See Appendix, Tables 36 and 37.

⁵See Appendix, Table 26, Part L.

⁶22:7.

wealth and money. It and two others¹ focus on the loss of control (demesne) that comes with borrowing or surety, thus reflecting more on the discipline of restraint than on a particular social relationship. The wise person avoids becoming thus dependent on others--through borrowing or becoming surety--while continuing to exert control over his own property when others are foolish enough to enter such a relationship.

The slave is mentioned only three times, one of which is metaphorical.² A second treats the proprieties of power and position, relating slave to prince.³ The third places the slave within the context of family rather than social relationships.⁴ Thus, though its extent may be unclear, there is a material familial dimension to the slave's position evidenced in this material, even though the status as such seems rather removed from the "existential possibilities" of the B composer. Slavery is tangential to his thought.⁵ It is relevant insofar as it continues to affirm the distinction between the social value of one's position and the value of one's integrity and faithful

¹17:18; 20:16.

²22:7 (in connection with borrowing).

³19:10.

⁴17:2.

⁵See Appendix, Table 38.

conduct. Propriety means one has an ethical responsibility to act in terms of one's social role, but one's disposition is not determined by his social position.¹

The foreigner appears equally tangential.² He figures into one saying concerning surety and pledge:

Take a man's garment when he has given surety
for a stranger and hold him in pledge when
he gives surety for foreigners [*nkrym*, *Q nkryh*!]
20:16³

The saying concerns demesne, leaving the place of the foreigner obscure. The Qere of this saying and 22:14 suggest the image of the "foreign woman" or *'yśh zrh*⁴ to a reader sensitized by the image in other wisdom. Only at 29:3 do we find any other reference to the foreign woman or prostitute within the four major collections.⁵ In addition, the image appears in the shorter intermediary collections at 23:27-28, at the conclusion of a series of hortatory discourses with the vocative reminiscent of the setting of the parallel sayings in chs. 1-9. Verse 29:3 uses *zwnwt*, limiting the parallel. Saying 22:14 could conceivably be an addition, since it is the third saying from the end of

¹See Appendix, Tables 14, 35, and 39.

²See Appendix, Table 40, Part H.

³27:13 (except *qh* for *lqh*).

⁴V. 14 *zrw*.

⁵There, D.

the B collection, which breaks off with the Amenemope material. On the other hand, nothing about the saying itself compels symbolic, let alone mythic, interpretation, and any relationship with the foreign woman image may be extraneous, purely inferential or even, contra Bauer-Kayatz,¹ anachronistic. In the context of the B composition, the sense of the saying could adequately be given by pointing up once again Yahweh's power, especially over those who act without restraint or self-control. Yahweh may (not, must) use such lack of discipline as an occasion to work his own purposes.

In this connection, the rhetorical style of B becomes important. The composer(s?) makes no use of mythic or highly symbolic language. When he turns to metaphor, he appropriates stock symbols and figures from what seems to be a technical vocabulary having relatively narrow and well-defined meanings. This vocabulary appears from an examination of B's own usages: by and large, one need not refer elsewhere to discover that B is using stock terminology. Our first obligation obviously is to see what B means by his language, irrespective of other applications. B's metaphors are conventional and relatively closed: concrete and narrow in scope. The foreign woman symbol is (almost)

¹ Bauer-Kayatz, *Proverbien 1-9*; Bauer-Kayatz, *Einführung*, pp. 36-38, esp. 37, n.3.

mythic, broad in its polyvalence, highly abstract--symbol rather than metaphor, to the extent that we may make a distinction between the two. On the other hand, the prostitute as a metaphor is quite within the rhetorical reach of B. Significantly, the mashal literature, the proverb collections, turns to abstraction rather than symbol in making general, potentially multi-valent statements. Indeed, it is that propensity for using abstract technical vocabulary which makes the proverb literature so difficult to read or interpret. We cannot exclude the image of the prostitute prefiguring or even subtly suggesting other usage, but the thrust here seems straightforward and concrete. Taken this way, the saying tells us little if anything at all, about "foreignness."

Whether the product of one or several writers, the B collection, as we have argued, seems to call for the existence of a group whose accumulated and collective counsel was superior to that of any one member. Moreover the group acted as custodians of this learning, instructing the educable in this heritage. While the sayings here give no certain evidence of the work or social location of the wise, inferences can be drawn. B shows ambivalence and value-conflict when social situations are close to the writer (and, presumably, his group). This group experiences wealth and poverty, high and low station, as real possibilities in

life, irrespective of personal virtues. They do not inherit wealth or position so secure that it can neither be lost nor materially enhanced. Rather, they live by what they do, not who they are. Thus, the capacity to project an effective image in dealing with the powerful becomes a vital group value—hence, their focus on effective speech. They seem to work in administrative milieu of information, judgment and decisions: false statements threaten the viability of their working positions. Close to those who have power, they esteem it, but perceive its fickleness. The king and the nobility are more remote than the wealthy and powerful; their power and its rightness are taken for granted. The king is remote; his power, quasi-divine. One would expect a more complex humanized view, cognizant of arbitrariness born of politics, intrigue and aristocratic conflicts, from a group close to the king or high aristocracy. Such ambivalence appears toward wealth and poverty, suggesting a more modest and intermediate position for this group. They have enough not to be forever subject to the control of others; little enough so that they project their concern about the loss of control inherent in wealth onto those with more than themselves. These characteristics suggest middle-rank career officials in the employ of the state and others, dependent on their work or wits for advancement but with some confidence (but not certitude) that

integrity, fidelity and diligence will be rewarded. While loss of position is a real calamity, it is not a fixation. There is far more to life of value than one's position. In this respect, the wise here reformulate the social order. They have sufficient stake in the present order that they value it and seek a measure of fulfillment within its proprieties. Yet, wisdom is not equivalent to social position; status is not presumptive evidence of wisdom. Neither is wisdom a radical inversion of the social order, whether this-worldly or other-worldly. The wise perceive their demesne, their limits of personal control, and seek to act within it. Overreaching is the cardinal sin. Social position is not good, it is given; it is part of demesne. Any realization of wisdom must be accomplished within that given, though it maybe an intrinsic value that does not lead to social preference or advancement. The social order, then, is affirmed to the extent that it is given. Wisdom values, however, are relatively, if not entirely, independent of that system. Though wisdom is possible for every status, and no one station is free of folly, each class has its special virtues and vices. The king's virtue is righteousness; his vice, evil deeds and judgments. The nobility, one suspects, might be characterized by, respectively, grace and perhaps boorish insipidity. The wealthy may be generous or grasping. The educated are wise or foolish. The poor

are uprightly faithful or dependently servile. Slaves may be trustworthy or, one might guess, self-aggrandizing. Wisdom and folly are the special virtue and vice of this “middle-class” officialdom. Each class may realize wisdom, or folly, but they appear in forms appropriate to that position in society. Each vice is not ignorance but failure to observe the bounds of demesne, overreaching the discipline of restraint, pride, hence hubris. Recognition of demesne is faithfulness and integrity; competent action and self-control within its bounds is wisdom, realized as the special characteristics of each position. We have to make inferences to reach such a list, but, to the extent that it be accepted, it suggests the relative independence of wisdom versus class which can masquerade as class itself only because it takes the social order as a given, seeking accomplishment within it. The adversity sayings (*infra*) strongly suggest that the wise value wisdom over their social position. Finally, one might even infer that Yahweh's righteousness, for this group, reflects Yahweh's kingly role: it is Yahweh's wisdom seen in ruling and governing, casting righteousness in a slightly different light.

Though important elements of our depiction of the wise have yet to be sketched, we can already begin to see difficulties with arguments from retribution and order that seek to represent or depict the wise, at least with respect to the

B composition. The wise' interpretation of their world shows notable affinities with what Weber called "inner-worldly asceticism" (*innerweltliche Askese*), though such a characterization would be far too broad and general to be entirely satisfactory for this literature.¹

The life-world: social institutions

The family and familistic language recur within these sayings.² We find references to father, mother, wife, son, child (*n^cr*), youth (*b^hwr*), grandchild, the aged, brother and friend/neighbor--not to mention the outsider or foreigner already discussed. As one might expect with relational language, several different familistic terms tend to occur within any particular saying and several relationships may be implied. Occasionally, these terms take on a symbolic or metaphorical sense, especially the term "brother." Generally, however, the terms seem to refer to the institution of the family, though often in an abstract or generalizing way. With the exception of the vocative *bny* in the admonition 19:27, there is no evidence that the terms should be taken as an indirect reference to some other institution or social relationship. There is, for example, no implication that "father" or "son" have any sort of

¹Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, pp. 79-92.

²See Appendix, Table 41.

school or apprenticeship setting.¹

Fathers are mentioned seven times.² In each case, other familistic terms appear: son,³ mother,⁴ wife,⁵ and grandchildren and the elderly.⁶ Where sons are juxtaposed to fathers, the grief of a son's folly for his parents appears in three sayings,⁷ violence toward parents is deplored once⁸ and his cursing of his parents is once decried.⁹ Only 17:6 casts this relationship in a more favorable light, and it emphasizes the glory of grandchildren for one who is old, while sons are honored by their fathers:

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged,
and the glory of sons is their fathers.

Against this left-handed compliment are arrayed sayings like:

A stupid [*ksy!*] son is a grief to his father;
and the father of a fool has no joy. 17:21¹⁰

¹McKay, pp. 426-35. See Appendix, Table 41, Parts A, D and H.

²17:6, 21, 25; 19:13, 14, 26; 20:20.

³17:6, 21, 25; 19:13, 26; and implied in 20:20.

⁴19:26; 20:20; and implied in 17:25.

⁵19:13, 14.

⁶17:6.

⁷17:21, 25; 19:13.

⁸19:26.

⁹20:20.

¹⁰Cf. v. 25, 19:13a.

Whoever does violence to his father and chases away
 his mother
 is a son who causes shame and brings reproof. 19:26

The relationship between youth and age, however,
 represents a counterpoise to the father sayings at least
 insofar that they are silent about the grief youth may
 cause. Saying 17:6 involves an ironic inversion of time;
 it is tied by catch words (*ḥrt, tp'rt*) to 16:31 preceding:

A hoary head is a crown of glory;
 it is found in the way of righteousness: (BK)

In 20:29, one finds an appreciation of youth that otherwise
 seems to be lacking in these sayings:

The glory of young men is their strength,
 but the beauty of old men is their gray hair.

Clearly, youth militates against wisdom; it is a stage of
 life in which the way of wisdom may be lost and is there-
 fore perilous to the youth and stressful to the parent.

Youth is not, however, to be devalued or evil ipso facto.
 Wisdom comes with age. The implication seems to be that
 those who are wise expect and desire that their sons (pre-
 sumably) succeed them in wisdom. They look to their chil-
 dren, not generally to surrogate children,¹ to follow their
 example. The role of family-based in-group recruitment
 among these wise, therefore, should probably not be under-
 stated.

¹Cf. 17:2.

Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it.

22:6

Right conduct cannot be assumed; it is something that must be attained in the child through disciplined development structured by the parent.

Wives are mentioned four times;¹ mothers, three, each time parallel to father (!).² Two of the wife sayings follow the *twb-mn* form;³ each is a saying of adversity.⁴

In each case, the wise man faces a dilemma. He has to decide between undesirable alternatives. The obvious implication is that such relationships which place the wise person in an untenable position occur; such choices have to be made, electing the lesser of two evils. Here, a marriage of contention and conflict represents one of the most unhappy and disruptive situations in which one who is seeking the wisdom can find himself. Better loneliness and isolation than such disruption. These sayings place a high value upon a sound and supportive marriage; a good wife facilitates the way of wisdom for her spouse. Both the choice of a wife and the wife's own conduct are fundamental

¹18:22; 19:13; 21:9, 19.

²17:25; 19:26; 20:20.

³21:9, 19.

⁴Cf. Appendix, Tables 41, Part C, and 29.

to the development of right conduct, a good relationship with Yahweh and successful pursuit of wisdom:

It is better to live in a desert land
than with a contentious and fretful woman. 21:19

He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
and obtains favor from the Lord. 18:22

As the ultimate good, the way of wisdom supercedes even the marital relationship. Still, the family is pivotal to the development, maintenance and communication of the character and discipline of wisdom. Thus, the character of one's wife critically affects one's ability to develop that disposition which is wisdom. This material seems to presuppose a male perspective. The role of father predominates over the (almost totally implicit) role of husband. The father's role in discipline receives heavy emphasis; the mother's, mostly implicit stress, though it is by no means beyond inference.¹ The value of the wise disposition as of righteous character redounds through and is expressed in terms of the father-son relationship:

A righteous man who walks in his integrity--
blessed are his sons after him! 20:7

While women or daughters are not explicitly credited with wisdom, and that relationship attains no symbolic status in this work, there is something to the disposition of a woman that one must assume can be developed and which must

¹See Appendix, Table 41, Parts, A, B, C and D.

be sought for her husband and children (sons) to hold to the way of wisdom. Interestingly, the vices of the bad wife presented in the adversity sayings are those of passion and heat: quarreling, contention, fretting. They also imply abuse of speech! The good wife, by implication, practices that same restraint which typifies one who pursues wisdom.

All of the references to the mother role occur in the context of sayings which deal with the foolish or disrespectful son: violence to parents,¹ cursing parents² or general folly.³ The first two stress, albeit by a rhetorical inversion of extremity, filial respect and responsibility, perhaps at least in part because wisdom can only come with mature age, though obviously these sayings also deal with surrender of the self to vicious passions. The third is consistent with the view that the fool's folly has contagious consequences. Those who are closest to him and whose lives are most inextricably bound up with him will be most affected by the consequences of his disposition and conduct.⁴

¹19:26.

²20:20.

³17:25.

⁴See Appendix, Tables 42 and 43.

Several sayings refer rather generally to children, though the child would seem to be male (*n^cr*) so that these sayings might be included with son sayings. Two sayings stress discipline.¹ The former has become a cliché, at least in English, but it stresses the gradually and systematic acquisition of disposition. The way, disposition and conduct, is and must be acquired while growing up, as a process of development.² The latter almost equates folly with ignorance, but that equation is rhetorical (effect and cause made equivalent).³ Wise disposition is not natural or inherent. Ignorance in a child becomes folly in an adult. The discipline is begun while one is a callow youth or not at all. Youth is the gateway to wisdom as to folly.

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.
22:15

Verse 20:11 is what we might call an observation: it is a pithy insight into human nature, a keen recognition and summary of how people actually behave, seemingly without a judgment as to that behavior.⁴ The recurrence of

¹22:6, 15.

²Cf. Appendix, Tables 20, 39, and 44.

³See Appendix, Tables 26 and 28.

⁴See Appendix, Tables 45 and 46.

observations among these sayings may account in part for the alleged pragmatism, not to mention secularity, of this material.¹ Something about human conduct and nature is seen which is simply given as an 'observation' for what it may be worth, apparently non-judgmentally. If this saying is an observation, then it expresses the universal experience of adults dealing with children: children have keen insight into what is expected of them, yet may behave in ways sharply at variance with what they know to be right. Just the way a child goes about doing something shows clearly whether what he is doing is proper.

Even a child makes himself known by his acts,
whether what he does is pure and right. 20:11

Even a child is not an a-moral being. Yet the saying lends itself to other, non-observational, interpretations as well. First, righteousness (unlike folly?!) forms part of an inherent moral sense which even children have. That intrinsic sense forms the basis for the development of what we are calling "character" or "disposition." The act is the unveiling of something that is not practical or pragmatic, that is prior to conduct: it is the revealing of the character out of which that act inevitably springs (*ytnkr-n^cr*). Second, the saying represents a counterpoise to 22:15. The child is capable of right action.

¹See Appendix, Table 47.

Folly is potentially present in youth, but it is not inherent. The child can elect or act out that righteousness which is the sine qua non of the way of wisdom or the child can choose evil or folly. Youth does not equal folly, therefore ignorance also is not the same as folly.¹ Underneath the observation lie some understandings of human nature that are fundamental to the distinctive position of this (wisdom) material.

Eight sayings deal explicitly with the role of son;² at least two others are implicit.³ Eight are explicit or implicit father-sayings, with which we have already dealt. One deals with the faithful slave.⁴ The last presents the stock figure of the callow youth whose ignorance can and must be overcome through discipline:

Discipline your son while there is hope;
do not set your heart on his destruction. 19:18

Ironically, while these sayings portray the vulnerability of parents, particularly the father, to the ignorance and potential folly of their offspring, no saying states that parents might somehow gain glory and honor through the conduct or disposition of their children. In fact, 17:6

¹See Appendix, Tables 20 and 48.

²17:2, 6, 21, 25; 19:13, 18, 26; 20:7.

³20:20, 29.

⁴17:2.

inverts that theme. It would be too much to take this curious balance, particularly on the basis of silence, as evidence that these wise strongly disvalue youth. If that were so, the concern with the institution of the family, to the exclusion of many other social institutions, that is expressed here would be inexplicable. The clear implication is that these wise desire that their sons (children?) eventually follow them on the path of wisdom: like many elites, this group would seem to sponsor its own children for its successors. Rather, we might infer that, while a youth, one's capacity for wisdom and maturity of disposition is by definition low, while one's vulnerability to folly is high. The contagion of folly exposes those close to one to its consequences.¹ Hence, these parents have little to gain from their youth qua youth, but stand to lose much if their children go astray. The sayings reflect that disparity.¹

Six sayings deal with brothers;² none with sisters. One is a slave saying,³ previously dealt with. Three are friend-sayings that juxtapose brother and friend as relationships of faithfulness and intimacy. Verse 18:9

¹See Appendix, Table 42.

²17:2, 17; 18:9, 19, 24; 19:7.

³17:2.

treats "brother" metaphorically. In 28:24b, the same basic phrase appears using *hbr* for 'h, thus indirectly linking this verse as well to the comparison between brother and friend. Only 18:19 may deal with the brother as a straightforward kinship relationship, but unfortunately the saying is quite corrupt. It seems to stress fraternal loyalty and mutual reliance.

There are eleven sayings which explicitly portray the stock figure of friend or neighbor.¹ Two others might be considered implicit.² Nine use the term *r^eh* or a related form; one, 'wlp;³ one, 'yš-'mwnym.⁴ The figure symbolizes steadfastness, loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness and integrity. By poetically juxtaposing friend and brother, the kinship relationship becomes a thematic bridge whereby the figure of the friend is brought into the closest circles of intimacy for these wise: the friend is like a close member of the family.⁵

There are friends who pretend to be friends,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

18:24

¹16:29; 17:9, 17, 18; 18:24; 19:4, 6, 7; 20:6; 21:10; 22:11.

²20:16 and 19.

³17:9.

⁴20:6.

⁵See Appendix, Table 24.

‘yš r^cym lhtrw^{cc}
wyš ‘hb dbq m’h. 18:24

First, the friend sayings stress the character of the friend:

A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity. 17:17

Many a man proclaims his loyalty,
But a faithful man who can find? 20:6

Character is important in assessing the conduct of the friend; there is a propriety of conduct toward one another. Friendship is a value that transcends particular acts.¹ Judgment is called for in determining how to act toward the other, for if the other be a friend, special obligation is due. Being a friend and friendship seem to be part of the character or disposition of wisdom: to become is, in part, to be and behave as a friend. Thus, the character of the friend qua friend raises a special propriety or obligation, one which impinges upon them both:

He who forgives an offense seeks love,
but he who repeats an offense alienates a friend.
17:9

Note that this saying, 17:17, and perhaps 22:11, all denominate the intimacy of the friendship relationship as love, *’hbh*. Those who share friendship, founded in righteousness and ultimately wisdom, have a relationship

¹Implicit adversity: better friendship than alienation over some misconduct.

that goes beyond intellect or conduct to 'way,' character, disposition. If love be a passion, which is probably too much to say, then it seems at least in this respect to be affirmed in friendship and a fortiori in kinship.

Second, and seemingly at some variance with the foregoing, these sayings relate friendship to wealth and material generosity. If one has means, one can have ready friendship. To some extent, we can subsume these sayings under our rubric of 'observation.' They are the wry recognition that where there is generous treatment of material wealth, the sycophants gather. Yet, the language of the sayings in no way suggests any distancing from wealth or means that would suggest irony or perspectival objectivity. At best, one might infer a certain ambivalent admiration: that friendship is easy and rewarding where there is material abundance but burdensome and fragile. where it is lacking:

Many seek the favor of a generous man,
and every one is a friend to a man who gives gifts.
19:6

Wealth brings many new friends,
but a poor man is deserted by his friend. 19:4

We might better explain this admiration as a recognition of the vulnerability and contagion of poverty. The poor person cannot readily control what happens to him and cannot easily influence others. The necessities of life come hard. One is vulnerable to minor exigencies

that one of more means could easily ignore. One is vulnerable to chance and circumstance.¹ Further, one must spend the capital of one's friendships and kin relationships in a constant succession of minor but irksome requests for basic needs. The poor are forever needing and asking for something. One is tempted to add that they do not even have to ask. To those who have some means, the mere fact of the poverty of kin and close friends is a burden borne with guilt that is rekindled every time one has to see them. Their very existence creates guilt. Verse 19:7 expresses this dimension, though its third stichos is difficult:

All a poor man's brothers hate him;
how much more do his friends go far from him!
He pursues them with words, but does not have them.

Warnings against becoming surety or giving pledge are the logical extension of such vulnerability: one objectively surrenders control of his life into the hands of others.² One is no longer able to rely on his own character or disposition. To be wise is to limit, not expand, one's vulnerability. Consider,

A man without sense gives a pledge,
and becomes surety in the presence of his neighbor.
17:18

¹See Appendix, Tables 34 and 43.

²See Appendix, Table 26, Part L.

Thus, we may infer that wealth provides a measure of protection against vulnerability. It is a means to an end, viz. relatively greater invulnerability which is part of the restraint which wisdom seeks. It may not be an end in itself.¹

Two sayings treat the corruption of friendship. The relationship opens one to influence by another, an influence, vulnerability, which the wise would seem to wish to avoid otherwise. Friends are not by definition either wise or righteous. Hence, one may be harmed by one with bad character or evil disposition.

The soul of the wicked [*npš ršh*] desires evil;
his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes. 21:10

A man of violence entices his neighbor
and leads him in a way that is not good, 16:29

One last friend saying sums up many of these points. Discipline, integrity and restraint are means to a life of quality that will be rewarding. The king becomes friend and intimate:

He who loves [*hb*] purity of heart,
and whose speech is gracious, will have the king
as his friend. 22:11

Within the life-world of these savings, the family figures prominently. Few social institutions or relation-

¹See Appendix, Tables 32, 33, 34, 42, and 43.

ships receive the emphasis that family does. While arguments from silence are perilous, one looks vainly for sayings dealing with most occupations, vocations, classes or social groups. Certain of the elite appear, as do and court. Most others are missing. Thus, the prominence accorded family and the friend loom large. There is a privacy, intimacy and relationalism to the way of wisdom that is otherwise often missed. Objectively, it means the group is more closed and higher in-internality than often seems the case. We infer most recruitment by sponsorship from within.

Only one other social institution receives the stress accorded the royal court and the family in the B collection: the law court.¹ The sayings revolve around testimony and judgment. Mashal 18:17 offers the observation that

He who states his case first seems right,
until the other comes and examines him.

There is a hint of propriety in this saying. The persuasive power of speech relates to the circumstances of its use. The eloquent litigant and the well-spoken adversary each use speech to present their approach to the case in the most convincing light. It is a good as a tool, in

¹See Appendix, Table 25.

relation to the propriety of its use, not as a value or end in itself.

Four sayings deal with false testimony; two differ only by replacement of the last word or two by an equivalent of the opposite valence (negative for positive expression--19:5, 9). They affirm the integrity and durability of true testimony. They assert the surety of judgment against a false witness.

A false witness will perish,
but the word of a man who hears will endure.
[or:--but an .attentive/obedient man will speak
in an enduring way. (BK)] 21:28

In 19:28, we find a saying of deceptive simplicity. It seems true by definition, almost an observation. Yet, it appears to assert that vice like virtue is its own reward, that evil corrupts established social institutions, that the defect in the evil person lies in the character from which the conduct flows, and that unreliable or false testimony amounts to an active rejection of or rebellion against the law court system. Like many other of these sayings, much is communicated by implication.

A worthless witness mocks at justice,
and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.
19:28

The saying in 18:5 can be taken as a direct affirmation of the judicial system as well as a rejection of partiality. In that sense, however, the saying is trivial and it belabors the obvious. It affirms the accepted with seeming

artlessness. Perhaps we should see this as another propriety saying revolving around the characters or dispositions of the litigants. The character as well as the act must be considered part of the litigation. The court cannot be blind as to who appears before it. Acts do not supercede the personalities, characters, of the agents.¹ To affirm the acts of the wicked or to hold against the conduct of one who otherwise is righteous represents a perversion of justice. The upright expect their conduct to be affirmed as the wicked must expect to meet rejection in the courts.

It is not good to be partial to a wicked man,
or to deprive a righteous man of justice. 18:5

With this saying, compare,

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the
righteous
are both alike an abomination unto the Lord. 17:15

Other sayings affirm the judgment of the courts and its appropriateness.² Hence, in what may be another propriety statement,

When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous,
but dismay to evildoers. 21:15

The association of courts with propriety is reinforced by the sayings concerning lots discussed above: the lot

¹See Appendix, Table 14.

²17:26; 19:29.

decides between powerful adversaries, implying that power, like character, is a relevant and appropriate consideration in the deliberations of those in the law courts.¹

Aside from the rite of lot-casting, if indeed it should be taken as a reference at all, the cult is infrequently mentioned and then in fairly general terms.² Verse 15:29, which we may include with B material, asserts that Yahweh hears the prayer of the righteous while remaining remote from the wicked. The saying is more interesting for the equation of righteousness with prayer, hence (cultic?) ritual, than for the possible allusion to formal worship or religious expression. In other words, we shall argue below that such sayings clarify the comparative semantic fields of "righteous" and "wise"--the two are related but not equivalent.³

In 21:27, the disposition of the worshipper affects the quality and validity of the worship and worshipful conduct. What the wicked does is ipso facto offensive; the character of the individual is in and of itself an abomination that by contagion sullies whatever he or she may seek to do. Above and beyond that, the worship

¹16:33; 18:18.

²See Appendix, Tables 8, Part H; 26, Parts R, S and U; and 40, Parts D, F, and J.

³See Appendix, Tables 26, 49 and 50.

is doubly abominable if it forms part of an evil design

zmh:

The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination;
 how much more when he brings it with evil intent
 [Better: intentions, plans, designs]. 21:27

Saying 21:3 clearly places some distance between the author and the cult. Sacrifice is not in and of itself a good.

This saying can be taken as evidence that these wise have secular values or that they downplay the role of the cult in their life. The saying fits in with the widespread secular-pragmatic interpretation of wisdom. Three issues impinge on this saying. First, the semantic field of "righteousness" (*sdqh*) needs to be considered. Second, if conduct is the outgrowth of a disposition, then the quality or nature of the disposition of the person determines the nature or quality of the act. Third, each disposition implies a propriety. Thus, one who is righteous has, we shall argue, a right relationship with Yahweh. It is a type or quality of relationship (not the only one possible); it is not an act. Thus, doing righteousness amounts to the expression of a certain quality of relationship and of the personality who has it. Valid cultic worship of any kind is possible if and only if the individual already stands in the proper kind of relationship with Yahweh--otherwise, the worship is actually a profanation, by virtue of the disposition of the agent alone

(propriety). Thus, sacrifice is not in and of itself valuable, but valuable only as the act and expression of one who already expresses the proper disposition, viz. right relationship with Yahweh. Thus, Yahweh clearly favors the disposition and its expression over the cultic act, except and unless it is the expression of such a personality.

To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.
21:3

This interpretation receives some reinforcement, not only from intentionality sayings, but from a saying concerning vows and one's perceptions of the holy. Here, the act of vowing or of religious affirmation (better: commitment, dedication in the cultic sense) represents a genuine vulnerability. The author(s) asserts that such an act binds. Therefore, it must be undertaken with caution and reflection. The sacred and the cult represent significant powers that are not to be trifled with or taken lightly. Such commitments represent irrevocable surrenders of autonomy. The power of the sacred, perhaps even over disposition, is affirmed.¹ The saying suggests a highly serious attitude toward cultic acts:

It is a snare for a man to say rashly, "It is holy,"
And to reflect only after having made his vows.
20:25

¹Cf. 19:16.

One other saying may reflect some understanding of the cult, though it is obscure at best.

The wicked is a ransom [*kpr*] for the righteous,
and the faithless for [*ṯht*] the upright. 21:18

The saying clearly deals with disposition and propriety following the interpretation we are developing, but the word "ransom" or atonement/redemption gives it a cultic cast. We infer that the disposition of the wicked vastly increases their vulnerability. Righteousness and wisdom represent attempts to limit one's vulnerability. Therefore, under the principle of propriety, those who have evil or rebellious dispositions are due evil and ultimate destruction. Whatever acts of evil the righteous person does, whatever acts of folly the wise person may commit, all pale to insignificance by propriety combined with a due consideration of the dispositions of those who have not followed that way. The vulnerability of the wicked to the consequences of his or her own disposition decreases the vulnerability of the righteous or wise to deviations from their ways.¹ This view would represent a modification of, and perhaps an explicit response to, the doctrine of retribution.² Retributive justice is not tied purely to act. The intentionality forms the basis

¹See Appendix, Table 43.

²See Appendix, Tables 8, Part E, and 27; cf. Tables 12, 29, 36 and 39.

of moral consequence: it is so governed by propriety that the consequences which accrue to those who are evil work to free from potential harm those who are upright.¹ The doctrine may be cultic as well as moral-ethical.

Trade is mentioned occasionally, though principally through sayings on weights and measures.² Three sayings associate "diverse" measures and weights with abomination to Yahweh:³

Diverse weights and diverse measures
are both alike an abomination to the Lord. 20:10

Sayings like these could represent a serious ethical concern on the part of the wise of the B collection, especially because of the parallels to prophetic ethical concern.

We shall shortly argue, however, that these sayings belong to a class we shall call 'noblesse oblige' in which the elite assert and justify their privileged station (here, in the way of wisdom and in righteousness) through-certain highly conventionalized ethical statements.⁴ The concern is formalistic rather than substantive. But, we anticipate ourselves. Suffice to say that, if so, these sayings also shed little light on these wise' relationships to trade,

¹See Appendix, Tables 42 and 43.

²See Appendix, Table 51.

³16:11; 20:10, 23. See Appendix, Table 52.

⁴See Appendix, Table 31.

merchants or measures. Otherwise, there remains only the penetrating 'observation':

"It is bad, it is bad," says the buyer;
but when he goes away, then he boasts. 20:14

A variety of sayings deal with agricultural settings, practices or products.¹ For Skladny, this language anticipates a gradual movement of this wisdom away from an urban elitist setting onto the land. Wisdom becomes both democratized and decentralized as part of its reaction to the breakdown of retributionism.² What is striking about these sayings, however, is not the depth and power of their insight, their familiarity with and use of the vocabulary and experience of agriculture, but rather their formality and superficiality. We find no *hapax legomena*, no odd technical terms, no difficult or obscure practices. We find metaphors that are virtually cliché and rather banal naturalistic language ("bread," "honeycomb," "grass," "rain" and the like). In what way is rural life essential to these sayings? Rather, an urban tyro could as easily appropriate this language (and it might therefore be more excusable artistically, if we dare make such judgment). To be convincingly naturalistic this language ought to seem out of place anywhere but on

¹See Appendix, Table 53.

²Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 76-79.

the land. It does not. Why? We would argue that it represents a common reaction of urban elites to their refined lifestyle: the neo-naturalistic urge to recapture lost intimacy with others and self and to be free of alienating and objectifying as well as anxiety-producing social structures by fantasizing a return to the land.

The fantasy serves as a compensation and affirmation. Neo-naturalism affirms one's own value and significance. It affirms another dimension to one's life and sense of self. It idealizes and captures the value of personal intimacy that being a part of an urban elite often denies one.

The language, therefore, is imagistic only to the extent that it is symbolic. It asserts the well-rounded interests and life of its author and preserver. The details and arcana of rural life are irrelevant, for one does not seek that life literally (and modern neo-naturalists would probably hate to live the life they so symbolically reverence), but figuratively. The banality and triviality of the images suggest the symbolic rather than experiential value of these sayings. Similarly, a few sayings mention wild animals--she-bear, lion, horse(?)--but not in ways that would suggest, let alone require, direct experience.¹

¹See Appendix, Table 54.

A king's wrath is like the growling of a lion,
but his favor is like dew upon grass. 19:12

Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs,
rather than a fool in his folly. 17:12

He who sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of his fury will fail. 22:8

Such sayings offer little direct interpretation of the life-world of these wise. If neonaturalistic, the life-world is expressed through them by a kind of indirect, almost inverse, symbolism.

There are several sayings that deal with war or battle.¹ The predominate theme is the stronghold or fortress-city, which may be besieged. Thus,

A wise man scales the city of the mighty
and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.
21:22

A rich man's wealth is like a strong city²
and like a high wall protecting him. 18:11

Restraint offers security,³ as does one's brother helped.⁴
Wisdom and counsel prepare the way for battle,⁵ intimating the cumulative nature of wisdom. Wisdom also makes the stronghold vulnerable.⁶ There is also the *deus disponit*

¹See Appendix, Table 55.

²Cf. 10:15a; 18:10.

³16:32.

⁴18:19.

⁵20:18.

⁶21:22.

saying:

The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the Lord. 21:31

Here, too, the imagery is stereotypical. There is nothing about it that suggests by vividness of imagery or use of special terminology that the wise of collection B have more than an abstract familiarity with war. Rather, war seems to express conveniently vulnerability and invulnerability in symbolic terms. Indeed, one saying suggests this conceptual and emotional distance by asserting the wisdom standard of valuation:

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
16:32

Though various sayings deal with corporal punishment as a means of discipline,¹ none specifically locates that within a formal didactic institution, though several do in terms of the law court's judgment. Only one saying seems to reflect a formal system of instruction as part of the *Lebenswelt*:

Why should a fool have a price in his hand to buy
wisdom,
when he has no mind [*lb*]? 17:16

Several technical wisdom terms appear in this rhetorical question.² Behind it, one would like to find some sort

¹19:18; 22:15.

²See Appendix, Tables 15 and 56.

of formal system of instruction for which fees were charged. One is tempted by the Greek model of *paideia*, though the notion is both anachronistic and culturally untenable. Still, the saying cannot be dismissed.

While one can make no useful statement about the form of instruction or its social organization, the saying would make no sense if it were not possible to think, however wrongly (irony!), that wisdom could be bought. In other words, the fool's error could be not merely that he lacks the essential disposition to acquire wisdom but also that he thinks wisdom is purchasable. Still, where would he get the idea unless there were some formal instruction, if only for those who had amenable dispositions and who could acquire the discipline to which the instruction would be at best the means? One cannot buy a disposition or character, but that character must be put on the way, trained, through a discipline imposed by those who have advanced toward wisdom.¹ Some formal system seems implicit.

This discussion of the *Lebenswelt* seems to show a focus in this material around the issue of socio-economic status and the institution of the family. The

¹See Appendix, Tables 20 and 39.

wise of the B collection seem to be an elite, built on administrative authority and a specialized discipline which they attributed to the character of the learner. They seem to form an in-group, hence their concern for their immediate circle of family and "friends." That intimacy shades into wisdom. They therefore probably sponsor their own young to succeed themselves, failure at which is deemed a great personal tragedy. They seem to be urban and privileged, though subject to those with great power. They live in an administrative world of court and courts, where language and reliability are vital. When they look outside that realm, their language and imagery become stereotypical, symbolic, and sometimes banal. Their attention seems to be focussed on a fairly restricted sphere. While arguments from silence are tenuous, an argument from a pattern of silence may not be: much of the social life of that society is missing, because it did not occupy the attention of these wise. It could be taken for granted as certain specialized areas could not. The life of the lower classes and the world outside the city (if our argument concerning neonaturalism be valid) scarcely appears. They explain and defend the world which they must interpret because of its immediacy and their potential vulnerability to it: the world of administrative and political power. It requires

interpretation only because they live within it and are immediately affected by it. I submit we may largely assume that what is missing did not require explanation.

Demesne

Third, under the rubric of space, we shall examine the demesne these wise perceive, or better the system of demesnes which they perceive themselves to inhabit and in terms of which they feel they have to act. We use the somewhat archaic term 'demesne' to refer to the range of personal and social space over which a particular person, being, institution or effect would have influence or power. One's demesne is what one can control. That the wise perceived themselves to deal with the world of experience in terms of demesnes meant that they understood the world in terms of gradients of power or authority, control. This view should not be surprising if our location of this literature among the administrative elite be correct. The bureaucracy is a world of semi-feudal demesnes. Little wonder that this experience should become normative for their understanding of life. The gradients experienced in work are seen as one manifestation of a pervasive natural and religious phenomenon. The world is organized and structured by power. Its range is demesne. The wise person lives within his own demesne, limiting his or her exposure to the demesnes of others and

thereby reducing vulnerability and contagion. Part of wisdom is one's recognition of the boundaries of demesnes beyond which one becomes especially vulnerable. The fourth section, following, deals with these boundaries. Demesne is not an act or action, nor is it expressed directly as or through activity. Demesne is the gradient structure of a power whose range diminishes at some boundary.

Obviously, 'demesne' represents an inference. We propose this concept as a means of interpreting the seeming inconsistencies of this literature. The much vaunted pragmatism of these wise stands over against admonitions and judgments which flagrantly ignore self-interest or expediency. Concern with conduct stands in opposition to the abstraction and generality of too many sayings. The term 'demesne' should be sufficiently neutral that we can avoid most extra-cultural inferences and use it to structure and interpret what seems to be an implicit and sometimes explicit consistency with these sayings.

Demesne begins with disposition, intentionality. intentionality, rather than disposition, is the more rigorous term.¹ By intentionality, we mean the way in which the individual as a whole being, having and giving

¹See Appendix, Table 39.

meaning to the world of experience, comes to (= is disposed toward, hence disposition) action. "Disposition," "personality," "character," all are more conventional terms which we substitute for the Phenomenologically-based 'intentionality.' Intentionality is hermeneutic because it presupposes a meaningful and meaning-giving orientation toward life. It is not "intent" or "intention" but the whole of a person's character which colors and interprets what that person then does. Intentionality cannot be reduced to conduct.¹

We have already suggested that the B material bases its evaluation of people and their conduct on disposition, intentionality, not on the conduct alone. The first clue to the approach from intentionality comes from the 'attitude' sayings.² They stress the state of mind (*lb*, heart) of the individual as something significant and valuable, entirely apart from behavior. Thus:

A cheerful heart is a good medicine,
but a downcast spirit dries up the bones. 17:22

A man's spirit will endure sickness;
but a broken spirit who can bear? 18:14

The purpose in a man's mind is like deep water,
but a man of understanding will draw it out. 20:5

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit. 16:2

¹Kovacs, "Intentionality."

²See Appendix, Table 57.

Within the mind/heart resides a disposition or character that may not readily appear in overt behavior. People do not reveal their basic natures by what they do. Important dimensions of personality, that are essential for interpreting the meaning and quality of their conduct, lie beyond immediate observation. Only through perspicacity and insight in the context of a proximate even intimate relationship can the deepest but most fundamental elements of the other be known.¹ Part of wisdom is being able to go beyond superficial evaluation of conduct and perceive the basic character that underlies it. Yahweh possesses this ultimate quality, so that he assesses or judges ("weighs'!) action on the basis of what is fundamental to that person, the essential disposition.² In that, Yahweh differs from people, especially those who do not pursue wisdom. They judge conduct after their own lights, i.e. in and of itself, apart from the intentionality from which it springs.

The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord,
searching all his innermost parts. 20:27

The "lamp"³ symbolically represents that essential

¹See Appendix, Table 16, Part O.

²See Appendix, Table 8, Parts H and L.

³See Appendix, Table 58.

character.¹ Note the equation here with spirit,² which is also terminus technicus for disposition or essential being.³ Another term is "bones" or *grm* in 17:22 which Brown-Driver-Briggs suggests can mean "self" as it may in the difficult text II Kings 9:13; Proverbs 25:15 also gains considerable poignance when interpreted in this light. The wise are sensible of the quality of depth in human experience and express it in imagistic and metaphorical language. Thus, too, they use the images of fountain,⁴ deep waters,⁵ rain and clouds,⁶ stream⁷ and the like. To understand a person, one must look within to his character; one must look behind actions to their underlying meaning. This quality of insight is quintessentially Yahweh's. This language also casts the term 'way' (*drk*) in another light.⁸ A person's way is not what he does but what he or she is essentially. We might

¹20:20; 21:4; cf. 15:30.

²*rwh*; see Appendix, Table 59.

³Saying 13:9 in the A collection parallels lamp to light, cf. 15:30 in B, "light of the eyes."

⁴16:22; 18:4.

⁵18:4; 20:4.

⁶16:15.

⁷21:1.

⁸See Appendix, Table 44.

say that it is the pattern rather than specific instances of conduct. The recurrence of the term suggests its importance; it is more than a metaphor. Though it certainly implies the discipline whereby wisdom develops and grows, the way is more than a discipline. It represents the intentional patterns of which particular disciplines are in turn expressions.

When a man's ways please the Lord,
 he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. 16:7

The highway of the upright turns aside from evil;
 whoever guards his way preserves his life. 16:17

A wicked man puts on a bold face,
 but an upright man establishes his ways. 21:29

Character is a value in its own right. It gives pleasure. It is the basis for intimacy with others, hence friendship. Ultimately, it is the basis of a sound relationship with Yahweh. The attitude sayings show that the B author, and presumably his audience, distinguish the importance of disposition, stressing the significance of good character, even as its own reward.

What is desired in a man is loyalty [*hsd!*]
 and a poor man is better than a liar. 19:22

Many a man proclaims his own loyalty,
 but a faithful man who can find?
 A righteous man who walks in his integrity--
 blessed are his sons after him! 20:6-7

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
 but only in expressing his opinion. 18:2

The wise have a distinct standard of values which are organized around the quality of person that is character, attitude, intentionality.¹

In the B material, we find delineated various ways of living, various kinds of character or intentionality.

The most important of these are wisdom, righteousness, ignorance, folly and wickedness, though one could probably argue for others as well, the 'friend' for example. The righteous, whom we have not yet really discussed, put the others in perspective.² Like wisdom, righteousness is an intentionality, it is character.³ Certain aspects of righteousness make it difficult to separate from wisdom, so that the two may seem to be equated or equatable.

Thus, two sayings associate the righteous person with reflective, thoughtful, accurate speech.⁴ Another relates righteousness to generosity.⁵ An adversity saying in *twb-mn* form prefers righteousness to wealth; reminiscent of the valuation placed on wisdom in such *meshalim*.⁶ Two

¹See Appendix, Table 36.

²See Appendix, Table 49.

³17:26; 18:5; 20:7!, 28; 21:18.

⁴15:28; 16:13.

⁵21:26.

⁶16:8.

assert that righteousness leads to life and wickedness to destruction, a la wisdom versus folly.¹

Since we have no saying which explicitly compares or contrasts wisdom and righteousness, any distinction we draw between the two must be based on inferred semantic fields. There seems to be some difference. Righteousness is associated with a relationship to Yahweh. The righteous person finds Yahweh a refuge; Yahweh hears his or her prayers; Yahweh orders the system of justice in favor of the righteous (not right acts!).² Righteousness appears in the context of integrity (*tm*) and loyalty/*hsd*³ and faithfulness (*'mwnh*).⁴ Several of the sayings have a cultic cast;⁵ others use the term abomination (*tw^cbh*) in the same context;⁶ some refer to an act of judgment;⁷ others associate righteousness with wise governance and the king.⁸ I would propose that what

¹16:31; 21:12; cf. 20:7; 21:18.

²15:29; 17:15; 17:26; 18:10; 21:3.

³See Appendix, Table 35.

⁴20:6-8, a thematic sayings sequence; cf. 20:28!

⁵15:29; 17:15?; 21:3, 18.

⁶See Appendix, Table 52.

⁷17:15, 26.

⁸16:12, 13; 20:28.

underlies these sayings is a disposition of one in a proper/valid/sound relationship with Yahweh. Righteousness is right relationship to god. That relationship then forms the basis of cult, court and kingship. Each can be well founded and function properly if and only if there be first a right or proper relationship to Yahweh. Otherwise, the structure is perverted and results in (contagious) evil. Righteousness is a way that is essential for Hebrew society and for each person within it. Righteousness is attainable: there is no suggestion that a person cannot aspire to being righteous, that some group or class of people are a fortiori excluded from the ranks of the righteous except insofar that they exclude themselves (as and through wickedness). Right character is self-justifying;¹ it is its own reward. We would infer that righteousness is the sine qua non of wisdom. Unless one establishes right relationship with Yahweh, one cannot begin to pursue wisdom, hence the unclarity. Everyone who is wise is and must be righteous and just. To be wise, one must have integrity. But all who are righteous are not wise. Wisdom is something that is not as readily accessible. Some, as fools, cannot attain wisdom; they cannot aspire to it. Even a child, we have

¹20:7.

seen, possesses a certain moral sensitivity¹ that is the basis of righteousness. The callow youth, however, does not possess a certain intellectual or better characterological sensitivity that predisposes him or her to wisdom. Indeed, the grief of bringing one's children to wisdom obsesses these wise. The fool, therefore, lacks wisdom, either by rejecting it or being unable to attain it. The ignorant, however, are educable. The fool is no longer educable. The wicked reject righteousness; what they do is evil. It leads, by contagion and vulnerability to destruction. Folly has the same outcome. Both can affect others who become bound up in them. In a sense, folly and wickedness are more closely related than wisdom and righteousness. If wisdom presupposes righteousness, then wickedness presupposes folly. But, to reject wisdom is virtually to reject the righteousness upon which it is based: hence, the probable convergence of folly and evil/wickedness.

There is no saying that neatly clarifies this vocabulary. We suggest, however, that the cultic and righteousness sayings, in the light of those on disposition and attitude, suggest a kind of increasingly restrictive hierarchy of dispositions: wicked, foolish,

¹20:11,

ignorant, righteous, wise. The ambiguity of the relationship between righteousness and wisdom derives from the fact that righteousness is taken for granted; it is that without which one cannot be wise, the *sine qua non*.¹ To be wise, one must first be righteous. One must first be in right relation with Yahweh, implying a recognition and presupposition of the cult. Again, it is the *sine qua non*. Of course one must have "piety," but that is not enough. Other values are higher still--which does not mean a rejection of or normative faith. But, disposition supercedes practice; wisdom is more demanding than righteousness.

Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity
 than a man who is perverse in speech and is a fool.
 It is not good for a man to be without knowledge,
 and whoever makes haste with his feet misses the way.
 When a man's folly brings his way to ruin,
 his heart rages against the Lord. 19:1-3

Each "way" is a disposition. To each way belong appropriate behaviors and responses. The 'propriety say-ags' are an outgrowth of these distinctions.² Behavior is interpreted on the basis of intentionality: it acquires meaning on the basis of who undertakes the action. Right interpretation and response is to the character of the "agent" not to the abstract ethical status of the act.

¹15:33; 16:6.

²See Appendix, Table 14.

In this sense, we see the Hebrew wise of this collection as personal, individualistic and concrete. Acts are an abstraction. What one is concerned with is the conduct of personalities. To understand an act, I must understand who did it. Thus, what may be fitting in one setting is out of place in another. What is right for one is wrong for another, even though the objective act be the same. The act alone is not at stake; one must consider the character of the person who acted. Perhaps this is the meaning of 21:18 as we have suggested.¹

The Lord has made everything for its purpose [*lm^cnhw*],
 even the wicked for the day of trouble [*lywm-r^ch*].
16:4

The poor use entreaties,
 but the rich answer roughly. 18:23

The latter may be an observation, or even bon mot; however, it also may reflect a sense of propriety as well.

What is proper, even admirable, in the well-to-do, is appropriate or unsuitable for the poor. Each way, each character, has its own appropriate conduct and style. A number of other propriety sayings have already been noted, though the clearest deal with social class, wealth or judgments in court. In a way, retribution is the working of propriety. Each "way" has intrinsic consequences. Each attains what is inherent and appropriate to the

¹See Appendix, Tables 39 and 57.

character of the individual. Thus, many seemingly retributive sayings can readily take on a proprietary cast when seen in this light.¹

As one moves up the hierarchy of dispositions, one becomes less and less vulnerable. Wickedness and folly not only lead to appropriately unfortunate consequences, but they expose one to danger and disaster. While no one can totally avoid misfortune, righteousness and wisdom reduce the risk of it.² First, Yahweh searches out a person's character.³ One may be mistaken about his way, and from that mistake incur disaster or mischance.⁴ What Yahweh intends, not man, will take precedence.⁵ Intentions bow to god's will:⁶

Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be
established. 19:21

Moreover,

Who can say, "I have made my heart clean;
I am pure from my sin?" 20:9

Wisdom is cumulative and limited. It is a demesne. When

¹17:10-11; 17:5, 13, 20, 22; inter alia.

²See Appendix, Tables 16, 39, 49 and 57.

³20:27.

⁴16:2; 21:2.

⁵See Appendix, Table 8, Parts A and C.

⁶21:30-31.

one steps beyond that demesne into Yahweh's, then one risks misfortune in the face of Yahweh's will, especially if that overstepping be borne of arrogance:

Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.
It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud. 16:18-19

Adversity occurs, even to the wise, as the adversity sayings clearly show.¹ But, one can reduce the likelihood of misfortune by pursuing a way, a disposition, that will find favor with Yahweh and by restricting his behavior insofar as possible to what is within one's own demesne.² What vulnerability means is that a person who is foolish or wicked will experience disaster or misfortune in ways far out of proportion to their objective behavior. The response (propriety) is to their character, not their conduct. Even the objectively "good" or "right" derives from a personality that is neither, thus they gain no benefit from such acts. Indeed, a right act done by the wrong person may be doubly offensive, as is the case with cult sacrifice by one who is wicked.³ Conversely, the righteous and wise avert many disasters that might befall them on the basis of

¹See Appendix, Table 29.

²E.g., 16:5-7.

³21:27.

the consequences objectively due certain deeds, because Yahweh searches out their "heart" or "spirit" and evaluates their conduct in that light. They are relatively less vulnerable to consequences.¹

By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil
16:6²

It is even possible that the increased vulnerability of the wicked or foolish can be thought to balance the decreased vulnerability of the wise and righteous,³ though we should not stress the point.

Along with vulnerability goes contagion. In other words, character is not purely a matter of individual personality. It affects those with whom one has relationships. The closer the relationship, the more one is affected. Good and evil alike are contagious, as are wisdom and folly. In a sense, then, relationships make one vulnerable to contagion.⁴

Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs,
rather than a fool in his folly. 17:12

A king's wrath is like the growling of a lion,
but his favor is like dew upon the grass. 19:12

¹See Appendix, Table 8, Part H.

²Cf. vv. 1-9.

³21:18.

⁴See Appendix, Tables 42 and 43.

Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out,
and quarreling and abuse will cease. 22:10

The second saying indicates that contagion may be facilitated by demesnes of power. 'Contagion' is a rather sinister way of saying that for these wise, dispositions develop and change. They are not fixed and immutable. Wisdom derives from discipline and learning.¹ Wickedness may be rebellion; folly can be arrogance or militant ignorance.² In a world where personalities can be changed, but where the "quality" of the personality has ultimate religious and ethical significance, people can be affected through their relationships with others. The consequences of disposition, good and ill, are not and cannot be confined to the particular individual: they affect those he is close to and whom he influences. Consequences are distributed through structures of relationship and influence. The doctrine of vulnerability merely enhances this process. Contagion also means that the individualism of these wise can be rather overstated. While contagion is not community, it does depend on relationships and ultimately intimacy.

When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise;
when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.
21:11

¹See Appendix, Tables 20 and 60.

²See Appendix, Table 26.

One is most vulnerable to contagion in family and friendship, hence the poignance of a shrewish wife, feckless child, impecunious and importuning brother or faithless friend.

The result of vulnerability and contagion is a sharpening of social divisions. One should seek to live his or her life among those with righteous dispositions and who are pursuing the way of wisdom. One should limit contacts with those whose dispositions are likely to draw one into their predisposition to misfortune and disaster. What counts is the character of the person with whom one deals.¹ Thus, we infer social demesnes. From this perspective, the wise constitute an elite in-group. They identify themselves on the basis of character, which they see as going beyond membership in a particular social subclass, a certain kind of training or discipline, or a certain parentage.² Doubtless, though, these objective characteristics constituted important signs for prospective membership among this group of "wise." Yet, "ideologically," they wish to maintain, probably with some justice, that the ultimate test is a character which one who is wise can generally

¹See Appendix, Table 39.

²See Appendix, Tables 16, 20, 21, 48 and 60.

perceive in another that goes beyond any specific objective criteria.¹ Indeed, from the adversity sayings, lack of certain of these characteristics does not necessarily bar one from wisdom, if one has the disposition/intentionality, though such lack makes the way more arduous and treacherous.² This proposal would account for our difficulty in specifying what wisdom is, for it lies beyond objective conduct in the quality of a person's character. Wisdom would then have a strong intuitive dimension. Wisdom is what one is, not what one does. Noetic words thereby take on another cast; they are intuitive recognitions, not sums of rote learning and application. This view, obviously, stands against the postulated pragmatic interest of the wise *soi-disant*. What is prudential is that one seek to fulfill a 'good' disposition, act within and in terms of it, and live within and in terms of a compatible social *demesne*. Within this group, the beneficial contagion and cumulation of wisdom redounds to the benefit of each member and of the group as a whole. Maleficence in turn is basically confined to its proprietary groups as a contagion.³ One

¹See Appendix, Table 16, Part O.

²See Appendix, Part 29.

³E.g., 16:27-32; 20:1-3; 21:4-12.

gains not only the beneficent fruits of one's own disposition as wise or righteous but shares in their potentiation through participation with like-disposed others. Thus, the ethic of restraint which expresses these demesnes constitutes a kind of *Standesethik* to the extent that it serves to identify, organize and maintain an identifiable social group that, at least by inference, constitutes a social demesne or in-group.

The most encompassing of all demesnes is Yahweh's. His power supervenes over all others.¹ No insight, no wisdom can prevail against the stronghold of Yahweh's power:² Whatever Yahweh disposes occurs. Human ends, from whatever disposition they may derive, must submit to those of Yahweh. While those who are righteous and wise are most likely to be in accord with those purposes and therefore most likely to experience beneficent outcomes, no human judgment, no concatenation of human judgments however disposed can equal those of Yahweh. Yahweh has the (absolute) capacity to bring his ends to fruition. Even when human purposes and the disposition of which they are born are in accord with Yahweh's, it is Yahweh's power that brings them to fulfillment. The outcome,

¹See Appendix, Table 8, Parts A and D.

²See Appendix, Table 8, Part B.

beneficent or maleficent, good or bad, always proceeds from Yahweh's power.¹ The demesne of Yahweh supervenes over all others.

Further, Yahweh is disposed (!) in terms of standards and values which are distinctly his (i.e., appropriate to his disposition as Yahweh and god).² Whatever human judgment may be, even born of wisdom and righteousness, its values are secondary to Yahweh's. Yahweh has a distinct system of valuation.

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit. 16:2

No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel,
can avail against the Lord. 21:30

People develop a variety of plans, in accord with their dispositions. Yahweh's supercede that diversity.³

Humility is, therefore, a virtue, because it is a recognition that no knowledge or insight, no disposition, can assure that one's intentions are consistent with Yahweh's.⁴

Wisdom is not absolute; it must submit to the superior demesne. At the same time, Yahweh's values, purposes and power are not maleficent but righteous--they are intrinsic

¹16:1-9, 33; 20:24; 21:1-2, 30 (!), 31; 22:5, 12.

²See Appendix, Table 8, Part C.

³19:21; 22:2, 16 (JB).

⁴See Appendix, Table 16, Part I.

to and follow from Yahweh's own disposition as god.¹ The superiority of the divine demesne does not place people in an intolerable no-win situation. While Yahweh's disposition is not fully knowable as such, its foundation in righteousness is knowable. Further, relationship with him, which is the foundation of human righteousness as *hsd*, is not only possible but essential. It is the *sine qua non* of any knowing and any sound disposition whatsoever. Thus, the relationship, as a kind of intimacy, supercedes any particular intent, purpose, end or action.² The relationship provides a basis for trust:³

Commit your work to the Lord,
and your plans will be established. 16:3

What one can do is walk in his integrity, which is the ultimate solution to the theodical question.⁴ Moreover, the relationship, upon which both wise and righteous dispositions are founded, is an intrinsic value; it requires no justification or legitimation in terms of some other value or system of value. It is good in itself.

¹See Appendix, Table 8, Parts D, G, H and I.

²16:3, 20; 18:10; 20:22, 21:1, 31; 22:4 (?), 12; cf. 22:16 (JB).

³16:3, 6.

⁴16:6; 19:1, 22; 20:6-7; 21:3.

It is its own reward.¹ Yahweh's power and values are accompanied by insight. In a sense, relationship with Yahweh is possible because he has ultimate insight into a person's character.² As a part of Yahweh's standards, he assesses a person on the basis of that integrity, faithfulness or *hsd* which is intrinsic to one's disposition. Deeds and purposes and knowledges are all subsidiary to the structure of character from which they derive. The standard by which Yahweh judges a person is character. Yahweh weighs hearts;³ he judges the spirit.⁴ Since character is an intrinsic good, nothing else is necessary as the basis of a relationship with Yahweh. For

Who can say, "I have made my heart clean;
I am pure from my sin"? 20:9

Wisdom is the quest for that character which Yahweh values, even though it can only be partially attained. It is also a search for that form of relationship and valuation in one's dealings with others--to deal with them dispositionally (hence, *demesnes*). *Yr't-yhwh* is the

¹15:29-32; 16:22; 18:2, 14; 19:2-3, 8.

²See Appendix,, Table 8, Part L.

³See Appendix, Table 8, Part H.

⁴16:2; 17:3; 20:27; 21:2.

sine qua non of wisdom.¹

Set below Yahweh is the demesne of the king, practically in terms of the monarch's power and ideally in terms of his perspicacity.² Thus, we might infer a distinction between office and person. The king's authority to govern is derived from Yahweh as righteousness.³ Thus, with the office goes the right to determine ends and realize purposes irrespective of the wills of particular people. In that respect, the power of the king resembles that of god and is second only to Yahweh. Whatever a person's disposition, he is vulnerable to the power and judgment of the king, though one who is righteous or wise is proportionately less vulnerable and more likely to be in accord with the king's will than one who is foolish or wicked.⁴ Wisdom is beneficial for one who deals with the king because it enables one to reduce his vulnerability and enhance the likelihood that his purposes and actions will conform to the desires of the king.⁵

¹15:33; 16:6; 18:10; 19:23; 22:4.

²See Appendix, Table 10.

³See Appendix, Table 8, Part G.

⁴See Appendix, Table 26, Parts B and C.

⁵See Appendix, Table 16, Parts E, M, P, Q, R and S.

Still, the purposes of the king are different from those of other people. And the disposition that inheres in kingship, irrespective whether the king be good or wicked, wise or foolish, means that the king's values and goals are not precisely those of his subjects, whatever their dispositions. In other words, the kingship implies a distinctive dispositional and valuational system.¹ For that reason, the actions of the king are not fully intelligible or comprehensible--no insight is sufficient to anticipate the actions of the king. Rather, one can conform one's disposition to that which the king ought to seek, since with kingship goes the potential for special insight into a person's character. The king, especially the good and wise king, penetrates beyond the superficial acts and appearances of people to judge them by their dispositions.² Against the king's power, wisdom avails as it does not against Yahweh, so that one may deflect royal wrath and channel the apparently whimsical purposes of the king.³ The wise person has power to act even within the demesne of the king, although

¹16:10, 12-15; 17:7; 19:10, 12; 20:2, 8, 26, 28; 21:1; 22:11.

²20:8, 26.

³16:14; 20:2.

that power is subsidiary to that of the king. Apparently the qualities of disposition and insight go to some degree with the office of king, so that the throne per se is founded in righteousness; obviously, the power is inherent in the office. The king, however, is capable of goodness or wickedness, wisdom or folly.¹ By pursuing goodness and wisdom, the king enhances his power, insight and capacity to rule. Wisdom and righteousness strengthen the effective demesne of the king. The king's problem is not to circumscribe his power, though against Yahweh's demesne that would be necessary, but to occupy and make use of the demesne effectively and potently.² Wickedness or folly, not to mention ignorance, make the king vulnerable. The stronghold of city and kingdom are vulnerable to human wisdom, as the way sayings seem to suggest.³ Only when the king occupies his demesne wisely are he and his people secure: by implication, wise governance is a fortress.⁴ From our study of the life-world of the wise, we might infer that through the royal court, certain high officials and members of the

¹See Appendix, Table 26, Part B (!).

²16:12; 20:28.

³20:18; 21:22, 31 (!).

⁴16:12, 32 (?); 20:28.

aristocracy share in or rank immediately below the power and disposition of the king. If that be so, however, the only saying which even hints of such a thesis would be 20:18 in light of the cumulative nature of wisdom.

Below the king's demesne ranks the wise' demesnes. We say "demesnes," plural, because, while the wise form a group to preserve and enhance what they have in wisdom, each person can govern only himself or herself and to a lesser extent can influence others based on kinship, intimacy, authority or persuasiveness. Life-world does not equal demesne. The exigencies of life force one to live among and act in terms of people, institutions and forces that one cannot control and over which one may have little if any influence (Yahweh, the king, the aristocracy, the powerful or wealthy, the contagion of the foolish or wicked). With the development of wisdom's disposition, one develops, through discipline, an ethic of restraint that leads one to limit his or her exposure to the influence or control of these forces. While one cannot constrict one's life-world, one can so live within it that one's exposure is limited. One can seek fulfillment within the demesne of what one can reasonably, though never assuredly, control. Thus, there is a parallel between governance and this sort of wisdom, for living within one's dispositional demesne is self-

governance.¹

A prudent man sees danger and hides himself;
but the simple go on and suffer for it. 22:3

Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;
whoever guards himself [šwmr npšw!] will keep far
from them. 22:5

It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife;
but every fool will be quarreling. 20:3

The beginning of strife is like letting out water;
so quit before the quarrel breaks out. 17:14

The minute one invests himself outside the demesne he can
govern, he becomes progressively enslaved to forces he
cannot control:

The rich rules over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender. 22:7

The man of discernment has wisdom there before him,
but the eyes of the fool range to the ends of the earth.

17:24 (JB)

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
16:32

Wisdom implies a discipline we shall discuss in a moment.

It also implies insight into the characters of others. In
order to be self-governing and to limit one's exposure,
one must be able to judge the situation and the person.

In that respect, wisdom leads to insight. One who has
wisdom perceives what is intrinsic to people and situations,
and therefore governs his actions more effectively and

¹17:27; 19:11; 21:23; 16:17-9.

gives sounder counsel.¹

On the basis of our analysis of their life-world, we have located the author(s) and audience of the B material at or near the social center, in positions of authority and responsibility. Not surprisingly, then, we would not only expect them to have an investment in tradition² and in the status quo,³ except in fact where these are in conflict with their highest values, but we might expect their interpretation of life to sound rather conventional and conservative.⁴ Thus, the concept of demesne can be seen not as limitation but as the basis for freedom and autonomy. To overreach oneself is to submit to the control of others. Pride, arrogance, passion, volubility, and political-social-economic manipulation, all are not liberating but exposing; they subject one to other powers in other demesnes.⁵ Only by restraint born of the increasingly wise disposition can one assume control of one's own life, govern it, act freely within it,

¹20:5, 27; 18:4; 22:1, 11; 21:22.

²15:31, 32; 16:16; 17:16, 24; 18:15; 19:8, 27; 22:6, 12.

³16:10; 17:7; 18:5; 21:15; not to mention sayings concerning royalty and power and wealth.

⁴See Appendix, Tables 37 and 61.

⁵See Appendix, Table 26, Parts A, E, F, P and Q.

live autonomously. With that freedom comes responsibility: an affirming of the status quo, upholding the proprieties of social class, liberality, counsel, cult, pedagogy. These follow from what is intrinsically good in life. The universe of the wise is ordered (!) into demesnes of power, competence and disposition. In that respect, the world makes sense. The authority of wisdom is the authority of an intrinsic good which also provides the means of its own realization. Wisdom is not instrumental; it need not be legitimated in terms of something else. Motivations are secondary, not primary, to wisdom. Wisdom is self-justifying; it is its own authority.¹ We should probably not over-intellectualize wisdom. The world is intelligible, not in the sense that wisdom leads to detailed understanding of it, but in the sense that one knows where and how one can act and can therefore act confidently and with integrity. Wise disposition leads to (self-) governance which is action, not contemplation. The pursuit of wisdom is discipline and restraint, but it is not by any means the contemplative life. It is the life of autonomous and value-able action:

qnh-lb 'hb npšw
šmr tbwnh lms'-twb. 19:8

¹15:32, 33; 16:4, 16, 22; 19:1-3; 18:14-15; 21:20-22.

Wisdom is an elite demesne. Not everyone may aspire to it. One must be so pre-disposed that the discipline and ethic of restraint can produce the mature disposition of wisdom. In order to free oneself from the power of others' demesnes, wealth, authority, position (status) and familial descent (class affiliation) seem to be important, perhaps even a certain relationship to Yahweh (through the cult?). Those who lack these conditions are seriously inhibited in seeking wisdom and may be barred. They certainly are, if as youth they did not have the opportunity to undertake the discipline which only can lead to wisdom. Wisdom is a total commitment of one's life begun early. Everyone, however, would seem to be able to pursue righteousness. While not offering the insight into character that wisdom does, righteousness, as we have seen, does offer an intrinsically valuable way of life built on a relationship with god. One is more vulnerable; but the fundamental character lies entirely within one's power to develop and sustain. Righteousness is also a dimension of governance,¹ so that the righteous person also has a measure of personal autonomy. What one lacks is the know-how to restrain oneself within the boundaries of one's demesne (though

¹20:28.

the demesne here is more broadly and loosely drawn). The redeeming quality is faithfulness based in a relationship to Yahweh.¹ By founding one's disposition in that relationship, one's character is grounded for self-governance in the same way that the king's power is grounded. As an intrinsic good, righteousness is self-justifying, though it also is sustained through its grounding in relationship to Yahweh.

Ignorance is a tenuous demesne.² It cannot endure. The wise symbolize this through a stock figure of the callow youth, whose impress we can see among these sayings. Ignorance is a stage of life out of which begins the development of some character that will endure throughout life. The youth lacks both insight and power. Ignorance is powerlessness. While one may have some basic moral sense that could issue in righteousness, one lacks the relationship, pattern of living and of action, and discipline out of which an autonomous, self-governing and perhaps insightful character may develop. To be ignorant is to be subject to any other power--it is in a sense the ultimate vulnerability because it is so consequential for life. Even if one lacks the pre-conditions

¹See Appendix, Tables 35 and 16, Part Q.

²See Appendix, Tables 18 and 41, Part D.

for becoming wise, however, righteousness is accessible to anyone. One's basic moral sense offers the possibility of such a line of growth and maturity, if one does not turn aside. In that respect, one is not hopelessly vulnerable. In youth resides the potential for some measure of self-governance and autonomy.¹

While the ignorant have some rudimentary sensitivity to the existence of demesne, the foolish systematically ignore the boundaries of autonomy and self-governance.² They seek power, freedom and fulfillment outside the sphere of demesne and consistently meet with misfortune and disaster.³ In a sense, their 'sin' is classic: hubris.⁴ They seek to control that which is beyond their proper bound, that which properly belongs to the dispositions of others. Thus, they not only bring such outcomes upon themselves, by reaching beyond their bounds, they impose upon the demesnes of others and involve them (contagion) in that misfortune.

Every one who is arrogant is an abomination to the Lord;
be assured, he will not go unpunished. 16:5

¹See Appendix, Tables 20, 29, 44, 62, and 63.

²See Appendix, Table 19.

³See Appendix, Tables 26, Parts D and P, and 50.

⁴See Appendix, Table 26, Part A.

. . . he who makes his door high seeks destruction.
17:19b

While a 'cool spirit' carefully weighs consequences,¹ the heated and passionate person substitutes action for reflection. Passion is a violation of the bounds of demesne. Strong emotions issue in actions that inherently and inevitably carry one beyond the bounds of his or her own autonomy--at times which such boundary violation is unnecessary.² Perhaps part of the difficulty in lacking the predispositions that will lead one, under proper tutelage, to wisdom is that one is frequently placed in vulnerable situations where the path of the cool spirit *soi-disant* is closed to one. One is compelled by the circumstances of life, poverty for example, to act in impassioned ways that a birth of wealth, higher birth or social station could readily avoid.³ The fool, however, is not merely one who is reduced by circumstance to being impassionate. The fool is ineducably ignorant of the boundaries of demesne.⁴ Poverty does not make one a fool. Militant ignorance certainly does. In part,

¹See Appendix, Table 26, Part K.

²18:13; 19:2; 20:1, 21, 25; cf. 17:27.

³18:25; 19:1, 4, 7.

⁴17:16.

folly seems to be a mistake. The fool conceives that what is required of a person, and what is essential for personal freedom and autonomy, is some sort of action. To be a person of a certain quality or kind, one must act. Therefore, the fool is forever acting, ignorant of the fact that righteousness and wisdom alike consist in what one is (in terms of a relationship grounded in Yahweh), not what one does. The fool substitutes action for character. The pride of the fool has a classic, even archetypal, overt manifestation: impetuosity.² In his haste (to act), the fool takes no time to reflect. Speaking is more important than having something substantial to say.

A fool's lips bring strife,
and his mouth invites a flogging.
A fool's mouth is his ruin,
and his lips are a snare to himself. 18:6-7

If one gives answer before he hears,
it is his folly and shame. 18:13

But,

Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise;
when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.
17:28

It is the disposition, not the silence, that separates fool from one who is wise. Alas, the fool cannot keep his

¹17:24, 28 (!); 18:2; 19:22; 21:20, 25; 16:22, 26.

²See Appendix, Table 26, Part P.

mouth shut. He must expose himself to the affects of powerful demesnes he cannot control and intrude himself upon the demesnes of others.¹ Thus, he cannot govern himself and makes himself and others vulnerable.

The wicked, too, is arrogant and prideful, though in a somewhat different way. The wicked person is a perverter. He destroys. His sin is more than just unbounded passion. In some respects, "sin" is the right word here, for, more than any other disposition, it is possible to specify in some detail the vices of the wicked. The wicked person violates the demesnes of others in order deliberately to aggrandize himself at the cost of others and their autonomy. The wicked spreads violence, oppresses and scorns the poor, corrupts justice, speaks perversion and lies, spreads strife and contention, schemes and plots evil, misuses authority and suborns governance, takes pleasure in calamity, violates the principle of propriety by returning evil for righteousness, perjures, bribes, quarrels, and is merciless.² On the basis of what is said in the B collection about righteousness, one is attracted to the inference that wickedness is a violation of the grounding relationship with Yahweh.

¹See Appendix, Table 26, Parts E, G, M, P, Q, R and S.

²See Appendix, Table 26.

While folly is a violation of insight and boundaries, wickedness is a violation of relationship with god. Rather than being an assault on the integrity of others, it is a violation of personal integrity because the wicked person explicitly rejects what is necessary to have integrity. Wickedness, if this be true, is a contravention of *ḥsd*. It is an assault ultimately upon Yahweh, the extreme case of hubris, rather than upon other people. For that reason, it is due absolute condemnation. While there may be a sense in which folly is its own punishment,¹ the wicked are due something more as the fruit of their explicit rejection and revolt.² This line of argument would clarify the special vulnerability and contagion that seems to attach to wickedness: what is at stake is not merely a particular kind of disposition. It is not merely the absence of insight or judgment or the capacity for self-governance. It is not delusion. It is not miscalculation of one's interests nor surrender of the self to one's passions. It is not mere overreaching. What is at stake is conflict with Yahweh, a rebellion against the grounding relationship upon which civil order, justice, the state, social relationships and the entire social

¹16:22; 18:21.

²See Appendix, Tables 40, Parts A, B and C; and 50.

system is based.¹ One can do without the insight of the wise, though at some cost. One cannot do without the grounding relationship in Yahweh, let alone do so by calculation. Thus, punishment must fall disproportionately upon the rebel.²

At the same time, one cannot help noticing, after reviewing the vices of the wicked, that there is a kind of inversion of the taken-for-granted world of the wise being projected upon the wicked. The wicked violate all the constraints to which the wise feel bound. Further, they represent a kind of symbolic assault upon tradition and the status quo.³ Though the wise have been accused of pragmatism and self-interest, in this material it would seem to be the wicked who are accused of this.⁴ Such self-interested action undercuts the foundation upon which the social system is based, grounding in Yahweh, and must therefore be condemned. The wise, one might speculate, fear disruption of the social order, religious or theological dissonance (non-conformity, impiety?) and conflict, breach of the proprieties, violation of tradition.

¹See Appendix, Table 8, Parts C, D and G.

²15:29; 16:4; 21:18; cf. 19:3.

³See Appendix, Tables 37 and 61.

⁴Cf. Appendix, Table 46.

As conservatives, the wise fear conflict and social upheaval; it is the cardinal social sin. Those who propose or symbolically represent significant social changes threaten the established position of this elite. The circle of wise have considerable to lose from significant social changes. What they value is not necessarily stasis but continuity. The pattern of future developments should be as clear as possible. Similarly, whoever opposes them and their position of privilege is likely to be tarred with the symbolic image of the rebel and have attributed to them the cardinal vices of these wise. Thus, the wicked person may well be a symbolic representation for this literature: a symbolic inversion of their taken-for-granted world, depicting what they regard as the greatest threat to their position and their world.

If the sketch we are developing has any validity or plausibility, the obvious upshot of this analysis is that the wise, as they appear through the B collection, are very far from being anthropocentric or secular minded. Religion, piety, is the *sine qua non*. The cardinal sin is rejection of the religious taken-for-granted, disruption of the grounding relationship, as *hshd*, with Yahweh. The analysis of dispositions and demesnes leads me to propose a hypothesis which the

B collection neither enables me to prove nor acceptably disconfirms. Therefore, I must offer it for further research.¹ The unquestioning and unequivocal Yahwism of the mashal literature, especially the B collection, is curious, given what we know of the social, political and religious circumstances when they most likely were written. Why does none of the conflict with folk religion or royal (i.e., political) religious practice appear in the sayings? Allegiance to Yahweh is the obsession of the prophetic movement throughout this period. Where the wise concern themselves with allegiance, it is only to the extent that they attribute symbolic sins to a rhetorical figure, the wicked person, whom they accuse, albeit by implication, of breach of relationship with Yahweh but not defection to some other deity. Why? I would suggest that we consider whether Yahwism serve, for this elite, as a point of elite symbolic unity. In other words, their adherence to a particular religious party (better: ideology) identifies them as members of the elite. Their religion is a symbol of their social status, particularly in that they are members of a religiously exclusive party when others of seeming high rank are eclecticists. Yahwism is a badge of in-group

¹Kovacs, 'Social Considerations'; Gottwald, "Response."

identification. Thus, they do not seek to expand Yahwism--that would undercut their exclusive religious position. Nor do they regard their religious commitment as a problem: their social position, as a class, is secure. They are much less vulnerable than high officials to the winds of political favor. Whoever is in power must turn to the educated and experienced bureaucrats to make the political and social system work effectively. Individuals may suffer; the class will not. Therefore, neither their religion nor their social position is or can be threatened easily. Their Yahwism, according to this hypothesis, is symbolic, unquestioned, unproblematic. Of course it is special, restricted/ive and elitist. That is the basis of its ideological appeal and function. I must state again that this literature offers no means of testing this hypothesis to my satisfaction. It remains, therefore, to be studied. It has the virtue, however, of explaining the Yahweh sayings in a way that seems to me to be consistent with what else we know, according to the most conservative renderings, about this social class. It is also a counterpoise to the recent resurgence of evolutionary hypotheses in biblical study.

Restraint

The concept of 'demesne' implies on the one hand a system of values and an ethic whereby the demesne is

occupied--i.e., one makes oneself "at home in it"--and on the other hand boundaries beyond which one cannot be autonomous but becomes subject to other forces--one is not at home there. We shall take each of these in turn.

From the B collection sayings, we have inferred two values that are fundamental. Both are intrinsic.

One must have righteousness, a disposition grounded in a relationship to Yahweh. From that grounding, one may then seek wisdom, a refinement of disposition that leads to insight into character and intentional self-governance.

Both values are intrinsic; they are not means to something else, even the good. Self-mastery, as mastery of one's demesne of existence, is ultimate, when properly grounded (the *sine qua non*). To lose either of these values is to lose the only things worth having in life. In fact, to lose either is tantamount to losing one's life, it is the ultimate disaster.¹ One cannot entirely control even one's own demesne, for there are powerful forces in the world. One has, however, entire control over one's own character--one cannot be compelled to lose that. Thus, any adversity is bearable, so long as one retains righteous and wise disposition:² character, rather than

¹See Appendix, Tables 64 and 65.

²15:33; 16:8, 19; 17:1, 17; 18:1 (?); 19:1; 21:1, 19.

the social world, is the ultimate demesne. Thus, development of that character represents a responsibility and high value. The discipline of wisdom is an essential part of its successful transmission, as we have seen. The author(s) and audience for this material are clear that life presents dilemmas where one is forced to choose between extrinsic and intrinsic values.¹ Adherence to wisdom or righteousness can force one to accept adversity, loss of things of considerable extrinsic value, in order to maintain those things which are ultimate. This valuation and this insight may underlie the evolution of the *.twb-mn* form.² The saying reflects the dilemmas of choice that one who has ultimate commitments has to make in a world of demesnes:

Better a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice. 16:8

It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud. 16:19

Better an equable man than a hero,
A man master of himself than one who takes a city.
16:32 (JB)

The word *.twb*, especially in variant or implicit *.twb-mn* sayings, expresses this comparative valuation process. Thus, these people are far from being masters of expediency.

¹See Appendix, Tables 29 and 36.

²See Appendix, Table 11; cf. Table 12.

They have ultimate commitments, and recognize the potential costs of holding to what is of intrinsic value in life.

Wisdom, righteousness, are not inherently pragmatic values; they are not instrumental.

The conservatism and conventionalism of this group confounds our understanding of them, because at the same time they generate sayings about adversity and the dilemmas of holding to such character, they also produce sayings which support the status quo and express admiration for what enables one to manipulate others.¹ While the hierarchy of characters, and their demesnes, is not a simple reflection of the social class system of ancient Hebrew society, it should be clear that there are significant parallels, nonetheless. The propriety sayings can be understood as support and admiration of the social status quo, an affirmation of the class system in the society to the extent that class status and character are equivalent (as they by all rights ought to be?).² Thus, we would see the support offered for the existing social situation as subsidiary to other, higher values. It is subject to the condition that the status quo reflect the hierarchy of dispositions, as it in fact does not always

¹See Appendix, Table 37.

²See Appendix, Table 14.

do. The elitism of these people is not built upon power. Power belongs to king and presumably to the aristocracy and court officials.¹ Rather, the elitism of this group as wise is built upon character and its consequent insight. They place intentionality and understanding ahead of conventional social values when there must be a conflict, which gives some of their sayings an iconoclastic flavor if so interpreted.²

Nevertheless, the social system is built upon grounded power, i.e., authority. This system generally assures these people a measure of status, stability and influence. They seem to be in a position where they can appropriate and make use of the authority of others. They have means and a measure of freedom and leisure. They have the time, education, and freedom to develop an elaborate and highly sophisticated, not to mention rhetorically technical, aesthetic that is expressed both in literature and as a discipline in life. Therefore, they respect, admire, support and affirm that social system insofar that it offers them such position. The view is evinced in sayings which, as we have seen, confirm the proprieties, uphold tradition and confirm the status quo.

¹See Appendix, Table 33.

²16:19; 17:2, 28; 18:17, 18; 20:9; 21:1, 20; 22:1, 2, 16.

Support of the status quo, in this view, would be instrumental and therefore conditional. The existing social system provides the opportunity to pursue wisdom and attain the highest and most demanding intrinsic value. The system is good and valuable in that light and to that extent. It is not good in itself.

Another series of sayings can best be described as pragmatic.¹ They are not an affirmation of the formal social order. They express approval or grudging admiration for manipulation of that order and its functionaries in pursuit of one's own end or goals. Curiously, the wise seem to admire expediency. Why?

A bribe is like a magic stand in the eyes of him who
gives it;

wherever he turns he prospers. 17:8

. . . everyone is a friend to one who gives gifts.
19:6b

Take a man's garment when he has given surety for a
stranger. . . 20:16a

Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits. 18:21

Wealth brings many new friends. . . 19:4

But,

Under cover of the cloak a venal man takes the gift
to pervert the course of justice. 17:23 (JB)

How do we square such sayings with the sayings' concern for

¹See Appendix, Table 46.

wisdom and righteousness above any apparent expediency?

Here again, we may appeal to demesne. Wealth and speech in particular are qualities which can free an individual from vulnerability to others.¹ Used with restraint, caution and calculation, they offer some extension of one's own demesne, or relative freedom from others', without the entanglements that inevitably follow from passion. In other words, there are certain things, and certain personal attributes, that can be used consistent with discipline and the ethic of restraint. While these wise may be ambivalent about such things, as they conspicuously are about bribery, they admire the extent to which a disciplined person can use them to maintain and secure autonomy. Their instrumental value cannot be ignored. Still, these values are quite subsidiary and extrinsic. They are subject to circumstance and condition. When used with passion, they menace. When used to pervert righteousness or in pursuit of folly, they are desperately inappropriate. Used in the context of a disciplined intentionality, they are an extension of propriety and an effective use of demesne, therefore to be valued, albeit cautiously. Actions are secondary to character. Actions done out of and consonant with right

¹See Appendix, Tables 22 and 32.

and faithful and insightful (wise) disposition are good. The same actions done out of another disposition, or not in consonance, are not.

The ethic of restraint, as we call it, is the expression of this system of values. The producers of this material seem to want to limit their vulnerability to others and to gain autonomy and self-governance. There are powers in society which one cannot avoid nor successfully contest. What one can do is limit his or her exposure to them. One can reduce his vulnerability.¹ Wisdom is expressed as a way of life; it appears as a holding back or self-restraint. What these people fear most, it would seem, is the loss of their power to govern their own demesne--loss of self-determination or of what we have called autonomy. Self-control, then, becomes the basis for an ethic. It means living fully within one's demesne and circumspectly outside of it.

Restraint is emotional control. Passions and strong emotions are held back. One is to behave reflectively and thoughtfully. Speech is a public act, therefore one is vulnerable whenever he speaks. Thus, each word must be weighed and considered for the effect it may have upon one's autonomy. One who is wise uses speech in

¹See Appendix, Table 43.

rare bursts of eloquence. These are most valuable in influencing the decisions of powerful others who could invade one's demesne. It becomes a defensive weapon.

Restraint means one's associations with others are controlled. Relationship means intimacy; that in turn means vulnerability through contagion. One uses the insights of wisdom to assess the character of others, though that instrument is not infallible. Associations are, so far as possible, limited to those who are worthy, by their character, of association. One invests only so much of oneself in most social relationships as is absolutely necessary: the minimum exigencies of the life-world are met through association, but more investment of self than that would be perilous.

Restraint means discipline. It means subjecting oneself to the control and guidance of parents and worthy elders. We should see in this relationship a measure of trust, though no saying evinces it. In other words, the callow youth cannot readily determine the character of his mentor(s), and so must accept discipline in trust that what is being done to and for him is worthy of his commitment. There is a theological significance to that relationship, between student and mentor, that resides far behind the sayings themselves. That perception should also be cautionary: there is much about the

taken-for-granted and implicit world of these sayings that we cannot readily know nor infer. Yet it may be precisely those dimensions which are socio-historically and religiously the most profound.

Restraint means humility. The cardinal sin, for fool and wicked alike, is presuming more control over one's own life than one has. When carried to extreme, the sin becomes an assault upon the authority of Yahweh. The concept of demesne implies that one does well to err on the side of underestimation.¹ Governance is a fundamental virtue, but only of the self (unless one happens to be king or a high official). That authority does not need to be asserted, merely to be exercised. Reputation, a high value, is made by others, not by oneself.²

Restraint ultimately means a style of life in which one has perspective and a measure of emotional distance. One is not without commitments; rather, one knows what his or her commitments are, which are fundamental, and what is at stake. The wise are neither idealists nor pessimists. They follow what might better be termed a minimalist approach to life: to invest of self only what one needs to invest, assume only what one

¹See Appendix, Table 16, Part I.

²See Appendix, Table 16, Part M.

needs to assume. While they value other things, that valuation is secondary and conditional. Their basic commitments and presuppositions are minimal.

It is this minimalism that they share with conservative, conventionalist, upper middle class movements in a wide variety of cultures--not necessarily the substantive elements of their thought or ethics. Their minimalism extends to their symbolic world, so that they come across to some readers as pragmatic realists. The nature of their commitment—to character, theologically grounded--belies that interpretation. What they have are few symbols and illusions, but by no means none. Socially, the consequence of this restraint is probably an in-group ethic (*Standesethik*). In other words, they value their own group and the facilitation it gives their governance of their own demesnes. The proprieties mean that they owe a different kind of ethical obligation to those outside the group than they owe each other. Their ethics may well have had, as many sayings suggest, a strong class character, even though no vocational or strict professional statement comes through. Commitment to their group and a differential ethic are nonetheless clear.

Boundaries

Demesne implies boundary. There are limits to one's sphere of control and self-governance. There are

other demesnes, just as there are other intentionalities. People experience boundary conditions because each person's demesne is limited. Those limits are appropriate to that person's character, life-world affiliations, and location within the Yahweh-grounded social world. Since wisdom is not what one knows but what one is, human wisdom is limited in extent and reliability.¹ Wisdom by no means implies absolute verbal understanding, or even *savoir-vivre*. It implies commitment, and the disposition to make the commitment, to certain, ultimate values, properly grounded.² In those terms and under those conditions, it is rewarding in and of itself: each disposition gets what it deserves by virtue of what it is. Thus, there is a sense in which retribution is true by definition, since the outcome is its own reward. The conformity of objective rewards, though expected, cannot be assured because it lies outside one's own demesne. In a way, the concept of demesne lends itself to the notion of a distribution of power(s) and its/their gradients. While there is a "harmony" to these powers, an 'aesthesis,' that interaction or mutual fit can only be partially understood and therefore deliberately participated in by

¹See Appendix, Tables 8, Parts A, B and G; 16, Parts H and I; 39 and 57.

²See Appendix, Table 36.

any person. 'Understanding,' as an expression of wise intentionality, is less a comprehensive verbal interpretation of experience's underlying orderly structure than an aesthetic sense of the propriety of things and an intention to harmonize with them well. There seems to be a strong aesthetic dimension to wisdom, at least here, to which we shall return below under the rubric of 'rhetoric.'

If our understanding of wisdom as *demesne* and intentionality represents the implicit presuppositions of this literature with any fairness, then limiting situations and boundary experiences constantly recur. They are far more diverse than they are depicted among these B collection sayings. Certain, presumably important, themes recur, suggesting that they are symbolic foci for this group, representing important aspects of that experience. Concern with these experiences becomes a thematic hallmark for the B collection, especially in the context of Yahweh's grounding and limiting self-governance and conduct. The significance of this fact rests in part on arguments and evidence which lie beyond the scope of this inquiry. If one presupposes an evolutionary view of society in general and theological understanding in particular--a view that has held considerable sway in biblical studies since von Harnack and nineteenth-

century liberalism, then it is possible to locate this concern for boundaries within the context of a breakdown in the credibility of the retribution dogma.¹ Thus, wisdom loses its innocence, draws back and changes its character as a result of an ethical and theodical frustration. Earlier wisdom would be focussed on ethics and conduct. The emphasis on boundaries becomes symbolic of a growing pessimism within this literature and among its authors.

What does the recognition of boundaries mean? We see four major lines of argument, in some way salient to this analysis, which impinge on this argument.

First, there is the evolutionary presupposition itself. We quickly embark upon a chicken-and-egg controversy. Does the evidence compel the thesis or the thesis compel the evidence? Which leads to recognition of the other? Obviously, the notion of presupposition-less research is a philosophical monstrosity. Still, what compels us to assume the process? In part, the assumption develops out of theses concerning changes in social organization and theological reflection that have a long base-line. They occur over many centuries, even

¹Cf. Appendix, Table 6; Schmid, *Wesen and Geschichte der Weisheit*, pp. 173-201; Skladny, *Spruchsammlungen*, pp. 76-79. Cf. the methodology developed in Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

millenia. How is modern society different from ancient society? It has evolved socially and intellectually.

Therefore, the microcosm recapitulates the macrocosm (an assumption, of course, but scale-invariance is a highly-desired criterion of good philosophy of history and elegant social science). The doctrine, however, presumes unilinear or at least continuous and generally linear social change. We cannot assess the argument on that scale here. What we can ask is a more restricted question. Is there anything about the B collection which compels us to see behind a process of intellectual or social change that is leading to a re-theologizing of wisdom? Absent such evidence, the assumption of scale-invariance in the application of evolutionary theory becomes quite tenuous. Our line of argument to this point has been in quite the contrary direction. We have argued that the sayings belie a period of social stability in which these people have a measure of confidence in their social position. They form an elite which does not seem to be agonizing over its status; certainly there is no (tortured) self-justification among these sayings. On the contrary, they seem to take the legitimacy of the position of this group for granted: its foundation takes some inferential reasoning to locate in fact. Restraint is not withdrawal. These sayings are far from jaded,

disappointed, sad, wistful or pessimistic. Rather, they are energized,¹ optimistic² and strongly supportive of the social status quo. While the sayings clearly do not assume social rigidity, they do not treat social change as caprice or chance. They are confident of their ability, within the bounds of discipline and restraint, to cope with it. Even the possibility of royal whim, and the menace inherent in it, is seen in perspective, with the assurance that wisdom can cope; indeed, even the king must give way to the power and purposes of Yahweh.³ What these people fear is the vulnerability and contagion of the wrong disposition, not the failure of their ethic. It is hard to see the force of any argument that the B material, taken in isolation from other works and other sayings, leads one to the conclusion that forces of social change or socio-political instability are at work either organizationally or theologically. It is extremely difficult to point to the absence of something and prove one's case. However, these sayings, by themselves, do not evince a theology in trouble. Rather, the theology seems too be clear, stable and untroubled. The boundary

¹Sayings on work and sloth.

²17:22; 18:14; 21:21; 22:11.

³21:1, 31.

material is quite compatible with such stability in terms of such concepts as demesne and intentionality.

These last points lead us to our second line of argument. From the B material we have projected an upper-middle-class elite whose authority and its legitimacy are both derived from others whom they closely serve --Yahweh, king, aristocratic officialdom. Thus, they are aware of their vulnerability to power, and the caprice with which it is sometimes exercised. On the other hand, they possess an expertise and station which significantly reduces their vulnerability despite their proximity. The concept of demesne is a natural evolution from bureaucratic and governmental experience. Derivative authority and proximity to power lead fairly straightforwardly to the recognition of boundaries. Moreover, one's privileged social position cannot be explained in terms of the ultimate legitimations of the authority one is entitled to dispose--those legitimations belong to others, basically to king and court.¹ One can find one's legitimation, however, in the way one exercises derived authority: in the style or personality of the individual rather than in the overt conduct. In fact, this situation explains a subtle iconoclasm that may seep in. While the

¹16:12b; 21:1; 22:11 (?).

truly powerful are elite in what they do and in their entitlement to do it, these people ("the wise") are elite in who they are. The latter then is an even higher form of elite status than the former; it becomes an ultimate value. Moreover, not only is character or style not derivative from others, it is secure and stable because it cannot readily be taken away. Unlike formal authority, which comes from others, character inheres in the self. One acquires character by some arduous process--here, discipline--it is not given to one by another. Literature becomes an expression of that refinement of character and that style. It reflects a superior aesthesis that those who have ultimate power never develop. Again, their position is actually higher. The highest classes, those who have power, notoriously abjure discipline and intellectual reflection; they reject arduous and abstract aesthetics. They are free to use power which resides within themselves; they do not have to worry about it. Vulnerability is not a problem. The highest classes are not intellectuals. The existence of such a literature implies a measure of vulnerability for that reason alone. More, it reflects the search for a means of justifying elite position; it is an ideological defense cast in aesthetic form. Demesne, therefore, did not evolve in response to ethical conflict. Boundaries are the

inevitable experience of those who use the authority of others--who have to justify and interpret their privilege. The characteristic of their *demesne* then becomes an ultimate value in a subtle inversion of the social structure: one would expect such a touch of *ressentiment* among those in such a position. They compensate for their functionary role by appealing to what they are as an ultimate value and the final superiority, while still affirming the social system and its status quo. They do this in an aesthetic form that is most accessible to those who are already members of the class, or who are aspiring to and sponsored for admission to that group (such ideological materials become didactic in use even when they are not so in origin). Significantly, ideological material is notorious for its lack of specificity. The language used is highly emotive, symbolic and expressive. It rehearses common feelings and sentiments. It is symbolic, not semantic. The fact that many words in this literature are difficult to define may be a clue to the nature of the *mashal* collections, i.e., ideological and legitimational rather than "ethico-philosophical." The basic issue is not ethical. The concept of *demesne* does not evolve under ethical or theodical pressure. In sum, this literature seems to be located in a setting where boundaries were a basic life experience and where retributionism would not be what is at stake socially,

religiously or ideologically. Hence, we have spoken of restraint and minimalism, rather than retribution.

Third, we argue that this literature is much more highly structured than the 'collection' terminology or hypothesis suggests. While more study is necessary, we have suggested, in the previous chapter, some evidences that the material has a tight and rigorous poetic structure. We shall argue that there is also a refined rhetorical style. These points weigh strongly for through-composition rather than collection. In the event of such composition, we have to raise the question of structure and theme. There are evidences of an architecture to the B collection as well as for thematic unity and consistency.¹ If the works be through-composed, then we must discount thematic differences among them as the basis for organizing them historically. To be more exact, in such a case, thematic differences are the result of compositional intent. Differences in theme are not *prima facie* evidence of differences in date or social setting, though they may be. Any such socio-historical differences would have to be established on some other ground than theme, or one's argument becomes hopelessly circular. In Table 9, we see that there is a general

¹See Appendix, Table 9.

thematic sequence to sayings. There is also some evidence of inclusion, as the opening and closing display some parallels, a few of which are striking. Given the predilection of wisdom literature *soi-disant* for *inclusio*, this pattern is the more interesting. The theme of the passage recurs at thematically and poetically crucial points, which we have called 'cadences' following the role of such architecture in music. These postulated cadences would make boundary experiences and Yahweh's role in establishing limits the central theme of the work. Yahweh-theology becomes fundamental to such wisdom as does the experience of limits to wisdom and personal demesne. The paronomastic architecture which also underlies this material is far too complex to discuss here, though some limited work has been done on it.¹ We shall have to content ourselves to asserting, without proof here, that initial examination of this structure suggests that it is highly intricate, beyond what the coincidences that thematically, onomatopoetically or paronomastically similar sayings might have. Again, through-composition, a possibility which undermines the concept of 'collection,' makes assertion of evolution in the material more

¹Boström, *Paronomasi*; Casanowicz, "Paronomasia"; J. J. Glück, "Paronomasia in Biblical Literature," *Semitics: Annual of the Department of Semitics, University of South Africa* 1 (1970): 50-78.

difficult because the themes become intrinsic to the structure of the saying rather than extrinsic and therefore a manifestation of the social and theological milieu. That the theme is tied to setting remains clear in any event, but the question becomes how. Artistic intent and expression force thematic, if not stylistic, diversity. That the themes can be ordered in a logical way does not compel they should be absent other evidence. In sum, if theme is a part of poetic architecture, then differences in theme among various compositions reflect various aspects of their self-interpretation which may or may not have any coincident historical sequence. Nothing in this material seems to compel such sequence, though that argument in detailed examination lies beyond us. Nothing from the life-world material compels a definable social milieu, except in the most general terms, independent of the theme. We have to have evidence, beyond assumption, for attributing theme to social milieu as opposed to other possible causations (i.e., artistic intent above all else).

Fourth, And finally, we raise the question of thesis. The concept of 'demesne' threatens to conjure up a Donnean vision of islands, separated from and independent of one another--or of Leibnitzian monads communicating with one another perhaps only through the mind

of god. Demesne can suggest isolation. The B collection, however, is not a work of isolation. Rather, it leads, through rhetoric, paronomasia, poetic architecture, thematic development, discipline and the interactions of the life-world to a relationalism we might best call 'aesthesis.' People who derive their position and influence from others tend to be more concerned with form than with substance, particularly if they are accorded comparatively lofty station in the order of things. They produce an 'etiquette.' They develop, an understanding of the fitness and harmony of things that becomes taste, for which they provide the leadership and sensibility. Etiquette and taste are not concerned so much with what specifically is done as with how it is done. Thus, we argue for a possible noblesse oblige interpretation of some of their conventional sayings about ethics as well as for a neo-naturalism in their imagery. In the poetry of the proverb collections, we run the risk of importing our own class and culture understandings into the literature. We are accustomed to using language for the conveyance of information or understandings. We look to it for meaning, signification, semantic significance. Yet, paronomasia and various rhetorical devices may appeal to another way of using the literature, for sound or harmony. If it be poetry in this form, then we risk placing

too much emphasis on any particular saying and its apparent meaning. The value of the saying is, one might argue, its structure and sonorous relationship, its harmony, with its context. It is not merely, or even principally, what is said so much as how it is said. Again, this view is consistent with what we have said of intentionalities and demesnes. We can perceive of wisdom as an aesthetic *Gestalt*, a comprehensive and harmonious patterning of life. Such harmony does not demand control, nor is its principal conceptual category 'justice.' Rather, one is concerned with fitting in, doing what is appropriate, elegance and style. For harmony, it is enough that one be able to perceive a pattern--not a rigid and inflexible structure, as the term 'order' seems to imply--or coherence in terms of which one can arrange one's life aesthetically. Aesthesis deals with values, not deeds. Thus, it is significant that this literature returns so often to the proprieties--to what is suitable, right or appropriate for particular kinds of people in particular settings. Propriety may reflect aesthesis, the harmonious suitability of things. It is hard for harmony to be disconfirmed. Harmony is not rigidity. Judgment is required to harmonize, and not all attempts will be successful. Those who have *Gestalt* insight--sensitivity --will be more successful at recognizing what situations

require and fitting in. The attainment of aesthetic value is hardly an extrinsic act: it is its own reward. The reward for doing something *well*, as opposed to just doing it, *is* doing it well. Aestheses certainly change and develop, but whether boundaries could be taken as evidence for change is most doubtful; they and the Yahweh theology are entirely compatible with an elitist and upper-middle-class functionaries' aesthesis or harmony, especially as a harmony of powers.

Boundary experiences are essential to wisdom, to living within and attempting to harmonize with a universe of graduated powers. Understanding is finite and fluid: there is a propriety of times as well as of place and person, as in knowing when to speak and when to be generous. There is always that which one does not understand; there is always that which one cannot control. One cannot entirely protect oneself from adversity, no matter how virtuous one may be. One cannot substitute one's judgment, insight, plans or purposes for those of Yahweh. For one who is wise, the world still contains non-manipulables. It is still filled with mystery. We are accustomed to think of knowledge in terms of content. We interpret it as a transitive relationship: understanding amounts to knowledge-of. For this literature, it is possible that we should orient ourselves more

intransitively: to think of knowledge as a state of being. At the risk of sounding existential, the known is bounded by the unknown (which is in principle vastly greater). The wise are sensible of hubris--one cannot arrogate to oneself the position of Yahweh.¹ Yahweh truly understands what goes on within a person and acts in accord with that fundamental disposition. Yahweh truly understands the pattern and direction of the world, and it is that direction which he purposes which will be established irrespective of our desires and understandings. My knowledge, as wisdom, is limited to a distinct demesne over which I can exercise it. Beyond that lies a world which I cannot control, though which I may harmonize myself with and which I cannot fully understand. Much of the world is ineffable. If I look to wisdom to give me an understanding of what lies thus beyond my demesne, I am asking for what it cannot give. In fact, what wisdom brings is a clarification of the ineffability of much of the world. I know that I cannot know it. The fundamental premise of this wisdom is not that the world is fundamentally intelligible and therefore communicable, but, ironically, that it is not. Yahweh, a la Otto, is

¹See Appendix, Table 8, Parts A, B, C and L.

the *mysterium tremendum*; his autonomy is absolute.¹ Even the demesne of the king supercedes that of the wise, so that his purposes can appear as caprice. To be wise not so much to make-sense-of, again a transitive relationship, but to be in a certain (aesthetic) way. It is from the latter that the world becomes reliable for me. I may still experience adversity and dilemmas; death remains a reality (and a fixation of these people).² Still, I have hold of what is valuable in itself. What is significant in the proverbs is the pattern which lies beyond them. Conceiving of wisdom aesthetically alters what we expect wisdom to be and do. Again, ironically, freedom or autonomy is found in circumscription and limitation, recognition of demesne.

When we start detailing specific boundary situations, we risk repeating our depiction of the hierarchy of intentionalities, for the hierarchy is a reflection of the boundary phenomenon. What we can do briefly here, however, is discuss the basis for its more important characteristics. The pivotal issue involves grounding.

¹Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey, Galaxy Books (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 5-59.

²See Appendix, Tables 64 and 65.

What is the source of the confidence and value that I find in the way of wisdom? To argue that wisdom is entirely self-grounding would amount to hubris. I cannot ground my own existence; intentionality is not self-grounding.¹ I rely upon Yahweh. My own judgment, introspection ("in one's own eyes"), provides no basis for a claim upon Yahweh.² Yahweh's power and authority lie beyond any individual's claim. Human intentions and insight are valueless in sensibly interpreting god. Yahweh is ineffable, for to know is to bind.³ The reliability and dependability that I find in the world is neither noetic nor ethical. It is aesthetic. From within my own demesne and in terms of it, I can perceive an aesthetic pattern (i.e., through artistic or symbolic or poetic rather than intellectual or moral sensitivity) with which I can harmonize myself. By so disposing myself, I participate in the wisdom of Yahweh which grounds that harmony. I do not claim it; I relate myself to it. (In a sense, it claims me; or in classic theology one has grace.) I can rely on the harmony of my being, but not on my judgment of the harmony of my being,

¹See Appendix, Tables 8, Parts D and G, and 39.

²See Appendix, Table 8, Parts A and H.

³21:30.

for god weighs hearts. Still, Yahweh's harmony is open and subject to innovation and surprise--improvisation as it were. The world does not lose harmony, or value, nor do I. Yet, I may not be prepared for that possibility and it may not work to my benefit. The aesthesis is open, not closed, and it depends literally on the direction of Yahweh. If my harmony be qualitatively poor, it is a reflection upon me and not Yahewh. Yahweh is the master of the harmony. If I do not conform to the harmony, I create a dissonance that affects me and those nearby, irrespective of my purpose in so projecting myself. It is not my harmony but the master harmony that will be established.¹ Dissonance can be created inadvertently. Still, if I develop aesthetic sensitivity, if I grow in skill in the harmony, then I am less likely than others to err and more likely to create a larger harmony with others of like sensitivity and disciplined skill. The development of an aesthesis is not a guarantee but it does not conceive of the universe rigidly. Rather, it is the assertion of a pattern that tends to recur and which can be enhanced by participation which is rewarding in and of itself, therefore grounded.

In saying this much, we obviously move far beyond

¹See Appendix, Table 66.

the text, drawing the aesthetic metaphor from the style of the mashal literature and the etiquette of the proprieties. Yet, aesthesis makes sociological sense. Ethical retributionism or a firm (order-based) noesis are both highly fragile doctrines for a group in the position suggested by the life-world of this literature. They act in terms of derivative authority. They cannot claim legitimacy for themselves and lack power to assert their position against those more powerful in a show-down. They have no claim on the most powerful people and institutions of the nation. Noetic or ethical wisdom invite isconfirming experiences. Their position is curious: individually vulnerable and collectively secure. Further, there is no obvious stake in a noesis or ethic to initiate cognitive dissonance, preventing a rapid theological breakdown in the world-view.¹ As aesthesis, however, the world-view expresses the mix of vulnerability and security much more closely while also providing a

¹ For a recent application of Cognitive Dissonance Theory to biblical study (here, New Testament) and a discussion of some methodological issues, see John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity*, Prentice-Hall Studies in Religion Series, eds. John P. Reeder, Jr. and John F. Wilson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975), pp. 37-49; cf. also my "Response" to his work presented to the Consultation on the Social World of Early Christianity, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 28-31 December 1977.

basis for asserting the inherent class superiority of the group, in terms of its character or aesthetic discipline and sensitivity. The task of the high bureaucrat is precisely to harmonize him- or herself to the wishes of those who delegate their authority and legitimacy through them, to give form rather than create substance, to pattern rather than create. An aesthetic of wisdom is impervious to disconfirmation in ways that other interpretations of wisdom thinking are not. It is more resilient and durable; it more effectively interprets their life-situation. And, it has the virtue of providing a means of in-group expression and solidarity through a medium denied to outsiders on the basis of its difficulty, sophistication and technical proficiency--not to mention the intangible trump-card of "taste."

Rhetoric: The Word

With the introduction of our concept of 'aesthesis,' the significance of rhetoric to understanding and interpreting the perspective(s) underlying this literature should become clearer. The style of the saying is as important as its apparent content. Poesis is the verbal expression of the integrating and interpreting aesthetic of this group of people. The aesthetic of the poetry is part of its hermeneutic. The poetic interrelationship of the sayings is integral to understanding how they

comprise a world-view. Atomization, combined with an orientation directed purely to content, ignores what is essential: the poetic integrity and expression of the work. Obviously, this line of argument is considerably heightened if one accept the possibility of through-composition for the B material. At the very least, each saying does not exist in a vacuum, either for its author or its audience. It exists in the context of a wide variety of sayings being honed and preserved and transmitted for their value in maintaining and conveying this people's interpretation(s) of experience, whether large numbers of sayings were composed by the same author as part of a continuous literary context or whether the composition/redaction was a social-group process. Each saying, by the very fact of its existence, presupposes the existence of other sayings. The preservation of a mashal literature makes this point beyond dispute. The audience for any saying, whether presented as part of a composition or as a separate saying, knew and used, and would necessarily be assumed to know and use, many and diverse sayings as part of the poetic interpretation of their lives--aesthetic interpretation of wisdom or not. These are a mashal-using people. Thus, any particular saying plays and must play off against a background of sayings with which the audience would be familiar, both

in particular and in general. Any given saying's meaning and form of expression in conveying that meaning would take that context for granted. This fact reinforces the aesthetic interpretation, for that taken-for-granted perspective is poetic and symbolic: each saying plays poetically off others in both form and content.

To convey meaning through *mashal*, the meaning must be incorporated into understood poetic forms and their variants.

The rhetoric of *mashal*-poesis is fundamental to the grammar of the sayings. Meaning arises through in-forming and in-stylizing a verbal interpretation of experience (von Rad!) which communicates according to understood and elegant expressive patterns (grammar and style). In order to make sense of these sayings, ultimately we have to develop, or better reconstruct, the rhetoric which informed them: the understood conventions of expression which gave the verbal interpretation of an understanding/experience an appropriateness to the experience of the audience once and an elegance of expression (*aesthesis*) that made it worthy of communication and preservation. What was the poetic context whereby these words became a *poesis* and were so retained and transmitted? What is their poetic-contextual significance in light of that poetizing? In what way are sayings modified by their larger poetic context, especially if that context be systematic and integral?

Adequate answers to such questions hardly exist. The 'collection hypothesis' has probably worked to dampen the search for such a larger rhetorical context, particularly when combined with a thesis that places the origins of some sayings or of the sayings-composition process within the folk or folk-tribal milieu. The significance of such an aesthetic, if it could even exist non-trivially, becomes down-played. The presence of a coherence of world-view and expression suggests the opposite tack: that we assume aesthetic integration and begin to search for the manner of its expression within this literature. In fairness, that assumption has underlain our analysis and interpretation of these sayings to this point, though the assumption has not been made explicit in this form. Assignment of sayings to various categories takes into account, insofar as possible at this stage of inquiry, our interpretation of the in-forming rhetoric.

Rhetoric is significant in another way as well. It constitutes a bridge from the 'spatial' to the 'temporal' dimensions of the projected world of the B composition as of this literature generally. The aesthesis is a *Gestalt* recognition. In that sense, it is as such ineffable; it lies beyond the particular interpretation it may be given in any verbal statement. The statement, the words, constitute a means whereby one comes to that understanding,

but they are not the understanding itself. Instruction, discipline, are a way of living, i.e. in self-governing but grounded autonomy, not a collection of statements or rules of conduct. Still, poesis is a way of expressing that understanding and provides a means for people who are so disposed to intuit the integrative understanding, aesthesis. To use Otto's language, it supplies the standpoint or perspective from which the aesthesis may be recognized and internalized if one will.¹ For a properly disposed person, the sayings lead to the unveiling of experience. It gains "integrity" and harmony. It coheres. Each demesne of the universe unveils itself, to the extent that it will in ways appropriate to itself. Poetic expression is part, but only part of that unveiling process. Aesthetically and rhetorically, the word is more a symbol than a sign. It harmonizes, rhetorically, with what is.

The word, here as saying, thus appears as a symbol in social space and social time. It is not only a means whereby the world coheres for one receptive to and disciplined for that cohesion. It is a means for incorporating, sharing, maintaining and communicating that harmony, as poesis and poetry. It delineates, but as a

¹Otto, pp. 5-59.

transmission event. The word has the power to locate an experience. It is a hermeneutic of space and time because it gives social spatio-temporal meaning to event. By publishing, i.e., making public, it locates what is otherwise precognitive and transient. For those reasons, one could arguably treat word or language, here our rubric is 'rhetoric,' as prior to either social space or time and therefore a distinct inclusive category. Alternatively, one could recognize the bridging dimension of rhetoric and treat it as a category between. While we see rhetoric as central to this literature, aesthesis extends beyond rhetoric. Clearly, though, rhetoric leads our discussion into social time.¹

We have already mentioned assonance, paronomasia, use of key-words and -phrases, topical linking, themes and poetic architecture as rhetorical expressions of the B composition's aesthesis. To these we need to add a list of stylistic tendencies and devices which recur and which significantly affect the meanings to be attributed to particular sayings. In addition, they may help explain some of the inconsistency, exaggeration and tendentiousness of the material. These include:

(1) Absolutism: representing qualities or

¹Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 385 ff.

characteristics that have a great deal of (internal) variability in terms of non-dimensional, invariant qualities or characteristics; treating variable qualities as constants. Only by the concatenation of such sayings or by combining them with instance-sayings that present specific counter-examples does the variability of the quality appear. In other words, the absolute saying assumes a background of sayings to introduce the attribute's variability.¹

(2) Concretion: representing qualities or characteristics by means of a class of behaviors, a type of person, or a specific characteristic in which that quality is deemed to appear. The tangible replaces the intangible, recognizing that what is involved is not the type of person or conduct represented but the general quality which is symbolically represented. Concretion does not present a specific case of the quality, but it takes an abstract or complex attribute or concept and presents it in terms of more comprehensible and ordinary concepts.²

(3) Instance: a specific instance--person, circumstance or behavior--is depicted to symbolize an abstract concept or quality. When instance involves a

¹E.g., 15:28, 31; 18:3; 19:4; rich versus poor, wise versus foolish, righteous versus wicked.

²E.g., 16:11, 24; 17:22; 20:14, 20.

class of cases rather than a specific one, it begins to shade into concretion; the former, however, tends to deal with a case or cases while the latter deals with a quality or qualities.¹

(4) Abstraction: a set of concepts are related to one another predominantly or exclusively as abstract concepts rather than concrete qualities or instances. The interrelation is stated as a generality or abstraction, without regard for the complexity of the concepts being related.²

(5) Universality: a quality of attribute is presented as applicable without exception, even when there are well-known or obvious exceptions to the generalization. The saying asserts the pervasiveness or value of a quality or attribute by treating it as if it were universal or unexceptioned. It thereby assumes that the audience will interpret it against the background of sayings which clarify the quality's true extent or which deal with the exceptional or difficult cases.³

(6) Personalization: presentation of a characteristic, quality, attribute or concept in the form of a

¹E. g., 16:26; 17:8, 17; 20:1.

²E.g., 16:12, 22; 20:18; 15:32.

³E.g., 16:3; 20:21; 22:6, 9.

person having that quality or an aspect of that quality.

An abstraction is made concrete by expressing it through typical or stylized personal behavior. Unlike instance or concretion, here the emphasis is on the person or class of people who represent this concept. The personalization, however, is highly one-dimensional and impersonal. The only relevant dimension of the character is the concept being presented through it.¹

(7) Stock figure: use of a stereotypical person or thing, often an ironic caricature, to present a series of related attributes, qualities, characteristics or concepts, the elemental structure of their interrelationships and the pattern of their interaction with other qualities and circumstances beyond the figure. The stock figure is not one-dimensional. It depicts a complex series of internal and external relationships. The figure also tends to be poetically and symbolically open to new situations and interpretations, unlike the personalization, which tends to offer only a rather closed set of applications or interpretations. The stock figure is sufficiently complex that it implies a wide series of attributes and behaviors beyond what is straightforwardly presented in the saying, offering the opportunity for

¹E.g., 16:27, 28; 19:25; 21:22.

ironic usage and divers layers of meaning.¹

(8) Extremity: the use of extreme or exaggerated occurrences of a quality, attribute, characteristic or concept even when the extreme rarely occurs in the course of the quality's widely variable forms of appearance. These sayings tend to treat extreme cases; they avoid the mean in favor of drawing worst- or best-case analyses, especially when combined with absolutism, where the extreme is treated as the representative occurrence of the quality or concept. Extremity anticipates a background of sayings which qualify, clarify or modify the extreme and often absolutistic presentation; other sayings provide the lacking perspective.²

(9) Antithesis: the juxtaposition of extremities or absolutistic extremities, often as if they were opposites or exhaustive alternatives. Antithesis reduces extremity to duality. Generally, this rhetorical device is used to draw fundamental lineaments of intentional demesnes and to stress boundary conditions, even where there may be more than two options and where the over-all valuing system may not see them as true opposites. Antithesis treats the system of values as uni-hierarchical,

¹E.g., the king, the callow youth, the fool, the sluggard, the false witness, the faithful wife.

²E.g., 17:2; 18:9; 19:3, 29.

even when a more complex system may be held. Again, the complex background of sayings would create the necessary depth, variability of quality, and valuational complexity that a specific individual saying lacks for stylistic effect.¹

(10) Dilemma: presentation of inconsistent or mutually exclusive qualities or values of identical valence (positive or negative), often in an extremitized form. This device is a stylistic inversion of antithesis. It generally serves to delineate boundary situations by depicting them in (extremitized) situations of exclusive alternative choice, with one value-system understood as favored. Adversity sayings frequently use dilemma. Dilemma sayings in particular serve to counterbalance and provide perspective for antitheses, extremities and absolutisms.²

(11) Cadence: a saying or group of sayings which the basic theme or themes of a composition (collection?) in terms of basic rhetorical motifs. Cadences form an inclusion structure and may punctuate the composition as well. The structure of cadences provides

¹See Appendix, Table 7.

²See Appendix, Tables 11 and 29.

closure or completeness.¹

(12) Observation: a superficially non-judgmental presentation, often with irony, of a relationship, quality or pattern of action that typically unveils the intentionality or characteristic conduct of the person or figure. An observation may therefore present neutrally or with admiration what is elsewhere highly disvalued; the value of the observation lies in the insight.²

(13) Bon mot: an observation which displays striking imagery. The observation tends to function explicitly while the bon mot functions implicitly and with multiple layers of meaning, beyond the aesthetic-qualitative difference.³

(14) Irony: the use of multiple layers of meaning, especially when the apparent explicit meaning stands in some tension with or dissonance to one or more of the implicit meanings; inconsistency of meaning, especially when it is used to emphasize the propriety of demesne.⁴

(15) Neo-naturalism: the symbolic use of stereotypical naturalistic language as a compensation for

¹See Appendix, Table. 9.

²See Appendix, Table 45; cf. Table 47.

³See Appendix, Table 45.

⁴See Appendix, Table 23.

qualities, concepts or values which are in conflict with those symbolically represented by the "natural world." Typically, neo-naturalism is compensation for urbanism, formalistic social relationship, and increased social distances.¹

(16) Intellectualization: substitution of verbalized interpretations of experience for pre- or extra-verbal interpretations; representation of the extra-verbal by means of the symbolic-poetic use of the verbal.²

(17) Individualism: statement of group or class values in terms of the qualities, attributes and conduct of stereotypical individuals; substitution of the typical individual for the values of the group of which he or she deemed to be a member, often by poetic attribution.³

To these, one might add thematic devices typical of this literature, such as hierarchy, demesne, mystery, noblesse oblige, topos, propriety, gradience, hubris grounding legitimacy/authority, and the like. If there be a wisdom aesthesis, then what is said--and meant--is inextricably tied up with how it is said. The 'how' remains in many ways too poorly understood.

¹See Appendix, Table 53; cf. Table 54.

²E.g., 15:30; 16:17; 17:12, 22; 19:14; 20:14.

³E.g., 19:6, 7; 20:5-7, 9.

Time

Excepting the somewhat doubtful middle case of 'word,' 'time' comprises the second of the fundamental phenomenological dimensions of social existence. People make themselves "at home" in a when as well as a where. This time is a hermeneutic, just like social space. It is an interpretation of experience as meaningful, valuable, and significant. Social time is a social reality, a construction and therefore a kind of convention. It is another way of relating disparate events to one another so that one may deal effectively with experience. Behind this literature lies an interpretive temporality which we also want to elicit. Time is not a prominent, explicit and consistent concern of this literature as it is of other types, such as prophecy or apocalyptic. The spatial characteristics of the social world are clearly more explicit and detailed in the B collection. In part, though, this may be a function of the rhetorical devices, such as absolutism, abstraction and extremity, which downplay or omit temporal conditions. Some of our understanding of temporality has to be derived from the juxtaposition of sayings with one another, especially as a socially interpretive background among a mashal-using people. Also, important temporal concepts are analogues or consequences of spatial concepts already developed.

In our discussion of space, it has been a practical impossibility to defer all consideration of temporality. We have already sketched many of its lineaments and developed some of its basic concepts. We shall not repeat those lines of argument again in detail here. Rather, we shall seek to summarize coherently the temporal concepts or implications of concepts already developed and explore the other, often-implicit, dimensions of temporality. Three central issues will form the basis for our discussion. First, what is the stance of the individual with respect to time? How does a person confront temporality as it applies to one's own life-situation? This question is at once ethical and existential: in what way can or do I act with regard to events as sequence, how do I choose? Second, in what way is temporality related to life as a whole? In what way is a person's life an expression of (their) temporality? Third, in what way does the world express a temporality that extends beyond one's own life and yet impinges upon it? How do I relate to time as the process of history?

The disparity of attention paid to spatiality as opposed to temporality constitutes an important clue both to the world-view of this literature and to the social milieu from which it comes. Spatial issues are problematic. The gradient power, its legitimacy,

autonomous action within one's essential social milieu, all have become significant problems requiring both interpretation and defense of that interpretation among the sayings. It is axiomatic in sociological analysis that people only talk about that which is not taken-for-granted. They discuss, assert and defend something because it has in some way become a problem for them. Defenses of world-views appear when those world-views are beginning to crumble. The world-view of this literature is not beginning to crumble, because it has not evoked that kind of elaborate spirited defense. Still, certain situations provoke questions that have to be dealt, with and those issues appear as social spatiality. The restricted autonomy, individual vulnerability and collective security of this bureaucratic elite require explanation and interpretation. They are ineluctable issues.

By contrast, temporality is largely-taken-for-granted. Few problems require social temporal explanations. This lack of emphasis does not mean that time has no meaning or significance for these people. It means that whatever experience they have of time, it is unproblematic, at least for the most part. In fact, we shall argue that time is an important part of their hermeneutic. They exist in a time that has a great deal of meaning for them. But, that time is reliable and

consistent. It is relatively free from surprises or rapid and unpredictable changes of direction. Indeed, the reality of time is pivotal to their ethic and their world-view: meaningful action is possible in the world. Problems of sociality arise precisely because the experience of temporality is fundamental, but relatively untroubled.¹

This taken-for-granted character of social temporality in this literature also has important implications for our understanding of its social evolution. Whatever experiences its authors and audiences may have been having, they did not raise significant issues of temporality in any of the three forms we shall consider. The social milieu raised spatial but not temporal kinds of questions. No event or constellation of events, no social process, no intellectual or theological development led to the posing of significant temporal problems. Their view of time persisted and could continue to be taken-for-granted, with few and specific expectations. Only the second question, the process of personal development, raises issues in connection with the commitment to and disciplined development of an intentionality. One would expect ethical or theodical problems to raise

¹See Appendix, Tables 37 and 61.

temporal questions. Choice--action and consequence--involves one's being toward the future.¹ To have choice at all, there must be some freedom and openness toward the not-yet. Yet, the future is not an overweaning issue, even in the dilemmas and adversity sayings. Similarly, the absence of Heilsgeschichte, even in the thematically theological B collection, is notorious. Whatever is happening "historically" to their social world, these people are not experiencing it as a problem in terms of their interpretation of history. Since we shall argue a temporality of continuity here, that entails that they have not experienced events that call that thesis of social and national continuity in time into question. Time may not be rigid and inflexible, else their ethic would be purely formalistic instead of substantive, but it is also not discontinuous and inconsistent. Their temporal world, on all three levels, is basically stable, consistent, reliable and predictable to a sufficient degree. They know how to cope with temporality and are coping with it. Their social world and ideology display no temporally-based evidence of being in trouble. Their being in time can be taken for granted.

¹See Appendix, Table 67.

Stance

The first dimension of temporality is stance, the "presentness" of the individual in his or her being toward the future. This dimension is both preceptual and ethical. To choose is to operate out of a stance toward a meaningful future. The temporal characteristics which emerge from the perspective of stance are:

(1) Time is an arena within which meaningful action is possible. The ultimacy and mystery of Yahweh, the boundedness of demesne, and the sharp delineation of intentionalities could together serve to deprive individual choices and actions of any real significance, but that does not happen.¹ Actions are not overwhelmed. Even allowing for a noblesse oblige interpretation of some sayings, the cumulation of wisdom, adversity sayings and dilemmas, correction and instruction, discipline and growth in an intentionality, all suggest that one faces ethically genuine choices at any stage in one's development.²

Each action has meaning; it is not automatic or derivative. Some choices lead to growth; others, to harm or even destruction. No particular stage of growth

¹See Appendix, Tables 8, Parts A, B and C; 39 and 57.

²See Appendix, Tables 13, 20, 21, 44, 48, 60; cf. Tables 16 and 26.

or intentional structure deprives one of the reality of choice. Thus, what one does and how one chooses to do it is a constantly meaningful occurrence. One's stance out of the present toward the immediate future offers portentous alternatives.¹ The future and the present are not equivalent. There is a genuine passage of and in time. The future is potential and it is different from the present. It is not fixed or given; it is not chimaerical. The 'way' involves constant decision-making to maintain and develop the discipline.² Thus, the individual is a functioning agent in time.

(2) Meaningful change occurs. One cannot rely on one's own judgment of a state of affairs or of one's own wisdom to detect a pattern or structure to events that will continue indefinitely into the future and upon which one can rely beyond that of the harmony or aesthesis of wisdom within one's demesne of autonomy. In other words, hubris or self-righteousness assert an understanding beyond one's demesne one cannot have, even one who is otherwise pursuing wisdom.³ Yahweh's pattern, his purposes,

¹See Appendix, Tables 8, Part A; 16, Part P; 26, Part D; and 67.

²See Appendix, Table 44.

³See Appendix, Tables 8, Part A; 16, Part P; and 26, Part A.

remain in principle beyond human ken.¹ Hence, genuine dilemmas and genuine adversity are possible, though unlikely, even for one who is quite wise.² The future differs from the present. Real change occurs, because the unexpected is an inherent part of futurity. Indeed, that fact about time is a fundamental motive for the development of the doctrine of demesne, limiting oneself to that upon which one can rely. Haste and impetuosity are cardinal vices.³ Choice is disciplined and bounded.⁴

(3) Change is evolutionary, not revolutionary. Excessive or excessively rapid change is as subversive of the possibility of choice as stasis.⁵ In a revolutionary society or world, change is so rapid that there is no intelligible basis for making decisions; experience is not a reliable or consistent guide. Old principles do not necessarily have validity in the new order. Clearly, wisdom is cumulative; growth is expected; the discipline is the facilitative means to wisdom.⁶ The past is a

¹See Appendix, Table 8, Part B.

²See Appendix, Tables 11, 12, 29, 65, 66 and 68.

³See Appendix, Table 26, Parts H, P and Q.

⁴See Appendix, Table 20.

⁵See Appendix, Tables 31, 37 and 61.

⁶See Appendix, Tables 13, 48, 60.

reliable guide to choice and conduct in the present and the future, though it may not be perfectly predictive. The pursuit of wisdom aesthesis and the harmony which flows from it are reasonable and worthy goals. The propriety of intentionalities is consistent and one can expect a general harmony or consonance of circumstance/ outcome and intentionality.¹ The possibility inherent in futurity does not undercut the general harmony of character and station, though it means that the relationship is not mechanical. The freedom of the powerful to exercise their power according to their will and the unknowability of Yahweh's specific intentions tend to be more ideal than actual in that in practice both tend to act in ways that are consonant with the aesthesis of wisdom. Specific inconsistencies do not undermine the larger consistency and therefore the appropriateness of wisdom disposition. Specific freedom is compatible with the evolution of possibility on the larger scale.

(4) Dispositions evolve, grow. Characters appear in this literature in absolute, one-dimensional form. In fact, each disposition is widely variable, a necessary concomitant of the reality and significance of choice.²

¹See Appendix, Tables 39, 57; cf. Tables 8, Parts E and G, and 27,

²See Appendix, Tables 20, 39 and 57.

Wisdom, for example, is acquired through a life-long discipline. One's wisdom at any particular moment may or may not be adequate to the situational demands made upon it. It is possible to have insufficient maturity in wisdom and therefore to be unequal to a circumstance or decision.¹ Similarly, there are degrees of folly, so that instruction even of the fool makes sense.² Judgment and correction do make a difference even for those for whom wisdom—and conceivably, though not likely, even righteousness—is not an intentional possibility.³ Though within limits, character can change and be molded. Again, ethical decisions have meaning; they are real, for each intentionality. To face genuine options, one's character must have a range of development. That range, however, seems to grow consistently narrower with time. The dispositional range--potential--of the callow youth is virtually total, from wicked to wise, at least in principle.⁴ The dispositional range of one mature in his or her intentionality is basically within that particular intentionality alone. The wicked do not become wise; but

¹See Appendix, Tables 11, 12 and 29.

²See Appendix, Table 19.

³See Appendix, Table 60.

⁴See Appendix, Table 18.

it seems that they may well become less wicked.¹

(5) What is relevant in relation to the consequential future is attitude or character, not the specific act. All action is character-based. This interpretation follows directly from the proprieties and from intentionality.² It exerts a stabilizing influence on the process of change. Harmonizing occurs with respect to character, therefore isolated acts, especially if out of character, do not disrupt the continuity of time. Changes in disposition development or deterioration of character, do appear to affect consequences. The process of harmonization is not restricted to the intentional agent. Others within the life-world, the powerful, the natural world and Yahweh also constitute active harmonizing forces that tend toward consonance, or 'aesthetic harmony.'³ Since the pursuit of harmony is intentional, the response of these extra-demesne forces is to harmonize with intentionality. This harmony, however, is not act-based, nor is it retributive. The world is not mechanical; these forces are individually active. Harmony above all in the domain of specific acts does not mean utter

¹See Appendix, Table 39.

²See Appendix, Tables 14 and 39.

³See Appendix, Tables 8, Part A, 10, 32 and 33.

predictability or rigidity: the world has its surprises, and not all are benevolent from the perspective of a particular individual ("in his own eyes"). Dilemmas exist which no harmony or structure or stability or order can avert, hence the recognition of *demesne*.

(6) Temporal processes which are relevant to the individual tend toward harmony with intentionality. In a way, the B material seems to make the claim that the world makes sense but that that sense is not intelligible as such even to one who is mature in wisdom. One can discern some of that pattern. One can have a *Gestalt* insight into the meaning of the pattern without knowing the details or substance of it. That the world makes sense does not mean that it is knowable or even that it has to be knowable. Rather, wise or tight intentionality are part of the way in which the world makes sense. Thus, the disparate forces and dimensions of activity in the world, including the actions of Yahweh, tend to fit appropriately with well-disposed actions. The psychological term 'closure' might apply here. The sense underlying the world appears as harmony, but only over time and in respect of intentionality. Moreover, harmony is a fitness or appropriateness, not a mechanistic relationship. The exact form of the harmony is not predictable--that is the part of the sense of the world that lies beyond human ken. What

one can be sure of is that wise or right intentionality fit; they harmonize. For that reason, they facilitate the sense of the world and are intrinsically good and right in turn. One's participation in this aspect of temporal propriety is not passive but dispositionally active.

While Yahweh sets the ultimate sense, the proper disposition (but not one's own interpretation of what the proper disposition might be, which is a fortiori dubious) does make a difference, facilitative or destructive (temporal dimension of contagion).¹

(7) For one of right or wise disposition, the world is ultimately worthy of trust. The B material is not cynical, despondent, melancholy or pessimistic. Less is it paranoid. People are depicted as active and participating in the life-world: one cannot successfully restrict oneself only to one's autonomous demesne. One must risk--disciplined--involvement in the life-world. Withdrawal is not a viable option, except perhaps as a rhetorical response to the choices posed in adversity (through the dilemma). Wealth, position, authority, influence, eloquence, insight, all are tools for use in manipulating and disposing one's life-world.² Consonance

¹See Appendix, Tables 8, Parts A, B, C, D, E, G, H and I; 28 and 42.

²See Appendix, Table 16.

can and should be sought actively, not passively. Discipline and restraint mean minimalism, not withdrawal. This literature reflects a wary people, who recognize the limits to intelligibility and knowing, but who believe that action in accord with the proper disposition is right, necessary and productive, though not always sure. There are ethical imperatives of action. With the appropriate character, such involvement facilitates harmony and tends to be rewarding. On balance, the oft-times precarious and uncertain world is benevolent to those rightly disposed. That benevolence-on-balance, however, is predicated on involvement within the life-world. To hope to harmonize, one must involve oneself in the world beyond the narrowest and best-governed portions of the demesne, into the life-world. On the other hand, that involvement does not mean arrogance or passionate commitment; it means discipline in accord with disposition. Restraint and discipline mean walking the path ("the way") between under- and over-commitment, both of which are inharmonious.

(8) The world within which one acts is reliable.

Irrespective of one's disposition, the world, as an expression of the purposes of Yahweh, can be expected to make sense. Harmony persists. While the particular form and content of that harmony cannot be predicted, one can be sure that the harmony will be maintained. The world

will not become dissonant and inharmonious; Yahweh will not act without meaning or purpose.¹ One can rely on the preservation of harmony and meaning by and through the aesthesis even when one cannot predict specific events or acts. One can also rely on the relationship which persists between harmony and intentionality. Right and wise dispositions facilitate, while evil and foolish harm or destroy.

(9) The world within which one acts is consistent. The pattern underlying the world is such that the strategies divined by the wise for dealing with it retain their validity even when certain prudential patterns of conduct may change. The basic lineaments of that strategy appear in *demesne*, intention, propriety. These strategic interpretations have persistent validity. While specific moral imperatives and admonitions may change, the interpretation upon which they are based persists, the ethic remains. In other words, one can count on the fundamental nature of the world remaining constant. One may count on the fundamental nature of Yahweh remaining constant, even if they cannot be fully known nor understood, let alone their effects predicted. Thus, ways of coping with such a world, if effective, retain their effectiveness to the

¹See Appendix, Table 8.

extent that they are based on valid and accurate interpretations of those natures. While first-order judgments may change, second-order do not. The interpretations are consistent and reliable, even when the specific judgments and actions they lead to may vary.

This is a difficult and somewhat obscure interpretive point, but basic to clarifying how this literature functions. We propose that the consistency and coherence of the world perceived by the author(s) and users of the B composition lies at a higher level than has often been supposed. The "order" does not lie in some automatic or mechanical relationship of act and consequence. The world is not rigid and inflexible. Such an order undermines the meaning of ethical choice: the appearance of choice is a sham. Ultimately, the effect is to deprive Yahweh of any freedom, which seems a curious doctrine to impute to either this literature or these people, though it cannot be ruled invalid for that reason. Such doctrines as retribution, however, do not square with adversity, dilemma, iconoclasm or the role of power in this material. The appearance of retributive language can be understood rhetorically. If reward and punishment are not mechanical, however, what motivates the wise to pursue an arduous and potentially unrewarding discipline? Why risk a foolish son, contentious wife, autocratic king

and willful deity? What justifies wisdom? The argument that wisdom could not be justified in the face of these experiences--theodicy--that it broke down, ultimately begs the question. Where did the notion come from in the first place? How did a people whose everyday experience exposed them to the caprice of power arrive at the conclusion that righteousness and wisdom are objectively rewarded? How could they claim to understand what they later must apparently admit they did not, when their experience with the caprice of king and official must have been immediate? A doctrine of consistency, however, does not raise direct theodical questions, is resilient and far more immune from attack. We cannot know the ultimate pattern. We can know that it exists. We do not know what Yahweh intends. We know that he intends purposefully. We do not know that what we do will always lead to reward and happiness. We know that no other strategy leads to more success and happiness than ours. Further, we know that the ultimate intentional realization of our way of life is fully in harmony with the ultimate pattern of the universe, helping to preserve, extend and perpetuate it insofar that human action can. What we do makes sense, though it may not always work. Our knowledge is limited and our judgment of our knowledge self-centered. But, it is the best strategy and the strategy is in basic accord with

the over-arching meaning of the world. When taken as the collective product of a group of people who persist over time, wisdom presents a strategy/interpretation whose fundamental structure is so in accord with the fundamental pattern of the universe that it persists. Wisdom, however, can grow and develop. The strategy and understanding are forever incomplete. Interpretations of it by individuals are subject to fault, folly and hubris. The persistence of wisdom as a harmonizing strategy reflects both the reliability and the basic consistency that underlie a world that appears open and changing.

(10) From the perspective of a particular individual, the temporal aspect of the world is fluid. Things change, but slowly. Short-term variability does not conceal long-term stability. The world is not erratic, neither is it rigid. In order to function in particular life-situations, one has to make judgments appropriate to the circumstance, context and character(s) involved. Decisions, choices, are not inalterable, but they are not random. There is a basis for choice, but specific choices gradually change. The world is not bound, brittle, or broken.

(11) The future is open. No specific course of action is ever a foregone conclusion. The role of Yahweh provides for intervention, however much one may think

one understands a particular situation and how-ever righteous or wise one may think one's course. The course of events provides real alternatives which lead in genuinely different directions. The over-all pattern or sense of the world, the purposes of Yahweh, do not produce a rigid structure to the world that closes or confines courses of action to the extent that inexorable processes are at work. The world is not governed by fate or necessity, certain rhetorical usages to the contrary notwithstanding.¹ The pattern does not produce an immutable sequence of events in which the individual or even Yahweh is impotent or must function mechanically. The options we face are real. The pattern exists at the second-order. We might say that it is the pattern of the pattern of events that is fixed.

(12) The orientation toward time in the situation of choice is individualistic. While it is clear that wisdom is both cumulative and collective, the situation of ethically-relevant choice is individualistic. Demesne, for example, is an intensely individual concept. The rhetorical use of stock figures is revealing. While they may present classes of individuals in the form of collective representations, the choices they face, the situations

¹See Appendix, Tables 8, Parts A, B and C; 36 and 66.

they are in, are appropriate to particular separate people, not to groups. Choice is not a group, class or national process. Intentionality must be pursued through individual discipline, not collective. Speech is the act of one person (at a time). The issues that concern people in this literature revolve around situations in which particular persons are presented with choices that they as individuals have to make. That fact does not make wisdom purely individual, but it certainly reflects a stance toward temporality that is individualistic.¹ The reality and openness of time is experienced at the point of the individual's decision for a particular way of being or course of action. Even contagion suggests that involvement begins with the spread of effects from a particular person's intentionality. It is the individual, not the group, class or nation, that is the focal point for the life-world. The model stance is a person open to decision.

(13) That stance assumes freedom and autonomy. Individuals can make meaningful choices apart from groups. In fact, the nature of group decision-making over against that of the individual is never addressed: is it different in kind or nature or degree? While self-governance

¹See Appendix, Table 16, Parts E, F, H, I, K, L, M, O, P, Q, R and S.

may not be competent, it is understood and assumed as the point of departure. Choices are real. No previous pattern of action so binds one that choices only have the appearance of meaning. Intentionality does not assure that one will act purely in terms of that intentionality. It structures and orients conduct, but it does not determine choice, hence we cannot totally predict the actions of others on the basis of their intentionalities.¹

However mature in wisdom one may have become, he must still make decisions that continue to be consonant with that wisdom and it is still possible that he will not.

Yahweh's involvement is determinative of events, not acts. Yahweh assures harmony. Yahweh assures sense. But the divine in no way takes away the reality of choice, even from the ignorant, foolish or wicked.² Instruction, free choice to alter one's conduct though not necessarily to an unlimited extent, remains possible.³ People can learn to some degree, however formed their dispositions. One is therefore responsible for one's choices. Yahweh may intervene between the formulated purpose (decision) and its outcome, but he does not intervene in making the

¹See Appendix, Tables 39 and 57.

²See Appendix, Tables 18, 19, 20, 28 and 60.

³See Appendix, Tables 21, 48 and 60.

decision itself. There is no structure, mechanism, necessity or fate that deprives a person of meaningful choice.

(14) Spatiality and temporality are both inner-worldly. We have seen that the life-world of the B material is disposed in a fairly-well-defined social milieu. The questions posed and answers given deal essentially with matters of immediate personal concern. One confines one's attention to that one can effectively deal with, one's demesne and one's life-world. Beyond that lie the demesnes of others. The supra-mundane does not occupy these people. They are not other-worldly. They look for no supernatural compensation for their lot. Indeed, their situation is, if not always assured and stable, more often agreeable than not. The same situation obtains with respect to time. The relevant temporal consideration at the point of choice is immediate and personal future. Outcomes are this-worldly and individual. They are not and are fundamentally inconsistent with the other-worldly, supra-temporal or supra-individual. At most, the focus of this literature extends beyond the temporality of one's own experiential world to that of intimates and progeny. The closest one comes to the other-worldly is the reference to *Rephaim* in 21:16, a, saying which is still concern with the fate of a particular individual as the consequence of this-worldly conduct; the lineaments of any

other-worldly place or time are lacking.¹

(15) Temporality appears as stance, presentness. Inner-worldly and individualistic temporality means that the focus is on the situation of choice, one's stance toward the immediate personal future. The past exists largely for one through intentionality developed to that point; indeed, the constitutive elements of that past, such as childhood, appear in and through that intentionality. The past appears as an influence upon the present rather than an independent and detailed reality with its own structure and concerns. Similarly, the openness of the future appears over against the presentness of one's stance: that the future is as-it-were unformed possibility without (first-order) structure. The literature is concerned with the specious present oriented to the immediate future.

(16) Personal past appears as developed/ing intentionality brought to bear upon the moment of choice. The past is individualistic, not collective. One is the product of one's choices; one ultimately is responsible for molding one's own life. Groups appear in forming and disciplining a person. Parents, for example, have

¹See Appendix, Table 40, esp. Part J.

²See Appendix, Tables 39 and 57.

great, though not absolute, influence over a child's development.¹ Yet, people have autonomy and genuine choice. Their actions are not subsumed to a group or structure of reality, present or past. The past, internalized, informs but does not determine their actions. The past appears within these sayings as what affects one's stance, rather than an independent and valuable reality to be preserved and cherished in its own right.² The past appears in light of one's stance in the present, and is subordinate to it (which rather rules out the last possibility as an unexpressed taken-for-granted lying far behind this literature). The past, therefore, can be seen under the rubric of experience, intentionally understood. The past appears less as the interpretive cumulation of past events than as the development and maturation of a personality/character through a process of learning and growth. (Thus, we need to be careful of the treacherous multi-vocality of 'experience'.)

(17) Temporality is an arena of non-symbolic action. This point follows rather directly from much that we have already said. Choice does not stand for forces or structures that are larger than life or supra-

¹See Appendix, Table 41.

²See Appendix, Table 61.

mundane. Nor are they supra-personal. Actions certainly reflect structures of intentionality, with which time harmonizes, but that intentionality is individual and personal, however typical or representative it may be. One is not compelled or fated to act in a typical way. Acts carry their ordinary social and contextual meanings. These sayings are certainly not devoid of symbolism, but the use of symbols is consistent with their minimalism; time is immediate and mundane. It seldom has symbolic value except as the arena of decision and action.¹

(18) Temporality appears as *demesne*, in terms of the life of the individual. The sayings' concern with time is often expressed in terms of the language of life and death.² As would be expected, longevity and right or wise intentionality are related. One's *demesne*, however, is one's life. While actions, may redound to some extent to family and kin, while contagion implies a measure of temporality, the consequences of action, like the action themselves, occur within and are directly related to one's own life. The temporal stance of presentness is oriented within one's own life *demesne*. The working out of intentionality, the realization of harmony, is a process

¹See Appendix, Table 16.

²See Appendix, Tables 64 and 65.

of the individual life, above all. An individual life-time is the demesne within which wisdom comes to its proper realization. This demesne is not obvious given the transmissibility of wisdom combined with cumulativeness. One could imagine a supra-personal wisdom realized in historical process whose symbolic benchmarks were divorced from the individual human life. If such a conception of wisdom existed among these people at this time, it does not appear clearly among these sayings. One can only realize wisdom within and in terms of one's own life and life-world, one's spatio-temporal action sphere.

(19) Wisdom has temporal authority. The development of wise disposition leads to facilitative harmony with one's world. In that respect it is continuous with the grounded aesthetic which is the (second-order) pattern of the world and of its governance. The transmissible authority of wisdom is its grounded aesthesis: it produces a valuable harmonizing of individual, group and world that is compatible with the aesthetic underlying the purposes of Yahweh. No other disposition is similarly consonant; only righteous character is similarly grounded. Wisdom and righteousness are transmissible realizations of intrinsic value. The aesthetic in which wisdom may be said to "participate" is good in and of itself. Wisdom's authority is its relationship to this

Yahweh-grounded and -legitimated value. The authority of those who have wisdom to act to preserve and transmit the wisdom aesthesis expressed through a person's intentionality (i.e., their authority to act, to seek and discipline students, to communicate their ethic) is their relationship to the value, the aesthesis and the ground of both in Yahweh.¹

(20) Wisdom cumulates through time. Wisdom is not an absolute or ideal quality. It appears concretely as intentionality, in and through specific-individuals. As discipline and aesthesis, wisdom can grow, develop, be refined. Its basis in mature and righteous intentionality, its history, its grounding, all mean that the basic pattern endures, as we have argued. Still, the last word remains to be said. Time forms an arena in which wisdom develops through the group which possesses it.²

(21) Wisdom is collective. Wisdom grows through the participation of people in a group. Thus, there is a sense in which wisdom is also tied to the life of the group of people who possess it. Wisdom cumulates with respect to the group as well as the individual. The

¹See Appendix, Tables 8, 16, 20, 21, 48 and 60.

²See Appendix, Tables 11, 12, 29, 36, 66 and 67.

³See Appendix, Tables 21, 48 and 60.

group assures, to the extent possible, wisdom's preservation and transmission. The aesthesis of wisdom, the "second-order pattern," is supra-personal in space and time to the extent that the aesthesis is the harmonizing pattern of world and god. This dimension of wisdom, however, is not discussed in detail within the sayings. Further, the group is not itself treated supra-personally. The temporality of wisdom, despite cumulation and collectivity, appears in and through individual demesne, one's life.

(22) There is a propriety to time. This propriety of individual temporality does not seem to appear as a doctrine of *kairos*, the general propriety of times, though such a doctrine would be quite plausible given the analysis thus far. Rather, it appears in the range of choices and alternatives arising within the sphere of immediate action at each stage of life. Each stage in intentional development has its appropriate relationship to action. The range of action--freedom, autonomy, openness of time—varies with intentional stage of individual development and growth.

In addition to these points, several others have either appeared within the discussion or are obvious analogues to spatial concepts. In either case, it is sufficient merely to mention the following:

(23) Aesthesis appears in the individual stance toward time as a strategic conservatism.

(24) Aesthesis appears in the individual stance toward time as a strategic minimalism.

(25) The openness of immediate futurity entails individual vulnerability, irrespective of intentionality.¹

(26) Contagion appears within immediate temporality.²

(27) Wisdom as intentionally realized aesthesis is transmitted through discipline, ethic and language (poetry) within the context of a group of wise.

These characteristics reinforce the artistic metaphor we are using in discussing wisdom. There is an art to applying wisdom to life situations. The openness and change one confronts when one deals with temporality out of the stance of one's presentness mean that wisdom as aesthesis cannot be a formula for conduct. When wisdom is converted, or better translated, from the abstract level of aesthesis to specific ethical considerations, the proprieties and demesnes of the immediate situation have to be taken into account. The suitability of the context is ethically relevant. Right is an appropriateness

¹See Appendix, Table 43.

²See Appendix, Table 42.

or fitness to character as well as the groundedness of the action; it is not a formula of conduct. The pattern derived from discipline and learned in the growing experience of the past requires harmonizing and application. An act is not objectively wise. It is aesthetically wise, doing well rather than doing good.

Stages of Life

The second temporal dimension of wisdom follows from the propriety of time. One's life is composed of stages, to each of which there is an appropriateness of both space and time. We have already discussed the hierarchy of intentionalities at length. Clearly, though, they have some temporal relationship. Even in childhood, an apparent sensibility of righteousness appears. The child is amenable to discipline, though incapable of intentional choice.¹ The child has not yet the capability of selecting an intentional direction to his or her life. The parent has both the capacity and the responsibility to begin the process of directing the child's growth so that proper choices will be made and the child will pursue the discipline of wisdom when he or she can.² This instruction, though pivotal, does not control inalterably

¹See Appendix, Table 41.

²See Appendix, Tables 20, 48 and 60.

the child's development as several sayings might seem to suggest. Else how can we explain the persistent theme of the foolish child. Clearly, parents who pursue wisdom nevertheless find their hopes for their children, the perpetuation of their wisdom-based values and class identity, disappointed. If all that were required for the child to elude this fate in later life were adequate parental guidance and discipline, this recurrent theme would be difficult to explain. Rather, the child's life seems to be patterned rather than determined. He or she must still decide the direction of his or her intentionality in youth, and face real ethical choices as adults. No childhood instruction in and of itself produces wisdom. This argument is also consonant with wisdom's apparent cumulation and collectivity, not to mention one's demesne.

The (callow) youth has reached the age where-intentional choice becomes possible. Indeed, only in youth can one's direction for life be set. In youth, one has the potential for the fundamental ethically-meaningful choice, what sort of character do I commit myself to developing? If the youth be so equipped, he or she may pursue the way of wisdom. Certainly, the way of righteousness lies open. On the other hand, folly and wickedness may also begin from wrong decisions and commitments made

in youth. In a sense, youth is a period of total intentional freedom. One may go virtually any direction.¹ Once this period in life is past, there seems to be much less freedom. The sayings offer no clear indication that one can change from one type of intentionality to another after the passage of youth.² To pursue wisdom, one must find teachers, perhaps one's parents, who can subject one to the course of discipline that is essential for mature wisdom to appear later in life.³ In youth, what begins as a result of one's decision is a process of growth within the way one has chosen. Whatever character one selects begins to grow and develop, both as a process of personal growth and development and as a process of social interaction. The youth who seeks wisdom becomes a protégé of the wisdom-seeking class. He becomes a part of their collective and its facilitation. The discipline, as we have consistently argued, is not rote learning. The "instruction" which occurs is a vehicle for developing a character.

With adulthood, the realistic possibility of committing oneself to a particular course of personal

¹See Appendix, Tables 18 and 41.

²See Appendix, Table 28.

³See Appendix, Table 48.

development fades. One's intentionality is increasingly fixed. One's actions, however, still have a measure of freedom, so that one may exacerbate a wrong choice or facilitate a good one--or vice versa. The process of growth and development does not come to an end with the passing of youth. The maturation of intentionality is ultimately a process that goes on for an entire lifetime. It is never complete or finished. The rhetorical device of extremity tends to conceal the variability within each intentionality. It is in the course of adulthood that one makes decisions and acts in ways that affect one's position within that variability. Wisdom in particular does not come to full maturation in the early years of adult life. Wisdom requires some age to possess with assurance and confidence.¹ Thus, we should distinguish the young man (young adult) from the mature adult. Only the latter functions as one who is consistently wise and fully autonomous (self-disciplining?). In that middle age, one's discipline has at last acquired a maturity that stable character exists and one becomes one who acts consistently out of wisdom intentionality and may properly be said to do so. Before that time, one's handle on that wisdom remains too shaky. Even now, one who is wise,

¹See Appendix, Table 41, Part G; cf. Table 16.

acting alone, may err grievously or do what is inappropriate or wrong. The group is some protection against such deviation.

Age brings the final maturity in wisdom. It is the full fruition of an intentionality developed through life's discipline. At that point it becomes one's point of honor and integrity. One may take satisfaction and act confidently with comparatively little fear of self-delusion or hubris. Honor, however, may begin to take the place of action and specific conduct as duties involving regular decision-making pass to others. In other words, it is possible that the old may revel and take honor in their professed wisdom in that they have ever fewer opportunities to use it, and therefore to risk error or misconduct. They have the privilege of being rather than doing.

There is nothing within this literature that enables us to locate the B collection clearly within any of these stages of life. Nevertheless, this analysis allows us to infer some probabilities which are suggestive. One may begin by asking in which life stage such a work could be composed or, alternatively, compiled. In theory, mature age is possible, since then one can function with confident authority. Still, action weighs against reflection. Moreover, the composition or

collection of such material even at that age would seem to border on arrogance or hubris. By what right does one engage in attempting to delineate, codify or organize wisdom material. What entitles one to undertake the poetic act without its becoming merely the expression of what is wise in one's own eyes. Old age, however, is allowed honor. Age, after all, is the harmonious concomitant of righteousness and wisdom. Moreover, the old are allowed their glory and honor in wisdom as no other life stage is. Further, a summing up is psycho. Socially appropriate in age. The preparation of a wisdom composition is the culmination of a disciplined and wise life. It is the verbal and poetic expression of what one has become. It offers a measure of psychological closure. The completion of the work parallels the completion of a wise and aesthetically sound life. Intentional aesthesis finds counterpart in literary aesthesis. Further, the failure of the old to record their experience threatens the loss of some of the wisdom collective. Certainly, wisdom is not a saying or collection of sayings. But, the aesthetic of wisdom is pointed to and symbolized by the composition. Some measure of retention and endurance is assured. Otherwise, the group is impoverished by the loss of its old. Clearly, the group believes that wisdom is transmissible. Indeed, it must be transmitted.

Poetic preservation is an appropriate and fitting part of that process. It is the more when it comes from the appropriate members of the community, among a group for whom the notion of fittingness or propriety is quite fundamental. Further, the group values eloquent speech. Speech is an important means of maintaining autonomy and manipulating the life-world. Among the old, such eloquence ought to have come to its fruition. The notion of cumulation points strongly to age as the life stage for mashal composition. It is the symbolic rite of a stage of life.

The notion of symbolic rite also offers a possible application for the literature. Stages of life in any society mandate a rite of passage between each pair of stages. All societies rehearse the formal and informal social transitions of their members. If these were so regarded and recognized stages of life, then rites of passage of some sort had to exist, at least for members of the group and their families. An exhortation of some sort, based in the mashal form, is an appropriate means of recognizing certain passages, perhaps best that from youth to young adulthood. When a youth has irrevocably committed himself to the wisdom discipline and has so demonstrated aptitude and proficiency that the attainment of wisdom in full adulthood may be anticipated, then it

is time to recognize the passage from 'postulant' to 'member.' One has become a member of the group and has committed oneself to it. The sayings would make a certain sense in the context of recognizing this membership and one's adult capacity to decide not subject to the strict and searching discipline laid by elders upon the callow youth. One becomes responsible for one's own conduct in accord to that intentionality to which one has committed himself. In this, the old become sponsors of the young. They symbolically, rather than literally, instruct eloquently those who are entering the group, ultimately to take their place. Those most advanced in wisdom communicate their aesthesis to those least advanced. There is a symbolic recognition that the preservation and transmission of wisdom rests increasingly with those who have sought out wisdom and become members of such a circle. The communication of the mashal makes far less sense to either callow youth or mature adult: one cannot yet make use of the exhortation and the other really does not require it. The young adult adherent also most needs ideological affirmation and confirmation. Such exhortation is far more symbolic than literal; it is affirming, and in a language deemed valuable and powerful by virtue of the commitment since made (cognitive dissonance?). If the communication of sayings, not to

mention their composition, formed part of some rite of passage, then the circle of the wise would have been even more tightly-knit and -organized a group than we have thus far argued. The existence of a theory of life-stages does fit appropriately with such a passage rite. The aged wise sponsor the committed young. They symbolically recognize their adulthood and thereby take leave of them.

Life and death are important dimensions in the sayings of the B collection, but the actual use of these terms does not display a discernible pattern beyond the obvious association with the antithesis between righteousness and wisdom versus folly and wickedness.¹ In a way, the terms seem rhetorical; they are ambiguous and vague in their context. They seem to be used symbolically more than literally. The *Rephaim* are once mentioned.² Death is associated with a messenger twice,³ perhaps consonant with Yahweh's role in grounding intentionality. The use of life and death language suggests that the course of a person's life, and its length, are of great significance in these sayings. That emphasis fits in with our

¹See Appendix, Tables 64 and 65.

²21:16.

³16:14; 17:11.

contention that the primary frame of reference is the individual human life: that is what is at stake in these sayings for their author(s) and audience. If intentionality properly developed is an intrinsic good, then it is not hard to infer that death is a fundamental evil. It represents the termination of any possibility of realizing that good. Moreover, if wisdom be cumulative, collective, and developmental (i.e., part of the human process of growth), then premature death denies one the opportunity to achieve mature wisdom. Wisdom in its fullest, in its aesthetic wholeness, comes only with the maturity of age. Thus, old age is required for closure, especially if *mashal*-composition is an old man's activity as part of that culmination.

History

Finally, we come to the question of history beyond the individual. What we can infer here differs little conceptually from what we have already said. One or two concepts, however, should be stressed. First, the material suggests that time is continuous rather than discontinuous. That means that each moment of time follows coherently and consistently, though not necessarily predictively, from the moment before. There are no drastic, erratic or random changes in the course of history. The past is applicable to the present; the present

has an intelligible relationship to the future. The consistency of change follows a pattern (of the second degree). What this means is that there are no points in history when sudden breaches occur which disrupt the connection of moment to moment. There is no point where what follows bears no readily discernible relationship to what preceded. There is no apparent dualism or polymorphism of time. Time is one continuous and uninterrupted process of development, growth and change.

This conception of time places this literature at some remove from those works which postulate drastic discontinuities in time. The wise have not had experience that causes them thus to distrust history or to place its meaning and unveiling outside the "natural" process. It is difficult to see how this material could readily be the precursor of literatures which postulate historical dualism. This view poses a basic difficulty for the von Rad hypothesis. The traditional affinity between law and wisdom is based on their compatible spatio-temporal realities: based in demesnes, displaying proprieties, this-worldly and temporally continuous. Prophecy coheres with apocalyptic on the grounds of the same kind of compatibility: here a dualistic approach to history that is radically discontinuous in a world without demesnes or proprieties in which ethical activity/sensitivity is

leveled by a radical divalent ethical and temporal system. The divalence of wisdom, we have argued, is largely specious; the doctrine is far more complex and multivalent, but temporally continuous.

The other features of historical temporality amount to a repetition of our earlier list: stable, reliable, evolutionary, coherent and consistent, arena of meaning, fluid, open, field of change, non-symbolic, intelligible through aesthesis and as aesthesis, individualistic, a field of authority and power according to the proprieties, subject to the harmonizing aesthesis of Yahweh as ground. The ultimate values of this material, however, are individual rather than supra-individual, so we look in vain for discussions of history qua history. At best, we perceive the longer term by inference: that history is the field within which these people may cumulate, rehearse, celebrate and transmit their interpretation through a literature which symbolizes poetically a quality of being they intrinsically value. In that they become a group and acquire identity, that wisdom grows out of common search and common life. Perhaps this literature is a reflection of the ritual forms and sharing that bound that life and group together.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The themes of atomism and evolutionary development recur in the scholarly interpretation of the Hebrew Bible's proverb literature. The sayings are terse, emblematic and often abstract. Their literary structure derives from formal rather than substantive coherence. Thus, the works may appear to be collections of sayings brought together from a wide variety of social, cultural, and theological milieux to serve their present, presumably didactic, purpose. Within or between these collections, one can discern the lineaments of the historical processes whereby the literature evolved. Elements of large-scale social processes already appear, perhaps in miniature. With their implicit hermeneutics and historiographies, such theories cut to the heart of the phenomenon of wisdom. The proverb literature is pivotal, both historically and form-critically, since it seems to derive from settings which, and to present what, one must call 'wisdom' if the term is to have any viable analytic application.

Examination of the definitions which predominate

in wisdom research makes clear the multi-vocality of 'wisdom,' raising the question whether any historical phenomenon as such lies behind it. The attempt to develop a wisdom typology derived from the text makes clear that wisdom is not a single historical entity.

If 'wisdom' is not to be either vacuous or ostensive and therefore derivative, then some minimum criterion for its application must be developed. This criterion is sociological: some identifiable social group must stand behind the literature. Theses concerning wisdom influence or development become theses concerning the relationships and continuity of that group with others within that socio-historical milieu.

Certain projective approaches derived from systematic, methodologically-rigorous Phenomenology elicit a coherent world-view from one accepted body of proverb material. Delineation of this *Weltanschauung* helps clarify the setting within which this literature developed and was preserved. The result argues for compositional rather than redactoral unity in this proverb work; it imposes distinct limitations on viable evolutionary theories.

The work examined, Proverbs 15:28-22:16, evidences a hierarchy of "demesnes." Demesnes are spheres of power, influence or autonomy. They are ordered in

terms of intentionalities. Character stratifies demesne: Yahweh, king, aristocrat, wise, righteous, ignorant, foolish, wicked. Passion or pride, violating the boundaries of demesne, makes one vulnerable to the contagious effects of other demesnes; one loses autonomy. Such structures are both spatial and temporal. Wisdom is the character acquired through a discipline begun early in life. Demesne is not absolute. Wisdom's discipline is an intrinsic good which supercedes other values, even autonomy.

Such a world-view demands a cohesive social group which preserves and transmits the discipline, shares the potentiation of collective wisdom, reduces vulnerability, and produces and preserves an ideological literature. Though they have authority, the wise are subordinate to other powers and demesnes, especially Yahweh's. Wisdom has a theological orientation which clarifies the religious self-understanding of this group and explains the authority of their wisdom.

Sociological-structural analysis thus validated offers further prospect for clarifying and evaluating theories concerning the origins, nature and development of wisdom and related groups. The methodology has potential value in interpreting any social group whose world-view is coherently expressed in literary form.

TABLE 1
TERMS FOR "WISDOM," "UNDERSTANDING,"
"KNOWLEDGE"

<i>ḥkmh</i>	wisdom; often used with <i>lb</i> , insight
<i>byn</i>	comprehend (distinguish), understand (action)
<i>nbwn</i>	insightful, understanding, apt
<i>bynh</i>	understanding
<i>tbwnh</i>	understanding
<i>d^ct</i>	knowledge, insight, understanding
<i>*yd^c</i>	knowledge, experience (i.e., ability), experienced, adroitness, aptness
<i>t^cm</i>	understanding, comprehending
<i>mzmh</i>	plan, thought., lucidity
<i>mwsr</i>	discipline, instruction., " <i>paideia</i> "
<i>^csh</i>	counsel, advice .
<i>y^cš</i>	advise, counsel .
<i>twšyh</i>	effective wisdom, success
<i>*škl</i>	insight, comprehension, think, ponder

Also:

<i>šdq</i>	right, righteous, in harmony with order (<i>maat</i> ?) .
<i>^crmh</i>	craftiness, prudence

Perhaps: *yšr*, *ḥsd*, *kbwd*, *twb*, *šr*

TABLE 2
TERMS RELATING TO FOLLY OR IGNORANCE

<i>'wyl</i>	foolish, stupid
<i>'wly</i>	useless, worthless
<i>'wlt</i>	stupidity, impious stupidity
<i>ksyl</i>	foolish, stupid (practical matters), shameless (religion)
<i>lš</i>	scorner, gossip
<i>nbl</i>	worthless, foolish, uncomprehending
<i>nblh</i>	folly, blasphemy
<i>*skl</i>	foolish action
<i>*pth</i>	inexperienced, misguided
<i>pty</i>	young and inexperienced, easily misled, ignorant
<i>b^cr</i>	dull, brutish, stupid
<i>hll</i>	boastful
<i>hllh, hllt</i>	madness

Also: *k^cs*, *pšh*, *ˆwn*, *šmh*, **ḥt'*

TABLE 3
ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL WISDOM TERMS

tkḥt

ysr

m^cgl

drk

'rḥ

ntbh

ḥsd

hn

mṣwh

^cqš

nptl

^cwt

ḥt'

SOURCE: Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Book of Proverbs*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 16 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), pp. xxiv-xxv.

TABLE 4

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL WISDOM TERMS PECULIAR
TO PROVERBS 10 ff

<i>mqwr hyym</i>	fountain of life
<i>mḥth</i>	destruction
<i>bn mbyš</i>	son who causes shame
<i>slf</i>	perverseness, subvert ruin
<i>yd lyd</i>	hand to hand [surely--BDB]
<i>'k lmḥswr</i>	only to want
<i>mpry py 'yš</i>	from the fruit of a man's mouth
<i>htgl^c</i>	show the teeth, rail, quarrel
<i>tw^cbt-yhwh</i>	abomination of Yahweh
<i>yš</i>	formula for introducing a proverb
<i>thbwlwt</i>	wise guidance, steersmanship
<i>eš hyym</i>	tree of life
<i>l' ynqh</i>	shall not go unpunished
<i>mrp'</i>	healing (with various applications)
<i>ypyḥ kzbym</i>	breathes forth lies
<i>ypḥ 'mwnh</i>	breathes forth faithfulness
<i>mrđp</i>	pursuer of . . .
<i>hpyq ršwn</i>	draw favor from Yahweh
<i>myhwh</i>	
<i>ygrh mdwn</i>	stir up strife
<i>nrgn</i>	whisperer, tail-bearer
<i>r'š, rš</i>	poverty
<i>bny</i>	my son

Also:

twšyh, lqh 'mrym, "void of heart," "sluggard "
m^cglwt, thpwt

SOURCE: S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Meridian Books (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956), pp. 403-4.

TABLE 5

THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF WISDOM
(ADAPTED FROM FOHRER'S ANALYSIS)

A. Sorcery, witchcraft, knowledge of sacred powers. This sense is closely parallel to the predominate Mesopotamian usage. "*Hkm* ist eine Bezeichnung desjenigen, der um die Hintergründe des Weltgeschehens und die künftigen Ereignisse zu wissen vorgibt,"^a including not only priests and oracle-sayers but animals. The wise are those who understand the times; thus, there is a connection with astralism.

B. Aptitude, ability, experience, adroitness. Here we understand by 'wise' the skill of the artisan at his craft as well as the administrative capacity of the ruler or official whatever his rank:

C. Cleverness, craft, cunning. The word is applied to the wiles of animals, so "dass *hkm* ein nicht von Moral bestimmtes Klug- und Kundigsein ausdrücken kann, das man braucht, um im Leben bestehen zu können."^b In Job, such cunning takes on a distinctly negative hue.

D. "*Lebensklunheit*," worldly wisdom, practical understanding. Wisdom is "die Kunst, das Leben in jeder Beziehung und in allen Lagen meisterlich zu führen."^c It is steersmanship (*tahbûlôt*), which may include the understanding that Yahweh directs the world, knows everything that occurs in the world, and distinguishes good and evil.

E. Learning, knowledge. To this sense of 'wisdom' belong the onomastica, the lists of plants, creatures, deities, and other entities which were common to Egypt and Mesopotamia and are suggested in I Kings 4:33 with reference to Solomon.

He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.

Here, the observer is attempted to define and objectify the world as it appears to him, to give it an intelligible order so that he may master it.

TABLE 5--Continued

F. Right conduct, rules of conduct, admonitions of behavior. Just as the torah is administered by the priest, and the prophet mediates the divine word, so the wise gives counsel. The speeches of the wise about behavior are flowing fountains not deep cisterns--the wise are not merely accurate authorities on right conduct, but their ideas and counsels are artfully arranged to be of use and beauty.

G. Ethical behavior, moral determination. The outcome of right rules of conduct is ethical behavior, which is governed by understanding. Indeed, it requires understanding to know enough to seek such rules in order to attain to ethical action.

H. Piety, right religious behavior. Ethical behavior is often tinged with religious implications; moral maxims, by religious thoughts. Wisdom is often equated with the fear of Yahweh, in the sense that theologically-determined wisdom will lead one to an understanding of and respect for Yahweh. By 'understanding' we do not suggest "pious aptitude."

Immer bezeichnet der in der Weisheitslehre beliebte Ausdruck Jahwe- oder Gottesfurcht das fromme Verhalten. Er meint nicht die Angst vor Gott, sondern die religiöse Verehrung, wie sie sie jedem Gott von seinen Verehrern entgegengebracht wird. Sie äussert sich nicht im Kultus, der in diesem Zusammenhang nur eine ganz geringe Rolle spielt, sondern ist praktische Religion im täglichen Tun and Lassen, d.h. im rechten ethischen Verhalten.^d

I. Academic wisdom teachings. This sense applies to the general understanding of the world developed in later wisdom. It formed a complete unity of teaching that was theologically finished.

J. Eschatological reward or treasure, apocalyptic gift. As gift, wisdom is the more-than-human wisdom to uncover the secrets of the future. As "grace," wisdom is bestowed by the Spirit of God upon the ruler of the end time. There, it amounts to insight, counsel, knowledge, fear of Yahweh, and power, all of which exceed in strength and extent any human skill.

TABLE 5--Continued

K. Possession of Yahweh, creation of Yahweh.

Finally, wisdom represents the sagacity of Yahweh which encompasses all his divine secrets, his retributive justice, his knowledge of the future, and his basic determination of good and evil conduct and their codification. In this meaning, wisdom represents a comparatively late borrowing from similar Canaanite, Mesopotamian and Egyptian notions. We also have the almost mythic characterisation of wisdom from Job 28. Yahweh searched out and won Wisdom, then used her to order and govern creation. Wisdom here is less personal and hypostatic than simply objective. It/she is divine, pre-existent, and an independent potency that only gradually becomes located in Yahweh's divinity. In any case, this kind of wisdom includes the secrets of creation and the immensity of creative knowledge.

SOURCE: Adapted from Georg Fohrer, "Die Weisheit im Alten Testament," in *Studien zur Attestamentlichen Theologie und Geschichte* (1949-1966), Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 115 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Company, 1969), pp. 243-74.

NOTE: Interestingly, while the Egyptian *ma'at* can at least arguably be related to Hebrew 'wisdom' and 'righteousness,' in Akkadian the terms for 'wisdom' convey almost exclusively the sense of cultic or magical knowledge. So, "In dem Text 'Ich will preisen den Herrn der Weisheit' ist der Gott Marduk gemeint, dessen 'Weisheit' darin besteht, dass er der Riten des Exorzismus kundig ist."^e This lack of an equivalent term, however, does not mean any lack of wisdom literature comparable to Hebrew and Egyptian. It is interesting, though, that the two Akkadian termini technici "to comprehend something" and "to learn" (*hakâmu* and *lamâdu*) are both West-Semitic loan words.

^aP. 254.^bP. 255.^cP. 256.^dP. 260.^eP. 245.

TABLE 6
CHARACTERISTICS OF WISDOM, LATE WISDOM AND MYTH
(ADAPTED FROM H. H. SCHMID)

A. Genuine wisdom.

- 1) In-the-world: person acts in terms of the demands and alternatives presented within his everyday life.
- 2) In history: there is only one time--duration--in which one lives wisely. His life is not ordered according to some objectivizing time nor according to "real time" from which the experiential is derived (cf. Jolles). Significant events are individuated as experience.
- 3) In space one lives in van der Leeuw's "extension" from which significant places are individuated as positions (i.e., of experience).
- 4) Duration and extension exist with respect to and for the acting individual: cosmos is created in unity with the world through individual, not collective, action.
- 5) Unity postulate: the world of life (-experience) and the cosmos (beyond experience) are one.
- 6) The same structure, order, fully interpenetrates world and cosmos.
- 7) "Man is the measure of all things"--the ethical value of an act (vis-a-vis the world order) is solely a function of its propriety in terms of that situation, that moment of time and that particular position in space. There is no ethical judgment apart from individual experience.
- 8) There is no sacred realm that exists in opposition to the space or time (or word) of this world.
[Perhaps one may regard the situation of right action as somehow sacred in Schmid's system, the word being sacred only with respect to that event.]
- 9) The wise man lives in the continuous present (not in Jolles' past). Wisdom is only viable for that present.
- 10) Wisdom is contingent on experience. Wisdom deals with an instant as experience, in terms of its particularity (parallel to Jones).
- 11) Change through time is continuous but not predictable. Therefore, knowledge can be transmitted but must be re-tested in every new context.

TABLE 6—*Continued*A. Genuine wisdom--*Continued*

- 12) Wisdom creates structure. Cosmogony is continuous and co-extensive with right action in the world. Cosmic structure is a function of human behavior in concrete situations.
- 13) Deed and consequence are perceived as a unity--the outcome is an integral part of the act. Any displacement between the two in space or time is immaterial to their synthesis.
- 14) Correlative with the unity of experience is a tendency to perceive the divine in "monotheistic" terms, i.e., as a functional unity which validates, justifies and upholds the ethical stability of the act-consequence synthesis.
- 15) Distillation of experience into maxims of wisdom is limited by social convention to certain individuals (*Sippenweisheit*, patriarchalism) or a class of individuals, on whose authority this contingent wisdom is transmitted. Descriptively speaking, wisdom sayings tend to center on the significant experiences in the lives of these people.
- 16) Wisdom validation out-selects transient phenomena.

B. Formalized ("late" or "systematic") wisdom.

- 1) Objectivized: a person acts in terms of the structured pattern of behavior and its descriptions of reality set out within an authoritative system (strictly speaking, an authoritative set of instructional sayings and discourses).
- 2) Systematic time is static--duree is immaterial to the system's validity or function and the system stands outside temporal categories, with respect to experience.
- 3) Systematic space stands outside extension which is equally immaterial. Experiential position is not relevant to the theory.
- 4) Time and space are perceived in terms of the system objectively. The theory rejects a relativism of space and time which emphasizes the individual, his experience, and appropriateness. Rather, situational duration and extension vary unpredictably and inconsistently from the objective norm, but the pattern of these deviations appears in the formalized space and time of the system.

TABLE 6—*Continued*B. Formalized ("late" or "systematic") wisdom--*Continued*

- 4) Time and space are perceived in terms of the system objectively--*Continued*
Therefore, the wise person norms all his experience to the system in the expectation that variations will cancel themselves out. This forming involves an act of faith.
- 5) The pattern of the cosmos cannot be adequately discerned by the mind of man. One can know authoritatively only enough to get along reasonably well in life. The divine remains distant; it is Wholly Other, whose purposes can at best be matters of belief where they are intelligible or discernible at all. In principle, the aims of the divine may be at variance with human well-being--at least they may seem to be.
- 6) Wisdom tends to personify and anthropologize in compensation for the implicit alienation from the cosmos and the unpredictability of experience. Man becomes man's center, restoring epistemic unity. Somehow, depending on the culture, the cosmos is mediated to man in a personal way.
- 7) The world's structure is not adequately and entirely discernible to man--hence, not intelligible. Wisdom, as theory, conforms this structure to objective criteria which are intelligible. The structure of the world continues subordinate to the cosmos and the divine, but the cosmos stands above and at some remove from the world. Late wisdom, as a result, essentially drops the unity hypothesis.
- 8) The system is the measure of all things; man constitutes the fundamental unifying center which validates the structure of theory.
- 9) The "school"—including in this term all formal and approved occasions for the systematic communication of wisdom--functions as a (quasi-) sacred position, or sanctuary. The school has its sacred word with power (whose order and form is fixed without regard for meaning (cf. Jolles on the maxim), its degrees, its rites. While the calendar of the school, the paternal-maturational structure of its time, are fixed, they seem not to have been so encompassing as to constitute truly sacred

TABLE 6—*Continued*B. Formalized ("late" or "systematic") wisdom—*Continued*9) The "school"—*Continued*

time. [Here we have to make considerable inference from Schnid's comparison between myth and genuine wisdom: a sacred calender would seem to recapitulate life far more than does the "school."]

- 10) Wisdom's authority derives from the past, an increasingly remote past of great wise men. Its faith in the proleptic justification of the system means a reliance on future vindication for what is undertaken in the present. The unintelligible contingency of the present stands in stark relief to the certitude of the past and hope for the future. The time to come, in other words, structures and explains and justifies the present world of action, events.
- 11) Wisdom is absolute.
- 12) Change is discontinuous. Wisdom stands above change, though there is a strong element of belief in its anticipation that cosmic structures beyond its ken will work to validate it.
- 13) Formal wisdom perceives patterns of action; disposition, not some particular deed, is ethically significant. The realm of wisdom differs from the realm (space) of non-wisdom; no act can bridge the gap. Positions relate to disposition, patterns of action.
- 14) Deed and consequence are displaced. In a single event, there is no guarantee of synthesis. Consequences (in the future) are believed to compensate for imbalances in the present, when interpreted in terms of patterns.
- 15) Wisdom persists through a stable authoritarian system of oral communication, rote learning, and learned formal interpretive schemes.
- 16) The tone of formal wisdom is ambiguous, because of the contingency of experience, and pessimistic, because of the alienation from everyday experience (objectification) and orientation to times other than the present. The pessimism is latent, in the form of a crisis potential between historical and a-historical wisdom. Overtly, the pessimism appears of a kind of distance (almost proto-stoic) in which one avoids unnecessarily exposing himself to the unpredictable vagaries of nature and power.

TABLE 6—*Continued*

C. Myth

- 1) Apart from the world: a person acts ritual in a formalized and world-excluding setting which may recapitulate fundamental and essential cycles or experiences in life but in a guise that established a separate and distinct reality.
- 2) Outside of history: mythic structure (mythos) does not define a present, past and future. All time, and therefore in a sense no time, is encompassed. The a-temporality of myth often appears in terms of an indefinite future (end-time) or past, but its continuity with the present is not that of history. It is synchronic; there is sacred time.
- 3) Sacred space also exists to delimit the sphere of holy power. Positions acquire mythic significance in reference to groups: family, community, sect, tribe. Gradations of space protect and define types or degrees of power. Different functions demand different space.
- 4) Sacred ritual encompasses. It celebrates unities, not distinctions. It recapitulates. On the other hand, some kind of negation is implicit in space and time distinctions which keep the sacred from the profane or the expressly contaminating. [We submit that three categories at least are needed; beyond sacred and profane there is the demonic/wicked/contaminating.] Rite and sanctuary are superior to the individual devotee.
- 5) Mediation Postulate: ritual brings together the cosmic and world of ordinary experience. The cult typifies so that separate events acquire reality in terms of sacred mythos. Supernatural reality impinges on phenomenal reality through and in terms of cultic mythos.
- 6) The structure of mythos is received from cosmic structure. Myth defines, therefore, a hierarchy of reality. One cannot speak of interpenetration since the devotee is drawn by the cult toward the original cosmic reality from which cult and world structure derive at increasing remove. Cosmic structure is primordial.

TABLE 6—*Continued*C. Myth—*Continued*

- 7) Cosmic structure (not necessarily order in the way that genuine wisdom creates cosmic order) is the measure of all things. Ritual and magic bring it to bear in intelligible form upon events to reveal their structure. Hence, they manipulate the cosmic, within definite constraints, in the service of the present.
- 8) There is a primordial sacred realm outside duration and extension.
- 9) The devotee, when in the sacred precincts and in the presence of or participating in ritual, lives outside time. Past and future are only metaphors for this is a-temporality of mythos.
- 10) Mythos is not contingent, but absolute because founded on a prior (ontologically, if we may say) reality.
- 11) Within mythos there is no change. Mythos defines a static, predictable cycle of events that recapitulate fundamental types of experiences. Its standard "time" is therefore cyclical. Since it points to the same cycles in the life-world, change there must be immaterial. Deep structures of the world do not change; the eternal cycles recur however appearances may differ.
- 12) Cycles suggest synthesis, that there is some kind of deed-consequence retribution, but the power which stands behind and above the deed (or, less likely, disposition) is prior to the deed itself. Right action rests upon external criteria not entirely consistent with retribution in the strictest sense. [Here again, we have had to go rather far in our inferences to complete a sometimes sketchy paradigm.]
- 13) Synthesis appears, but includes a prior element of the power of structure from which the derivative reality of experience acquires its structure.
- 14) Mythos tends to cosmologies which rehearse cosmic structures excluding (i.e., vanquishing) chaos. The tendency to cosmologize places mythos in primordial times, increasing the alienation between cosmos (in cult) and experience.
- 15) Mythos is authoritative, ritualized in word and deed, restricted in space and time, a collective rather than individual product. [Mythos is

TABLE 6—*Continued*C. Myth—*Continued*

- 15) Mythos is authoritative . . . —*Continued*
received from tradition (by the ritualizers); it is not written nor revised by any determinable individual.] It therefore centers on the recurring collective experiences of some relevant group.
- 16) Mythos deals in terms of the Wholly Other whose power must be duly protected and confined.
- 17) While genuine wisdom expressly affirms life in a certain sense, so does mythos in terms of the cyclical, basic, collective and cosmic. The tone of both is affirmative-optimistic. Wisdom is dynamic, while cult and mythos are static.

SOURCE: Adapted from Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit: eine Untersuchung zur Altorientalischen und Israelitischen Weisheitsliteratur*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 101 (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1966).

TABLE 7
ANTITHESIS

15:29, 32

16:1, 2, 9, 22, 21, 33

17:9, 22, 24

18:2, 12, 14, 19, 23, 24

19:4, 12, 21

20:3, 5, 6, 14, 15, 17, 29

21:5, 8, 15, 20, 26, 28, 29, 31

22:3, 15

TABLE 8
SAYINGS DEALING WITH YAHWEH

A. Yahweh disposes

16:1, 4, 7, 9, 33
19:21
20:24
21:1, 2, 30 (!), 31
22:5, 12

B. Mystery

16:(25?), 33
19:21
20:24, 25, 27
21:2, 30
Cf.: 18:17

C. Yahweh's standards

16:2, 4(?)
17:3
19:21
20:22, 25 (?)
21:1, 2, 30
22:5, 12, 14, 16 (JB)

D. Trust in Yahweh's power

16:3, 20
18:10
20:22
21:1, 31
22:4 (?), 12, 16 (JB)

TABLE 8—*Continued*

E. Simple retribution: direct harmony

16:4, 5, 7

17:5, 15

19:3, 17, 23

21:12(?)

22:4, 5, 12(?), 14(?), 16

Cf.: 15:29

F. Atonement

16:6

(20:9)

(21:18)

G. Guarantor of justice

16:4, 5, 6, 7, 11

18:10

20:10, 12, 20(?), 22, 23

21:12(?)

22:4, 12, 16

Cf.: 18:18

H. "Weighs hearts"

16:2

17:3

(20:27)

21:2

I. Yahweh as maker

17:5

22:2

TABLE 8—*Continued*

J. Yahweh's name

18:10

K. Wife as Yahweh's favor

18:22

19:14

Cf.: 22:14

L. Yahweh as origin of insight

20:12, 27

Cf.: 20:30

M. Cult/Sacrifice

15:29

19:16

20:25

21:3, 18(?), 27

TABLE 9

ARCHITECTURE OF PROVERBS 15:29-22:16

15:28-16:9 Thematic Statement

15:28 parallel 22:12

15:29 parallel 22:11(?)

15:30 parallel 22:9 ("eye")

15:33 parallel 22:4 (*yr't-yhwh*)

16:1-7 parallel 21:30-1; 22:1-4

15:28-9 wicked

31-3 instruction

16:1-9 Yahweh sayings

10-5 royal sayings (*mlk*)

18-9 pride and humility

20-30 speech or words

26-32 attitude types

16:32-17:3 wisdom standards

4-5 evildoers

6-16 proprieties

17-8 friend

19-25 attitude or character

27-8 speech

18:2-3 character (wisdom standard)

4 wisdom

6-8 fool's speech

10-1 security

12-4 attitude

16-8 pragmatic judgments

TABLE 9—*Continued*18:2-3 character--*Continued*

(19 parallel to verses 10-1?)

20-3 speech

19:3-4 observations

5-9 false witness

6-7 friend

11-2 anger/wrath

13-4 fathers

213 thematic recapitulation

Cadence

19:29-20:3 passion

5-11 Character or attitude

20 parallel 27 lamp

20-1 filial relations parallel 29

20:22-21:3 Yahweh and king sayings

Cadence

4-12 wicked versus righteous

16-29 intentionalities

21:30-22:4 Yahweh (wisdom standard)

Cadence

7-11 intentionalities or character

12 thematic summary

Cadence

12-16 additions?

TABLE 10
ROYAL SAYINGS

16:10, 12, 13, 14, 15

17:7(?)

19:10(?), 12

20:2, 8, 26, 28

21:1

22:11

Cf.: 18:18

TABLE 11
TWB-MN SAYINGS

16:8, 16(?), 19, 32(?)

17:1, (10?), 12

19:1, 22(?)

21:9, 19

22:1(?)

TABLE 12
ṭWB-SAYINGS
 (WORD "*ṭWB*" APPEARS, IRRESPECTIVE OF FORM)

15:30
 16:8, 16, 19Q, 20, 29, 32
 17:1, 13, 20, 26
 18:5, 22
 19:1, 2, 8, 22
 20:23
 21:9, 19
 22:1, 9

TABLE 13
 ADMONITION OR VETITIVE

19:18, 27
 20:16, 18, 19(?), 22
 Jussive: 17:12
 Motivated Form: 16:3
 19:19, 20
 20:13
 22:10(?)

TABLE 14
PROPRIETY SAYINGS

16:4, 25, 26(?)
 17:7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 26
 18:5, 17, 23, 24(?)
 19:1, 4, 7, 10(!)
 20:20
 22:7
 Cf.: 19:14, 26 .
 But: 17:2
 22:2

TABLE 15
WISDOM TERMS

A. **hkm*

15:31, 33
16:14, 16, 21, 23
17:16, 24, 28
18:4, 15
19:20
20:1, 26
21:11, 20, 22, 30

B. *byn*

16:16
17:10, 24
19:25
20:24
21:29

C. *d^ct*

17:27
18:15
19:2, 25, 27
20:15
21:11
22:12

D. *tbwnh*

17:27K
18:2
19:8

TABLE 15—*Continued*D. *tbwnh*—*Continued*

20:5
21:30

E. *nbwn*

16:21
17:28
18:15
19:25

F. *^csh*

19:20, 21
20:5, 18
21:30

G. *mwsr*

15:32, 33
16:22
19:20, 27
22:15

H. *^crwm*

19:25
22:3

I. *tḥblwt*

20:18

J. *śkl*

16:21, 22, 23
17:2, 8

TABLE 15—Continued

J. *śkl*—Continued

19:11, 14

21:11, 12, 16

K. *tm*

19:1

20:7

L. *twšyh*

18:1

M. *ysr*

19:18

N. *mškyt*

18:11

O. *ykh*

15:31, 32

19:25

P. *'mwnh*

20:6

Q. *thwr*

20:9

22:11

TABLE 16
ELEMENTS OF WISDOM

Cf.: 20:9

A. Comparison to gold or silver

16:16

17:3

20:15

22:1

B. Power

21:22

C. Heart

16:21

17:22

18:15

19:8(!)

22:11

D. Fountain

16:22

17:14

18:4

20:5

21:1

E. Speech

15:30(?)

16:23

18:20, 21

TABLE 16—*Continued*

F. Bribery

17:8

18:16

19:6

21:14

G. Forgiveness

17:9

19:11

But: 19:19

H. Silence

17:27, 28(!)

21:23

I. Humility

15:33

18:12(?)

J. Prosperity

19:8

21:26

K. Slow to anger

19:11

L. Without vengeance

20:22

M. Reputation

22:1

TABLE 16--*Continued*

N. Dew/grass
19:12
Cf.: 20:4

O. Insight
18:4
20:5, 27

P. Plans
20:18
21:16(?)
22:3

Q. Loyalty
20:28

R. Action
21:3

S. Diligence
21:5, 21, 29

TABLE 17
LB SAYINGS

15:30, 32
16:1, 5, 9, 21, 23
17:3, 16, 18, 20, 22
18:2, 12, 15
19:3, 8, 21
20:5, 9
21:1, 2, 4
22:11Q, 15

TABLE 18
IGNORANCE

15:31, 32
16:20 (?)
18:13
19:2, 7, 20, 25, 27
21:11
22:6, 14

Cf.: 17:16, 28
20:5, 24
21:2

TABLE 19
FOLLY

16:22
17:7, 10, 12, 16, 21, 24, 28
18:2, 6, 7, 13
19:1, 3, 10, 13, 29
20:1(?), 3, 19
21:11, 20
22:5, 14

TABLE 20
DISCIPLINE

15:31, 32, 33
16:22
17:10
18:6
19:11, 18, 20, 25, 27
22:6, 15

TABLE 21
'INSTRUCTION' SAYINGS: *MWSR*

15:32, 33
16:22
19:20, 27
22:15

TABLE 22
SPEECH

15:28
16:13, 21, 23, 24, 27(!)
17:4, 7, 20, 27(!), 28
18:2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 13, 20, 21
19:1, 7, 16(?)
20:15, 19
21:23
22:11

TABLE 23
 IRONY

16:26, 30
 17:2, 8, 10, 16, 24, 28
 18:17, 23
 19:13, 24
 20:14, 28
 21:3, 13, 17, 25
 22:13

Cf.: 19:27 (JB)
 20:11, 17

TABLE 24
 FRIEND/NEIGHBOR SAYINGS

16:29
 17:9, 17, 18
 18:24
 19:4, 6, 7
 20:6
 21:10
 22:11(!)

Cf.: 20:16, 19

TABLE 25
LAW COURTS

17:15, 26

18:5, 17

19:5, 9, 28, 29

21:15, 28

TABLE 26
ELEMENTS OF EVIL AND FOLLY

A. Arrogance or pride

16:5, 18

17:19

18:12

20:6, 9

21:4, 24

B. Errant kings

16:12

C. King's Wrath

16:14

19:12

20:2, 8, 26

D. Plotting/Scheming

15:28

16:27, 30

17:11, 20

18:3

E. Speech

15:28

16:27

17:4, 7, 20

18:21

19:1, 28

Cf.: 20:19

TABLE 26—Continued

F. Strife

16:28

17:14, 19

20:3

22:10

G. Gossip or Rumor

16:28

17:9

18:8

20:19

H. Violence

16:29

21:7

I. Mocking poor

17:5

J. Rejoicing at calamity

17:5

K. Evil returned for good

17:13, 15

L. Pledge, surety

17:18

20:16

Cf.: 19:17

22:7

TABLE 26—Continued

M. Attitude

17:22

18:1

21:7

N. Bribery

17:23

O. Laziness, sloth

18:9

19:15, 24

20:4, 13

21:25

P. Impetuosity

18:13

19:2

20:21

21:5

Q. Quarreling

18:19

20:3

R. Lies, perjury

19:5, 9, 22, 28

20:17

21:6

TABLE 26—*Continued*

S. Despise word
19:15, 25, 29
21:24
22:10
T. Unfilial
19:26
U. Vows
20:25
V. Wine
20:1
W. Mercilessness
22:10

TABLE 27
SIMPLE RETRIBUTION: WITHOUT YAHWEH'S AGENCY

16:17, 31
 17:11, 13
 18:5, 7, 20(?), 21
 19:5, 8, 15, 16(!), 19
 20:7(?), 13, 16, 18(?), 21, 30(?)
 21:5, 7, 8, 11, 12(!), 13, 15, 20, 21, 28, 29(?)
 22:2, 4, 5, 8, 10(?)

Cf.: 15:29(?!)
 21:17
 22:7

TABLE 28
GULF BETWEEN WISDOM AND FOLLY

15:32
 16:22(?)
 17:7(?), 10, 16, 21(?), 24
 18:2, 19(?)
 19:2, 10, 22
 21:11, 15, 18, 20, 22, 26, 27(!), 29
 22:3, 5

But: 17:28
 22:2

TABLE 29
ADVERSITY SAYINGS

15:33(?)
16:8, 19
17:1, 17
18:1(?)
19:1
21:9, 19

TABLE 30
ALTRUISM

17:5
19:6, 17
21:13, 26
22:9, 16(?)

Cf.: 18:23
21:5, 20

TABLE 31
NOBLESSE OBLIGE

16:11, 19
17:5
19:17
21:13(?), 26
22:9, 16

NOTE: Sayings involving "Weights-Measures-Scales," "Altruism;" and "Law Courts" (viz. testimony) may be given this interpretation (Tables, 51, 30, and 25).

TABLE 32
WEALTH

18:11, 16(?), 23
19:4, 6, 10, 14
20:14
21:6, 20, 26
22:1, 2, 4, 7, 16

TABLE 33
THE POWERFUL

18:16, 18
21:22, 24

TABLE 34
POVERTY

16:19
17:5
18:23
19:1, 4, 7, 17, 22
20:13
21:13, 17, 19, 26
22:2, 7, 9

TABLE 35
HSD SAYINGS

16 :6
19:22
20:6, 8
21:21

TABLE 36
WISDOM STANDARD OF VALUES: IMPLIED
“HIGHER STANDARD”

15:33
16:25, 32
17:2
20:9(!), 14, 24
21:16(?)
22:16

Cf.: 20:29

TABLE 37
STATUS QUO

16:10, 31(?)
17:7, 14(?), 26
18:5
20:8(?), 28
21:3(?), 8, 15

TABLE 38
SLAVE SAYINGS

17:2
19:10
22:7

Cf.: 20:16

TABLE 39
INTENTIONALITY

15:28, 32
16:6, 7, 23, 25, 27, 28
17:9, 10, 11, 16, 22, 24, 26
18:1, 3, 6, 14
19:2, 11, 19, 22, 28
20:5, 7, 9, 11, 14(?), 27(Q)
21:2, 8, 10(1), 15, 17, 25(!), 27(!)
22:11, 12

TABLE 40
MISCELLANEOUS SPECIAL CONCEPTS

- A. Day of trouble 16:4
- B. Messenger 16:14; 17:11
- C. Way of Death 16:25
- D. Commandment (*m_swh*) 19:16
- E. Wine 20:1
- F. Lots 16:33; 18:18
- G. Vocative "My son" 19:27
- H. Foreigners 20:16, 18
- I. Loose woman (*zrwt*) 22:14
- J. *Rephaim* 21:16
- K. Cool spirit (*qr-rwḥ*) 17:27

TABLE 41
FAMILISTIC SAYINGS

A. Father

17:6, 21, 25
19:13, 14, 26
20:20

B. Mother (all with 'b)

17:25
19:26
20:20

C. Wife

18:22
19:13
21:9, 19

D. Son/Child

17:2, 6, 21, 25
19:13, 18, 26, 27
20:7, 11
22:6, 14

E. Grandchild

17:6

F. Brother

17:2, 17
18:9, 19, 24
19:7

TABLE 41—*Continued*

G. The Aged

16:31

17:6

20:29

22:6(?)

H. Vocative "my son"

19:27

TABLE 42
CONTAGION

16:19, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30
 17:2, 4, 8, 9, 12(!), 14(!), 17, 21, 25
 18:9, 22(?)
 19:12, 13, 19(?)
 20:7, 19, 28(?)
 21:10, 11, 18, 22(?)
 22:9, 10, 11, 14

TABLE 43
VULERNABILITY

16:4, 5, 7(!), 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22
 17:5, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22(?)
 18:3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14(?), 16, 19, 21, 23
 19:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8(?), 9, 16, 23
 20:2(!), 3, 8, 16, 23
 21:5(?), 6, 7, 14(?), 16, 18, 22, 23, 26(?), 27
 22:3, 6(?), 7, 14

TABLE 44
'WAY' SAYINGS: *DRK*

16:2, 7, 9, 17, 25, 29, 31
19:3, 16Q
20:24
21:2, 8, 16, 29Q
22:5, 6

TABLE 45
OBSERVATION (FORM)

16:24, 26^a, 30^a(?)
17:12, 14, 17, 28
18:8, 17, 18(?), 23
19:3, 4, 6, 7
20:6, 11, 14^a
21:17
22:7, 13^a

^aBon mot.

TABLE 46
DESCRIPTIONS

16:15, 26
17:12
18:8, 17
19:7, 24
20:4, 11, 14, 28(?), 29(?)
21:8, 15, 17
22:7, 13

TABLE 47
PRAGMATIC SAYINGS

17:8, 9, 14
18:16, 18, 20
19:6, 11, (18?), (19?), 20
20:6, 9, 13, 16, 25
21:14, 22(!)
22:3, 6, 15, 16(?)

TABLE 48
TEACHING

17:16
19:18, 27
22:6, 15

TABLE 49
THE RIGHTEOUS

15:28, 29
16:8, 12, 13, 31
17:15, 26
18:5, 10, (11?)
20:7, 28
21:3, 12, 15, 18(!), 21, 26, 29

TABLE 50
PURPOSE/END OF THE WICKED

16:4, 18, 25
17:11
18:3, 21, 24
19:16
20:20, 21, 22
21:7, 13, 25, 28(?)
22:8, 14

Cf.: 21:18

TABLE 51
WEIGHTS-MEASURES-SCALES

16:11
20:10, 14, 23

TABLE 52
 ‘ABOMINATION’ SAYINGS: *TW^cBH*

16:5, 12
 17:15
 20:10, 23
 21:27

TABLE 53
 NATURALISTIC SAYINGS
 [OR, NEO-NATURALISTIC]

16:24, 26
 18:8, 20, 21
 19:12, 1:3, 15, 24(?)
 20:4, 13, 17, 26
 21:17
 22:8

TABLE 54
ANIMALS

17:12 She-bear
19:12 Lion
20:2 Lion
21:31 Horse
22:13 Lion

TABLE 55
WAR SAYINGS

16:32(?)
18:10, 11, 19
20:18
21:22, 31

TABLE 56
(RHETORICAL) QUESTIONS

17:16
18:14
20:6, 9, 24

TABLE 57
ATTITUDE

15:30, 33
16:2, 6, 7, 26-32
17:5, 9, 20-22
18:2, 12, 14
19:1-3, 16(?), 22
20:5-7, 27
21:2, 3, 24, 27
22:10

TABLE 58
LIGHT/LAMP SAYINGS

15:30
16:15
20:20Q, 27
21:4

TABLE 59

'SPIRIT' SAYINGS: *RWH*

16:2, 18, 19Q, 32

17:27K, 22

18:14

TABLE 60

CORRECTION, ADMONITION

15:31, 32

17:10, 15, 26

18:5, 6, 17

19:5, 9, 18, 20(?), 25, 28, 29

20:8, 30

21:11, 15, 28

22:6(?), 14

TABLE 61
TRADITION

15:31, 32
16:16
17:16, 24
18:15
19:8, 16, 27
21:11
22:6, 12

TABLE 62
NPŠ SAYINGS

15:32
16:17, 24, 26
18:7
19:2, 8, 15, 16, 18
20:2
21:10, 23
22:5

TABLE 63
YR'T-YHWH SAYINGS

15:33
16:6
19:23
22:4

TABLE 64
LIFE SAYINGS

16:7, 15, 22
18:7, 21
19:1, 23
20:2
22:5

TABLE 65
DEATH SAYINGS

16:14, 25
17:11
18:21
19:16, (18)
20:2, 20(?)
21:6, 12(?), 16(!)

TABLE 66
SAYINGS INVOLVING 'FATE'

16:4, 7, 25
18:18
19:9 (?)
20:22(?), 24, 25
22:2(?), 3

But: 16:33

TABLE 67
FUTURE

19:20
20:20
21:28

TABLE 68
SICKNESS

17:22
18:14

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