

Dr. Knut Heim, Proverbs, Lecture 7

Personified Wisdom Part 2

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This is Dr. Knut Heim in his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number seven, metaphors and personified wisdom part two.

Welcome to lecture seven on the biblical book of Proverbs.

In this lecture, we will look at the second part of our exploration of metaphor theory, modern metaphor theory. And we will also look at several other important texts in the book of Proverbs in which wisdom is personified. So let me begin by picking up from part one on metaphor theory.

And I want to start really with exploring a little bit more the kind of breakthrough insights that were presented in the third edition of *Metaphor and Thought*, published in 2008, now entitled the *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. And if you are interested in metaphor theory, this is a fantastic volume. This is not cheap, but it's worth every penny to explore really the cutting edge or pretty close to the cutting edge of modern metaphor theory.

It signaled an immense paradigm shift and it was edited by Raymond Gibbs, who rightly claimed it to be the most comprehensive collection of essays in multidisciplinary metaphor scholarship ever published. Gibbs noted that there is now a huge body of empirical work from many academic disciplines that clearly demonstrates the ubiquity of metaphor in both everyday language and specialized language, both in abstract thought and in people's emotional experiences. We are now in a position to describe more fully and more realistically the essential contribution that metaphor makes to human cognition, communication and culture.

In particular, the empirical study of metaphor reveals its importance for theory of mind and meaning, showing the prominence of metaphorical thoughts in everyday life. Gibbs noted, quote, the marvelous interaction between basic and applied scholarship, such that findings on the way that metaphors are employed in real-world contexts offer important constraints on general theories of metaphor, end quote. There is now a growing consensus that metaphor provides an essential component of the larger system of human cognition and communication, leading to a growing conviction supported by ever-increasing evidence that verbal and non-verbal metaphor does not require extraordinary human effort to be produced and understood.

I quote from Gibbs again, metaphor arises from the interaction of brains, bodies, languages, and culture, end quote, and is prevalent in other domains of human

experience, including gesture, art and music. This, of course, stands in contrast with traditional reflection on metaphor, including most of the first edition and much of the second edition of *Metaphor and Thought*, published in 1979 and 1993 respectively, which focuses on how people understood novel metaphorical language with the implicit assumption that the creation of these poetic figures was attributed to special individuals with significant artistic talents, as Gibbs explains. Attention to how metaphors are used by real human beings in natural contexts reveals then what Gibbs calls the paradox of metaphor, namely that metaphors are simultaneously ordinary and spectacular.

To quote him again, metaphor is creative, novel, culturally sensitive, and allows us to transcend the mundane while also being rooted in pervasive patterns of bodily experience common to all people, end quote. Metaphor has the power to reshape imagination, our imagination. It has the ability to create new modes of understanding, often accompanied by special aesthetic pleasures, while creative poetic metaphors can at the same time be extensions of enduring schemes of metaphorical thought and not necessarily have to be created *de novo*.

Research that focuses on the conceptual and embodies grounding for metaphorical thought can draw connections between what is simultaneously ordinary and spectacular about metaphor. These new findings, then, have led us and brought us to an exciting interdisciplinary stage in metaphor studies. I now want to turn to explore modern metaphor theory and the, wait for it, meta-metaphorical nature of talk about metaphor.

So, metaphor is a complex thing to think about and understand. So, ironically, in order to understand metaphors better, we are reduced or enriched to use metaphorical language in order to understand it. Here we go.

A typically negative example of metaphorical talk about metaphors, or meta-metaphorical talk, is a well-known description of metaphors by G.B. Caird, a highly respected biblical scholar. It is widely used, in the language and imagery of the Bible from 1980. And you notice, of course, this is pre-Lakehoff.

Caird emphasizes the significance of metaphor by using the analogy of a lens. And I should say that this analogy has been widely influential in biblical studies, but I think sadly has been very detrimental to our appreciation of how metaphors really work. But here is Caird's formulation.

I quote, that when we look at an object through a lens, we concentrate on the object and ignore the lens. Metaphor is a lens. It is as though the speaker was saying, look through this and see what I have seen.

Something you would never have noticed without the lens. This meta-metaphorical explanation of what a metaphor is, is both compelling in its beauty and terrifyingly misleading in its obscurity. It is a particularly eloquent formulation, but it is wrong.

It is informed by what has now been often or is now often being referred to as the ornament theory of metaphor. While Caird correctly highlights that metaphors enable a unique way of seeing, the concept expressed by means of the metaphor that would be impossible without the metaphor, the very joys of his metaphor to explain the nature and function of metaphor is ironically misleading. He says, that when we look at an object through a lens, we concentrate on the object and ignore the lens.

Yet, the very statement, look through this and see something you would never have noticed without the lens, implies of necessity that the metaphoric expression itself is indispensable from and necessary for the cognitive process. Caird's meta-metaphor is also misleading for a number of other reasons. First, a metaphor is not usually used to describe something that one has never noticed before, but in order to describe something that is known but not well understood.

Second, most lenses that are useful for the purpose do nothing else but magnify. And so only helps us to see what we have already seen without it, only bigger. Yes, we may see smaller parts of the object that are invisible to natural sight, but that is all.

And even when a lens does actually help us to see something differently, it is of necessity a faulty lens that distorts the object we contemplate. Therefore, I want to highlight that metaphoric expression is absolutely essential to both the meaning of what is being expressed and the thinking that is done through the employ of the metaphor. And I call this metaphoricity, the intrinsic and indispensable value of metaphoric expressions in their own right, in opposition to statements like the one from Caird we have just looked at.

By contrast, then, I suggest that we need to stay with the metaphoric expression itself to gain a full appreciation of its contribution to what is being communicated. And in a way I have tried to demonstrate this in part one of my engagement with wisdom personification, especially with regard to the metaphor of acquiring wisdom as we explored it earlier. In turn then, I actually now want to use a meta-metaphor to explain the process of metaphoric communication.

The idea is that a metaphoric expression is a, wait for it, train of thought. And do you notice how I am actually employing a meta-metaphor that is already current in the English language? We follow a train of thought, we pursue a train of thought, we entertain a train of thought, and so on. We use that expression regularly, precisely in order to help us to think about thinking.

Metaphors may be likened to a train of thought reviving an apparently dead metaphor. It's not dead at all. It's actually been useful all along.

They invite the mind traveler to come on board and take a journey of the imagination. Do you see how there is a whole system of other metaphors connected to this systematic idea of metaphor as a train of thought? So we are on a journey of the imagination where associated commonplaces of the metaphor are actually landmarks along the road. The metaphor as a train of thought takes us on a journey of discovery during which our perception of and engagement with the entity that the metaphor expresses is enlarged.

Come with me. The object of contemplation that we hope to understand by means of the metaphor is the journey's end, the destination of our thought travel. The ticket we have chosen, by the way, is a return ticket.

We can travel all the way to the train of thought's final destination and back again. However, with the power to travel comes added responsibility. Our chosen train of thought carries us along a trajectory, a track that is predetermined by the nature of the vehicle we have chosen.

Another metaphor. This train will only get us so far and there may well come a time when the landmarks become unfamiliar, no more associated commonplaces. A time will come when staying on board of the train will carry us further away from our goal of understanding rather than closer to it.

We have stayed on the train too long. We've missed our exit station. Eventually, we realize that it is time to get off the train.

This metaphor, the vehicle we have chosen, has been right for the distance, bringing us closer to the destination of understanding. But the time has now come to change. This metaphor has brought us to a mental relay station where we can catch a different vehicle.

Whether that is another train line, that is another metaphor, or a replacement bus, that is a simile, a taxi, that would be a metonymy, or a rental car, that would be a synecdoche. That will bring us closer still. Note that all the vehicles in my meta-metaphor are modes of public transport, a conscious choice to emphasize that metaphors are a common good.

Finally, however, it is also worth reflecting on that part of the journey where we became unsure as to whether we should continue on the same train or make the change. We can disembark at any point, but the sooner we do so, the less certain we will be as to whether or not we have come as close to our goal as this train could in

fact take us. Thus, it seems to me that staying on longer is worthwhile and in fact crucial for pushing the boundaries of our understanding.

Only by going beyond the familiar landmarks, the common places that everyone recognizes, instantly will we be able to reach genuinely new insights. It is a win-win situation, for even when our train takes us beyond where we wanted to go, we can, here the metaphorical analogy with trains breaks down a bit, in the imaginary world of metaphoric thought travel, disembark instantly. We have a return ticket, remember, and retrace our journey by jumping straight back to where we now know we should have disembarked in the first place and hop on another means of metaphoric transport to get us ever closer to our destination.

So, this really is my meta-metaphor of a train of thought in order to explain the importance of metaphoricity. In traditional metaphor theories and applications thereof, metaphors were dispensable, like the lens in Kehr's example. Only there, in order to ornament, make something sound a little bit more interesting, but really to be gotten rid of as quickly as possible.

In the new understanding of metaphor theory, the metaphoric expression is essential to mental and cognitive progress, and quite rightly so. And so, as I will explore in the second part of Lecture 7 when we look at further texts about wisdom personification, we will try to really stay and continue to stay with the personification metaphor in order to help us to understand wisdom and the intellectual process of becoming wise at a much deeper level than until recently has been possible to do. In the second part of Lecture 7, we will now apply further insights we've gained into metaphor theory to further readings of the key personification texts in the Book of Proverbs.

We first turn to Chapter 7, verses 4 to 5, and to help us in following the arguments, I'll just read those two verses for you. Say to wisdom, you are my sister, and call insight your intimate friend, that they may keep you from the loose woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words. Wisdom here is clearly personified, but the juxtaposition of the imperative in verses 4 to 5 with the three preceding imperatives in verses 1 to 3, namely to keep and to bind the Father's teachings, suggests yet again that wisdom here personifies the Father's teaching.

The personification is not restricted to verse 4 only, which reads, say to wisdom, you are my sister, and call insight friend, but also continues into verse 5, although the verb form used there, an infinitive, is not specifically feminine. Michael Fox in his commentary provided a good summary of the verse's meaning. I quote, The verse speaks of wisdom as if she were a person.

The as if is maintained in the wording in contrast to chapters 8 to 9, where wisdom is consistently treated as a person. This verse tells us to relate to wisdom as a person,

but it does not picture her as one. The point of comparison is the nature of the relationship itself.

Sister, in the Song of Songs, and by the way in the Egyptian love songs, is a term of endearment for the beloved. Sister, in this sense, would stand in stark counterpoint to the illegitimate erotic relationship described in the rest of the chapter. Nevertheless, the sister may express intimacy and affection without connoting erotic attraction.

So, in the Song of Songs, and in the Egyptian love songs, sister is a term of endearment for the beloved. Since the friend in the second line of the verse may also refer to a male friend, however, the erotic connotation of sister is not in the foreground. In the Song of Songs, the term sister appears four times, in 4:9, 10, and 12 and also in 5:1, each time in the combination, my sister, my bride, as the man's address to his female lover.

But the twin term bride does not appear in Proverbs, and so the erotic connotation implicit in the song is even more muted here. Sister may simply mean a family or blood relationship. But Murphy, in his commentary, thought that, quote, the language is clearly erotic, and that suffices to flesh out the symbolism underlying the passage, end quote.

Yet, as we have seen, the language is less specifically erotic than in Song of Songs, and even there it is alluded to through evocative poetry rather than explicitly. Sister can express intimacy and affection without implying erotic attraction, as Fox noted. In the context of the whole chapter, however, a delicate romantic overtone is present, at least in the background.

It suggests a positive alternative to the illegitimate, overtly erotic relationship with the strange woman discouraged in the rest of chapter 7. Again, the personification overtly remains on the literary level. The femininity of wisdom is not essential to this particular instance of personification. The verse encourages us to relate to wisdom as to a person, but it does not picture her as one, as Fox suggested.

The point of comparison is the nature of the relationship itself. Friendship with a man, affection for a sister, and romantic love, each can express the recommended relationship equally well. Significantly, these are egalitarian relationships typical between humans.

This is different from chapter 1, verses 22-33, chapter 8, 1-36, and chapter 9, which picture an asymmetrical relationship between humans and fully personified wisdom in the shape of the exalted lady wisdom. Thank you. We now turn to Proverbs chapter 8. Of course, this is a very long chapter with 36 verses, and all of it is in a very extended and very elaborate personification.

In a lecture of this style, we cannot focus on every single verse, but I will highlight a number of observations on the opening part of the chapter, and then focus particularly on chapters on verses 22, verse 30, and verses 32-36. Much of my discussion here will be in dialogue with and often either affirmation or critique with regard to Bruce Waltke's excellent engagement with the chapter. Sometimes I agree, sometimes I disagree with him.

I've learned a lot from his engagement, but often I think my understanding of metaphor theory leads me one or two steps further than what I have seen in Waltke's work. As we turn to the investigation of wisdom's personification in Proverbs 8, three aspects play vital roles for its interpretation. First, the personification of wisdom is not different in kind from the personifications in the previous chapters.

Everything that has been said in chapters 1-7 feeds into the perception of personified wisdom as presented here, and vice versa. Second, wisdom in Proverbs 8 is personified throughout the chapter, not only in verses 22-31, which have played such an extraordinarily prominent role in the reception history of personified wisdom. Thus, the investigation needs to analyze personified wisdom against the background of the whole of the chapter.

Nonetheless, and this is the third aspect, the reasons that have led to such an extraordinary rich reception history of verses 22-31 need to be spelled out and taken seriously in the interpretation of the chapter as a whole and of its contribution to the rich tapestry of personified wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 as a whole. We've already mentioned this, Proverbs 8 contains the longest and most auspicious personification of wisdom in the whole of the book. The closest formal parallels to personified wisdom's self-praise are Mesopotamian hymns in which a deity praises himself or herself in the first person.

In the wider context of Proverbs 1-9, wisdom speech matches Proverbs 1 verses 22-33 as Waltke has recognized. I quote, the personification of wisdom at the city gate is the next to the last pericope on the prologue balancing the parallel personification in the second from the beginning. The settings, addresses, and vocabulary of these two addresses by wisdom are similar and their conclusions contrasting the fates of those who listen to her with those who reject her are also similar.

Nonetheless, Waltke also pointed out differences between the stance of personified wisdom in Proverbs 1 and Proverbs 8. I quote, in her first address to the gullible, she assumed they had irrevocably rejected her so that she could make her point that there is no second chance after judgment. But here, she still holds open to them an opportunity to give heed and gain moral insight. Waltke seemed content to let the

contradictions and inconsistencies of his interpretations of 1-22-33 and 8-1-5 stand side by side.

By contrast, we find here an instance where an earlier personification of wisdom must be re-read in light of a later passage. In particular, then, the apparent irrevocability of the young men's fate in Proverbs 1-20 following is not to be taken literally but needs to be understood as an exaggeration for rhetorical effect. And now I want to say something about the overall structure of wisdom speech in Proverbs 8. It falls into seven parts with an introduction in verses 1-10, in two parts in fact, a main lesson, in verses 11-31, falling into four smaller parts, and a conclusion, in verses 32-36, often ignored in scholarship.

Well, not completely ignored but not taken as seriously as I think it ought to be taken, as I intend to show. The following is a slight adaptation of Waltke's outline, who in turn adopted and adapted the analysis of Raymond van Leeuwen's structural analysis in his commentary. Actually, I will not do this now because it's largely a repetition of something I've already done, but focus again on Waltke's structural analysis, which is particularly helpful with regard to the main body of personified wisdom speech.

I quote, Wisdom develops her encomium, that is her exuberantly high self-praise, into two equal halves of ten verses. The first pertains to historic time, verses 12-21, and the second to primordial time, verses 22-31. The first features wisdom's communicable attributes of counsel, understanding, and strength, which enables kings to rule, and that bestow wealth and honour on her lovers.

The second pertains both to her divine procreation before the rest of creation, bestowing her with patent nobility, competence, and authority, and to her delight in the way the Lord created the cosmos, housing the inhabited earth, in verses 22-31. The opening verses introduce personified wisdom as the speaker, who voices the statements in the remainder of the chapter. There are so many remarkable statements about personified wisdom's unique character and status, that a list of brief summaries may perhaps be the best way to present the data.

First, wisdom's locations and her audience in verses 1-4. She positions herself inside the city at the main crossroads and at the city gates, where everybody must eventually pass by, and where she can best be heard by as many people as possible. Her appeal is practical and tangible, but at the same time universal, appealing not only to the citizens of the city but to visitors and travelers, everybody who comes within the range of her voice.

It is possible that verse 2 refers to the main roads in the open country. Contrary to expectation, wisdom's speech is not specifically addressed to men, despite the masculine plural address. The plural form is the regular Phoenician plural, as Waltke

has pointed out, but the choice of the unusual variation should be understood as a generic masculine plural, addressing people in general.

This interpretation is supported by the second half-line, where the expression, sons of Adam, means humanity at large, male and female, young and old, rich and poor, Israelite and foreign. The phrase reappears in verse 31 and so frames Wisdom's speech. However lofty her origin and status, wisdom cares about people, even the less worthy, and seeks them out.

This statement taken from Michael Fox's comment. Wisdom presents her message to everybody, and she presents it where the competition is fiercest, not competition from other orators, but from the everyday distractions of business, politics, and disputes. Far from being esoteric or academic, wisdom plunges into the midst of this hustle and bustle to reach people where they are, again using words from Michael Fox's commentary.

A similar statement can be found in Waltke's comment. The sage who transmits Solomon's heritage does not cloister himself in a monastery in an esoteric circle of learned or religious people, or even exclusively in his home. Rather, perhaps as an elder at the gate, he makes himself heard in the marketplace where the competition for the hearts of people is fiercest.

I agree with that, only I think Waltke allowed himself to slip into male-oriented language here, reducing and demetaphorizing the feminine wisdom personification into the words of the male sage. Again, one of those typical errors, I believe, of an earlier understanding of metaphor where the female personification is seen as incidental to the meaning of what is being said. The circumstance that wisdom here addresses everybody, including females, in my view, constitutes a significant development from the opening of the book, which exclusively addresses males.

Although much, though not all, of the practical advice in the following chapters 10-31 in Proverbs will continue to focus on a male audience, personified wisdom's central address in the book is addressed to all. Proverbs 8.14-16 confirms this on two accounts. On the one hand, the terms designating various powerful figures encompass all rulers, not just Israelites.

On the other hand, these rulers are not the exclusive beneficiaries of personified wisdom's generosity, as Waltke noted. Quote him, recall that she addresses the man in the street, not an elite few. What success princes have in their good government.

Wisdom promises *mutatis mutandis* to all her lovers. End quote. So we have just looked at Wisdom's locations and her audience in verses 1-4.

We will now look through the rest of verses 5-21 and begin with wisdom's value as a second point here. Wisdom's value. Personified wisdom in Proverbs 8 is worth listening to, for learning from her is immeasurably valuable.

What she teaches is reliable and ethically sound, verses 6-9. She is more valuable than the most costly treasures, verses 10-11, a theme already drummed in Proverbs 3. Waltke aptly comments, I quote, she must emphasize the value of her words, for she has a hard sell. She has some hard things to say and some uncomfortable truths to tell.

And she talks about self-discipline and not self-indulgence. The unfaithful wife's speech is sweet in the beginning and bitter in the end, as chapter 7 argued. Wisdom's speech demands discipline in the beginning and promises life in the end.

End quote. The motivation to listen to personified wisdom's speech in Proverbs 8 and, by implication, the entire teaching in the book of Proverbs, then, is twofold. Wisdom is worth listening to because of her intrinsic values and virtues.

And she is worth listening to because obeying her teaching brings concrete social and financial benefits, leading to significant lifestyle improvements. Perhaps the most significant implication of the opening sections of Proverbs 8 is the renewed issue of an invitation that offers a conscious choice. We now turn to wisdom's self-praise.

In Proverbs 8.12, it states that she dwells with shrewdness, knowledge, and discretion. The same intellectual qualities are mentioned in the book of Proverbs' introduction, Proverbs 1.4, which we've discussed in Lesson 2. This suggests that personified wisdom's speech is closely integrated into the overall design of the whole of Proverbs 1-9 and, indeed, the whole of the book. Wisdom is a communicable virtue, as can be seen especially in sections about personified wisdom.

What does it mean that a virtue that has been personified can be communicated? In Waltke's opinion, the figure of wisdom finding knowledge and discretion means that, quote, wisdom herself models the role of a believing seeker after virtue, end quote, indicating that, I quote again, these virtues are inseparable from wisdom, end quote. This may be so, but there is another interesting aspect to this. Personified wisdom in Proverbs 8 may portray herself as the spirit of God.

In verses 14-16, wisdom elaborates on her role in human affairs by enumerating the gifts she grants to those who rule society, counsel, competence, and power, essential ingredients for effective statecraft. Two significant parallels suggest personified wisdom's identity with the spirit of God. First, in Job 12-13, wisdom, power, and counsel are attributes of God.

Second, the spirit of the Lord which is to rest on the ideal messianic king described in Isaiah 11-2 is described as, quote, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and power, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Waltke commented on 8-14 as follows, drawing direct parallels to the New Testament. I quote, this cluster of attributes brings wisdom very close to the Lord himself, for according to Job 12-13, he too possesses what she claims as her possessions.

These heavenly qualities are needed by a ruler, see 8-15. Isaiah attributes the dynamic spirit of the Lord as their mediator to the messianic king, Isaiah 11-2, but wisdom mediates them to those who love her. Jesus Christ alone achieved them perfectly, and he has become wisdom from God for his church, see for example 1 Corinthians 1-30 and many other New Testament passages.

Since wisdom as a personification is the embodiment of these intellectual attributes, the statement that she dwells with one of them and finds the others is not meant to be taken literally. Perhaps we have here an analogy that helps us understand better what it means that God acquires wisdom in Proverbs 8-22. On the other hand, however, the figure does suggest that wisdom as personification is different and more than the virtues or qualities she embodies.

Because she possesses them, she can also pass them on to humans, as verses 14-16 express. I have good advice and sound wisdom. I have insight.

I have strength. By me kings reign and rulers decree what is just. By me rulers rule and nobles, all who govern rightly.

Significantly, however, the way personified wisdom passes on the qualities she possesses is by imparting herself to the human kings and rulers who reign and govern with her help. The imagery is suggestive of more than a literary device, and the closest analogy we can think of is the way Jesus of Nazareth speaks of himself and the way Paul of Tarsus speaks about the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Personified wisdom in Proverbs 8 is a universal gift to all humanity.

By me all kings reign and rulers decree what is just. By me rulers rule and nobles, all who govern rightly. Verses 15-16.

This universalism is cast into even sharper relief against the background of Baruch 3 and Ben Sirah 24, which make personified wisdom an exclusively Israelite phenomenon. Personified wisdom in Proverbs then is the sole distributor of the gifts of the Spirit. Verses 14-16 clarify that wisdom is not one among several virtues and divine attributes granted to humans, but the one who grants all the others.

I now turn to personified wisdom in Proverbs 8 as a social being. Wisdom longs to love and to be loved. Though this notion surfaces elsewhere in Proverbs, for example

in 4.6, 7.4, 29.3, and perhaps also in 8.34-35, it is most uniquely expressed in Proverbs 8. Verse 17 reads, I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.

Verse 21 repeats the phrase, those who love me. And in verse 31, personified wisdom describes how she delighted in the human race from the beginning of creation. Michael Fox comments aptly, to be wise is not only to know wisdom but to love and seek it.

Although it may perhaps be better to speak of seeking and loving her. Waltke also noted the change in tone from personified wisdom's first appearance. In 1.20-33, she used menacing speech.

Here she speaks only the language of love. Although he recognized the complete reciprocity of love between wisdom and her seekers, Waltke's insistent identification of personified wisdom with the teaching of the book comes to the fore again in the following statement, I quote, the personification connotes that when the sage's teachings are memorized with spiritual affection, they will become assimilated into one's character, end quote. It is difficult to resist the impression that something is lost in this interpretive gloss of personified wisdom's own description of the relationship she offers to those who seek her.

I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me. I walk in the way of righteousness, endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries, 8.17-21. For example, as Waltke himself noted, similar biblical statements are made about human relations with God. For example, those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt, 1 Samuel 2.30. See also 2 Samuel 22.26, which is of course identical with Psalm 18.26. And then also the phrase, the Lord watches over all who love him, in Psalm 145.20. Egyptian wisdom literature also has comparable statements.

For example, Ta loves all those who love him and who ask him, and God loves the one who loves him. It is easy to see how later generations recognized divine traits in wisdom's personification. I now turn to verses 22-31.

The rest of the second part, or maybe I should say even the second and third parts of Proverbs 8, fall into two parts of equal length. Verses 22-26 on wisdom's origin before creation, and verses 27-31 on her presence in celebration during creation. And Bruce Waltke detected a thematic chiasm binding the two parts together.

A. Wisdom's origins, verses 22-23. B. The negative state of creation, verses 24-26. B'.

Positive presentation of creation, verses 27-29. And A'. Wisdom's celebration of humanity's origins.

Again, Waltke's identification of wisdom with the teaching in Proverbs comes through, verses 22-31, in his opinion, quote, elevating Solomon's teaching to transcendent heights, end quote. According to Waltke, verses 22-31 have three functions. First, the demonstration of wisdom's pre-existence functions as a patent of nobility to establish wisdom's authority to teach.

Second, the demonstration of wisdom's comprehensive knowledge to establish wisdom's competence to teach. And thirdly, the narrative about wisdom's delight in God's creative act establishes the efficacy of wisdom's teaching. To put it in Derek Kidner's words, quote, the only wisdom by which you can handle everyday things in conformity with their nature is the wisdom by which they were divinely made and ordered in the first place.

With regard to personified wisdom's delight, Waltke focused more on personified wisdom's delight in the cosmic order in general. Quote, the wise ruler's ability to decrease social order conforms to her own delight in God's decrees that order the cosmos, end quote. In my view, this does not capture the whole aspect of wisdom's delight and fails to recognize the motivational impact of wisdom's delight in humanity.

The fact that human beings are singled out as the only particular object of her delight within the created order strongly emphasizes her unrestrained enthusiasm and great affection for human beings. By implication, her intentions are shown to be unrestrainedly positive and her teaching is portrayed as completely reliable. She means well for humanity.

The impact of the statement about personified wisdom's delight in creation and in humanity is therefore highly motivational precisely because they are relational statements. And I want to say a few more detailed words about verse 22, which is of course one of the classical texts in early Christological interpretations of Proverbs 8 in the early church. Verse 22 expresses that wisdom's priority to creation is not only temporal, that is before, but also qualitative, that is begotten perhaps, not created.

We'll come back to this in a moment as we revisit the meaning of the verb kana here in this verse. I kind of want to compress this perhaps a little bit more and not say all that could be said about the meaning of kana, partly because I've already covered some of this earlier on in the lecture. Here I simply want to say that I think the meaning of kana here is both a continuation of the metaphorical idea of acquiring and also an expansion of it.

It does seem to me that it is possible that the notion of being begotten, being birthed, is actually, and also the connotation of being created, all of which are translations that have been proposed for this verb, especially here in 8.22, are at the

very least possible. So, what I would want to argue here now is that really in this highly metaphorical, or I should even say hyper-metaphorical, self-expression of wisdom's existence and movements and identity in primordial time is deliberately ambiguous. So, within the early context of monolatrous Israelite faith, the idea of wisdom being acquired by God or being created or used by God is entirely consistent from a dogmatic or systematic theological perspective.

But the other meanings are latently there through the multivalence of this verb. Waltke was convinced that the passage has personified wisdom apply birthing imagery to her inception. Immediately, however, Waltke warned against what he considered two serious types of error in the history of the passage's interpretation.

The first is the understanding of personified wisdom as a literal offspring of God. I quote, A literal polytheistic interpretation involving the Lord with a sexual partner in begetting wisdom is unthinkable in this book. The metaphor brought me forth signifies that Solomon's inspired wisdom comes from God's essential being.

It is a revelation that has an organic connection with God's very nature and being, unlike the rest of creation that came into existence outside of him and independent from his being. The second error is addressed in an important footnote appended to this quotation. Again, a quote from Waltke.

The notion that wisdom is eternally being begotten Sorry, I'll just repeat that. There was a typing error. The notion that wisdom is eternally begotten is based on Christian dogma, not exegesis.

Verses 22 to 26 represent wisdom's origin as a one-time event and action, not as an eternal birth and or an eternal coming into possession. Augustine, Calvin, and others erred in that they wrongly interpreted wisdom as a hypostasis of God that they equated with Jesus Christ and not as a personification of the sage's wisdom. I want to make a few comments on this from my perspective, especially, again, with regard to a fuller attention to the impact of metaphors.

In verse 22, when wisdom says, the Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the word translated beginning here, again, is the word *reshit*, which we've already discussed several lectures ago. It can have four different meanings and maybe even more. First, in time.

This is, by the way, Waltke's preferred meaning. Second, the importance of quality, that is, the best in a series. Choices, chief or foremost.

Thirdly, first in principle. And then fourth, first in virility, in the sense of firstborn. When wisdom says that she was created at the beginning of his work, this literally translates the literal at the beginning of his way.

Probably, actually, it does have its normal sense as a metaphor for conduct with a more specific sense of activity or works. Wisdom is begotten, acquired, created, or all three of them, as the earliest of God's deeds, not his virility. This happened in the remotest past.

And since personified wisdom is part of his deeds, the phrase distinguishes wisdom from the Lord, even as the rest of the passages distinguish her from the rest of creation, as Waltke rightly notes. When we look at verse 23, ages ago I was set up at the first, before the beginning of the earth. The word translated ages ago in the New Revised Standard Version is the Hebrew word *olam*, which can sometimes, especially with regard to the Lord, refer to eternity, but normally and most regularly means the most remote past or future, unless, as I said already, it is applied to God's constancy, where it designates eternity.

And so here it seems it designates the beginning point in the extreme terminus, *arc quo*, of the most distant past, a relative concept, or rather I should say a relative time frame. Waltke again, wisdom is not claiming to be eternal, because the time in view is that of her birth. Only in theological context where God is thought of as existing before any beginning can *olam* be glossed as from eternity.

I also want to comment on verse 24. When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no springs I was abounding with water.

The phrase translated I was brought forth uses in the Hebrew the verb *qul* to writhe in childbirth. In the active mood, the verb designates how a mother writhes in childbirth, beginning with the first contractions and only ceasing with the baby's parturition from her body. In the passive mood, it refers to childbirth from the perspective of the newborn, often in metaphoric context, as for example in Psalm 139, verse 13.

Here, and in its chiasmic parallel in verse 25b, it metaphorically describes personified wisdom's birth from her own perspective. Although God is the agent of the verb, thus implying his role as mother, this implicit gender reversal has rarely, if ever, occupied exegetical minds. Waltke correctly noted that this, quote, unquestionably expresses the birth metaphor suggested for Cana in verse 22, one of the multivalent possibilities of the verb.

This confirms, in my opinion, that the aspect of giving birth is indeed expressed in verse 22. This does not mean, however, that the semantic range of Cana, to acquire, possess, to create, to beget, bring forth, should therefore be restricted to the aspect of birth only. The other connotations remain present and enrich the meaning of what wisdom is saying here.

Waltke repeated his claim here that, quote, no mythological reality is intended in these texts for the Lord has no spouse and without a female partner a mythological reality is impossible. Be that as it may, I think even to start arguing about this is a strange thing to do and only happens because interpreters go away too quickly from the metaphor. The metaphor says that wisdom arrived in childbirth having been brought forth by the Lord, but in the metaphor the Lord is treated as a female deity, as the mother of wisdom.

Even as wisdom herself of course continues to treat God as a male deity, the God of Israel. And so, what we have here is indeed a metaphoric description that is truly not meant to be taken literally. Yes, birthing imagery is being used, but that does neither make God female nor does it mean that God suddenly becomes a consort or a spouse.

That would be over-interpreting the metaphor. By the time now when we reach verse 29, wisdom has shifted the scenic depictions of the world's creation to focus ever more narrowly on humanity's place in it. So, the water is now separated from the inhabitable land which is secured and the standard version translates verse 29 as when he assigned to the sea its limit so that the waters might not transgress his command when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

However, there is a wordplay with a polyvalent Hebrew expression. It's limit or decree that appears twice. The phrase when he assigned when he established for the sea its decree similar to the second occurrence at the end of the verse when he decreed the foundations of the earth.

The phrase and the water cannot go beyond his command literally mouths a metonymy takes up the same thought as in Job 38.11 and so the reprise and that the creator established unalterable laws or ordinances that set the boundaries for the earth that the hostile sea cannot transgress. This is again taken from Waltke here. I'm spending so much time on this because the idea of divine decree may in fact have prompted the identification of personified wisdom with the divine Torah the written manifestation of God's decrees in other Jewish literature.

For example, in Ben Sira. I now turn to verses 30 to 31. Here wisdom says then I was beside him like a master worker and I was daily his delight rejoicing before him always rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

I've read this from the new revised standard version but as we shall see there are several other possibilities of how these verses can be translated. The word translated master worker in the new revised standard version is the Hebrew word *Oman* which is a very rare word and often as is often the case with rare words we are not absolutely sure exactly always what they mean. And so indeed *Oman* may mean constantly but it can also mean craftsman.

It can mean and be amended to Amun as a passive participle of the verb Oman and then mean to be looked after. And from there some people suggest that the meaning of the word may have to do with ward or nursling. And there is a number of other possibilities as well and we come back to this in a moment.

Waltke acknowledges that ward or nursling might actually be contextually appropriate but has a number of reasons why this is probably not so. First, if the word was to be taken as a noun we would expect a feminine form as in the Kal-feminine active participle Ominet nurse or nursing or something. This is less than convincing since nurse refers to someone who nurses somebody else while nursling refers to somebody who is being nursed.

Fox's interpretation is a variation on this. He argued that the form is a Kal-infinitive absolute with the meaning being raised or growing up. In favour of Fox's construal speaks the fact that it requires neither a textual emendation nor a feminine form and it has the support of earlier authorities such as the early Jewish commentators Ibn Jan'a and Moshe Kimchi.

Waltke, however, saw grammatical problems. In particular, the Kal-infinitive is active with the meaning raising rather than the required passive which might have been expressed by the Nifal stem. Waltke's other argument against this interpretation carries little weight.

He says, Wisdom's claim that while she was a little child she rejoiced delightfully in the Lord's creative work does not make her claim to have grave authority very credible. The notion of grave authority is not a helpful one. Neither is the idea that Wisdom's self-description as a playful little child undermines her authority.

Rather, the description as a child in the infancy of time marks her as ancient and thus authoritative in the present time of Wisdom's speech now and her playful delight in God's creation marks her as benevolent towards humanity and thus trustworthy. The fourth meaning of Oman is just that it means faithfully. This interpretation takes the word as a Kal-infinitive absolute of Oman 1 to be firm or faithful and this is represented by some of the Greek translations Simachus, Theodotion, and also the Targum followed by a number of modern commentators.

An interesting argument in favour of Waltke's preferred option in his representation of parallel elements as divided by the Masoretic text is to take the phrase as a threefold parallel. And I was beside him faithfully and I was delighting daily celebrating before him at all times. In Waltke's view day after day emphasizes and clarifies faithfully in the previous half-life.

In my view, the relationship of two expressions from a bygone age to do with synonymous parallelism precise parallelism carries little weight. While the parallel between delighting and celebrating before him is clear the relationship of these two expressions to beside him is remote. While faithfully may be perceived as related in meaning to daily and at all times if faithfulness is a necessary one to make.

Waltke concluded while all these interpretations are possible and have historical support the last interpretation best suits the broader context of verses 22 to 31 and the immediate context of verse 30. Waltke also verbalized what is at stake. Quote It is one thing to be an instrument in a creator's hands.

It is quite another to be the one who arises and or does the work. And we can see how indeed there are theological consequences arising from the idea of wisdom being an independent actor contributing to the achievement of creation. Waltke thought that the interpretation of Oman as artisan may find support in Proverbs 3.19 where God used wisdom as an agent in creation.

But more probably it means that wisdom was his instrument. But since wisdom is personified and speaks about herself the clear implication is that she does not consider herself as an instrument but as a collaborator. Van Leeuwen in his commentary argued that the self-praise of Enki the Sumerian god of wisdom Enki and the world order where he portrays himself as the craftsman and counselor to the divine king Anu is a precise conceptual parallel to wisdom as the Lord's architect advisor through whom the king the Lord puts all things in their proper order.

End quote. Waltke presented a concise list of arguments against the interpretation of craftsman. We will quote the passage in full as it brings all the main arguments together in one point.

I quote in addition to lacking good lexical support the interpretation artisan contextually diffuses the message of Proverbs 8 22 to 29 that the Lord is the creator of all things and the procreator of wisdom. A claim that she is in fact the artisan would come unexpectedly out of the blue and then just as unexpectedly be dropped. Up to this point in her argument wisdom has been building her case to have grave authority by claiming to have been begotten by God before the creation came into existence and by being present at the time when the Lord established the heavens the sea and the earth.

If she intended to present herself as an active agent in creation one would expect her to make such an important contribution to her argument that she would know everything because she designed and or made them and therefore people should listen to her. Also, this interpretation offers a poor parallel to delighting or playing and celebrating or dancing in his work. One would expect for this interpretation something like teaching or conversing or making and the like.

Finally it would be unique and against Hebrew poetry for woman wisdom to describe herself by a male image unless one argues that this is an unattested epicene noun. Now I'll come back to what an epicene noun is in a few minutes. But let me just comment and make a few points here.

Since the word only occurs here, the word *oman*, a hapax legomenon, is by definition epicene if it is a noun. An epicene in this context means that it can be referred both to a woman or a man at the same time. So, it's not, it's a noun and it happens to be a grammatically male noun, a masculine noun, but it can refer also to a feminine representative of the class that it describes.

That's what it means to speak of an epicene noun. To the last point of course it is because it is a rare technical term for architects and there were no female ones around. The epicene use of professional designation however has been ubiquitous for most languages in most of humanity's history.

Another good way of presenting the issues is to distinguish between three different interpretations of personified wisdom's role in Proverbs 8.30. First, personified wisdom was an independent agent in creation who acted with a certain degree of independence from God. Second, God is the creator but he used personified wisdom as his agent to create the world. In this case, wisdom was a co-creatrix with God.

And thirdly, wisdom is a purely literary personification of God's attribute of wisdom. God used his own wisdom like an instrument in order to design creation. I now want to make some comments on delighting.

What is the meaning of this enigmatic term? Who is delighting in what? As we have seen the new revised standard version says, I was his delight daily. So in this case it is God who is delighting in wisdom. But of course, it could also have been the other way around.

It could have been wisdom delighting in God or wisdom delighting in what was being created, either by God or by God and her together. Walter rejected this interpretation on the basis of a strict understanding of parallelism in verse 30. He says, the chiasmic parallelism in 8.31b rebuts this interpretation and shows that wisdom is the actor.

As I have shown elsewhere, parallelism does not mean that the statements in parallel lines have, mean the same thing. Since the three partial lines in verse 30 and the other two half-lines in verse 31 form a combination of intralinear and interlinear parallelism resulting in five parallel partial lines, it is best to consider all of these verses together. And I'll just give them now in my translation, divided into five parallel partial lines.

Listen to this. Then I was beside him, either faithfully or like a craftsman or like a little child. And I was delighted daily, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited earth, and my delight was humanity.

There is a lot of joy going on here. These two verses are full of purposeful, deliberate ambiguity. The three terms juxtaposed with where I say faithfully, like a craftsman, like a little child, in the first partial line constitute in my view a multivalent wordplay.

I'll come back to this in a minute. And the second partial line is deliberately vague. Thus, delights refer to wisdom's own delight or in God's delight, in her.

There are contextual indicators favoring both answers. Initially, the strongest parallel relationships may be perceived between partial lines two to five, as all four mention a term indicating joy. In the last three of these, wisdom is clearly marked as the one who does the celebrating, not the Lord.

In the traditional account of parallelism, which would identify these lines as synonymous parallelisms, this would have suggested that wisdom is also the one who rejoices in the second partial line. However, there are three reasons which suggest otherwise. First, as I have shown elsewhere, parallelism is not only characterized by similarity but also by variation.

We've already touched upon this in the earlier lectures. Second, there are other kinds of parallels in these partial lines and other dimensions of parallelism that point in the other direction. The parallels in verses 30 to 31 extend to the whole of the two verses.

Consequently, three of the five partial lines in the two verses include a pronominal suffix whose antecedent is the Lord. This may suggest that such a suffix should be added in partial line two, resulting in His delight. Or it suggests that delights should be interpreted to refer to the Lord's delight in wisdom.

This would result in a series of four partial lines in uninterrupted sequence having a reference to the Lord. On the other hand, however, if partial lines two to five form a particularly close sequence of parallel partial lines, as the chiastic sequence of terms referring to joy indicates, A delights, B rejoice, B prime rejoice, A prime delights, then the fact that both partial line two and five do not have a pronominal suffix whose antecedent is the Lord suggests that it is indeed wisdom who rejoices in partial line two. Are you still with me? I'm having a lot of fun doing this.

But of course, as you can see, these are highly, highly complex interpretive issues. And that is why in an earlier lecture I spoke about the fact that when we get to such ingenious, incredibly metaphorical and theologically rich passages, we really need to

work with due diligence. And we need to have the virtues of scaled careful patient exegetical attention to detail paired with a larger view of the whole and attention to the aesthetic beauty of the poetry as poetry.

Reading the passage both skillfully and imaginatively. Reading with imagination does not mean reading fancifully, but reading with attention both to the detail and the minutiae of the passage and also with a perspective on the whole chapter and the wider context of Proverbs 1 to 9. And now I want to focus a little bit more on the whole idea of joy, rejoicing, and celebration. To delight and dance before God is, in Waltke's view, a cultic act.

A German commentator, Arndt Meinhold, followed the lead of Otto Kehl, another German scholar, and his interesting proposal that personified wisdom is here portrayed in parallel with the Egyptian goddess Ma'at and Hathor. These two female deities, as Kehl has demonstrated, had the role of frolicking and inciting the other gods. And consequently, Meinhold suggested that personified wisdom supported God throughout the activities related to creation, playing, and frolicking before him in such a way that she inspired and delighted him in order to enhance his creative activity.

Meinhold concluded that, consequently, personified wisdom is not portrayed like a nursing, but like a young and beautiful woman. Waltke rejected this interpretation because he says, that to read into this text the pagan notion that wisdom as a young and lovely woman sexually incited the Lord to create activity, to creative activity by dance and play is unfitting for the anti-mythical bias of biblical thought. Meinhold, however, did not suggest any sexual dimension in Wisdom's delightful play.

Furthermore, the possibility that the portrayal of personified wisdom has been influenced by the roles of Ma'at and Hathor does not necessarily mean that all or even most of the associations connected to these two deities were thereby automatically taken over in an uncritical way. I think we need to stop here for a moment. So, thank you for allowing me a short break.

I now want to comment on the phrase inhabited world in verse 31 to round off this section of chapter 8. According to Waltke, this is a synecdoche for the whole creation and suggests that the aim of the creation was a world fit for humanity. The overall drift of verses 30 to 31 is then to demonstrate wisdom's delighted involvement in every stage of creation as it unfolded her joy reaching its peak with the appearance of humanity in the concluding stages of the universe's formation when it had been fully prepared for human habitation. Waltke rightly noted that the explicit focus on wisdom's joy over humanity in H31b furnishes the climax of wisdom's self-praise.

The reference to humanity, literally sons of man, at the beginning and end of Wisdom's self-praise forms a frame around the entire section of her speech and

formally signals that the entire content of Wisdom's self-praise serves to boost her value for humans thus providing a suitable transition to wisdom's final appeal to humans in verses 32 to 36 where she now directly addresses humans and says and now my children listen to me. Happy are those who keep my ways and so it continues. From the pragmatic perspective of verses 32 to 36 they form a climax of wisdom's speech by using all that wisdom, personified wisdom said about herself as motivation for her appeal to her children to listen to her and to obey her to become wise by seeking her acquaintance until they find her because finding her means finding life and rejecting her means death.

The conclusion's pragmatic aim leads to a pronounced shift but Waltke's assessment that personified wisdom changes her persona, setting, and addressees almost severs the conclusion from the lecture's body and I disagree with that. Here is Waltke's summary. She replaces her guise as Mediatrix at the city gate addressing the masses and as a primordial figure beside the creator to that of the owner of a house addressing the sons and inviting them to maintain their vigil at her door in order to find her." In my view, however, the shift is from wisdom's message going out issuing an invitation in verses 1 to 31 in which she describes the value of her teaching, verses 4 to 21, supporting its worth with her credentials as humanity's benevolent elder sibling from primordial times verses 22 to 31, to her return to her own home to prepare a feast of learning for those who would accept her invitation.

Contra Waltke, the outgoing movement of the first part of her speech was from the beginning designed to turn into an invitation to receive her audience as guests in her own home. True, wisdom now addresses her audience as children, literally sons in verse 32. In contrast to the more generic addresses of people, humans, immature, and fools in verses 4 to 5. But the shift is one to a closer relationship characterized by maternal affection rather than a shift from one audience to another.

Wisdom did not portray herself just as a primordial figure and authoritative mediatrix in the lecture as Waltke seems to think, but also as humanity's affectionate and happy elder sister. True, wisdom now locates herself inside her house rather than in the various hot spots of the city. But the shift is one from active recruitment and invitation to hospitable reception.

Rather than a shift from an open to an inward-looking perspective. However, while according to one of the connotations of the wordplay in verse 30, personified wisdom in Proverbs 8 seemed to portray herself as humanity's elder sister, emphasizing not only her grand age and supreme knowledge but also her deep affection for humanity. She now addresses humanity in the guise of a mother figure.

Thus, climactically characterizing her feelings towards humans as maternal love. Proverbs 8.32 is the first and only occasion where personified wisdom, by means of addressing her audience as children, identifies herself as humanity's mother. Since

the expression is by definition metaphorical and figurative in meaning, this wording does not imply that Wisdom imagines herself as a real blood relation to her audience.

Neither is the expression meant to imply that personified wisdom casts herself in the role of a primordial mother deity, as some have argued. Rather, the stress is entirely on the sincerity and reliability of her affection for humanity. This is the impact of the metaphor.

We need to stay with the metaphor itself and not try and interpret it away into something else. An interesting question is whether this appeal in fact brings personified wisdom in line with parental teaching. Waltke argued that there is an intertextual relationship with the father's preceding lecture.

He says, her initial words, so now sons, listen to me, and her final word, death, precisely matched the father's conclusion in the preceding speech in chapter 7. This led him to affirm his frequent identification of later wisdom as a personification of the father's teaching. Quote, this precise intertextuality between the two great paired poems of chapter 7 and 8 further validates that woman Wisdom personifies the sage and his teaching. End quote.

In Waltke's opinion then, to listen to woman wisdom and the sage come to be the same thing. Other observations add further weight to Waltke's contention. First, personified wisdom's appeal in 8.32 does not constitute her initial words, but the first words in the concluding section of her speech, which heightens the similarities between the two adjacent lessons because the similarities are located in similar positions within their respective contexts.

Second, personified wisdom's appeal to humanity as sons does metaphorically imply wisdom's status as a parent, albeit not the father, who perhaps equally metaphorically personifies the wisdom tradition, and represents the teachings of the wise. But the mother, whose teaching the book's audience, both in the singular and plural, are to obey. Waltke's suggestion that wisdom's appeal that her audience should listen probably refers to the following collections of proverbs and sayings in chapters 10-31 because wisdom has given no chastening word in the immediate context is unduly literalistic, especially since the entire chapter in Proverbs 9 intervenes between her speech here and those other collections.

More likely, the appeal to listen refers to the entirety of personified wisdom's speech and perhaps to the entirety of Proverbs 1-9 and perhaps even the entire wisdom tradition represented not only in this book but in the wisdom tradition of Israel at large. Finally, what is the significance of the metaphor of expected watching in chapter 8, verse 34? Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting by my doors. It does not simply intensify the command to listen as a specific

location where wisdom's audience is to watch attentively, namely wisdom's gates and doors given.

Various explanations as to what the sons are waiting for have been offered. Royal favors the mistress's instruction, admission in general, or admission as wisdom's suitors. However, it seems that any speech in which specific identifications are highly problematic and overburden the various metaphors.

For example, the idea of personified wisdom encouraging numerous male suitors with an implicit promise of eventual access would amount to open prostitution or at the very least, overt display of culturally inappropriate sexual behavior, clearly unintended in the present context. More likely, the metaphor needs to be sustained and not dissolved into a prose interpretation. The metaphor carries on into the following chapter, chapter nine, and envisages an admission to wisdom's palace in the context of personified wisdom's banquet invitation, which is issued in chapter nine.

I think we stop here again for a brief moment. We now turn to chapter nine, Proverbs chapter nine. Especially verses one to six, but then also verses eleven to twelve.

At first sight, Proverbs 9 seems to fall into three sections. Verses one to six on lady wisdom, verses seven to twelve are standard wisdom instruction, and then verses thirteen to eighteen on lady folly. Verses seven to ten and twelve seem to interrupt the juxtaposition of the two personifications of lady wisdom on the one hand and lady folly on the other in an awkward manner so that many see them as secondary insertions.

Yet it may have an important function in its present position. First, the material in verses seven to twelve with its combination of admonition and sayings resembles the instructional material in Proverbs one to nine and the predominantly proverbial material in the following collection, Proverbs ten to thirty-one. Second, while verses seven to ten and twelve appear to be general advice to a wise teacher and a proclamation on wisdom's value, verse eleven clearly continues the thought and thus the personification of wisdom of verses one to six.

Placed at the end of the collection in Proverbs one to nine then, this section serves to link the introductory material of the open book opening collection with the following collection of individual Proverbs by juxtaposing the dominant literary forms of each. Verse eleven thus makes the proverbial materials in Proverbs ten one to twenty-two sixteen and subsequent materials part of the teaching of personified wisdom. Instruction and Proverbs collection, admonition, and proverbial sentences together constitute what personified wisdom stands for.

Waltke explains this transitional function of Proverbs nine eloquently, bringing out some of the rhetorical impact of the complex metaphor. I quote, The representation of wisdom as having built her house and prepared her banquet may represent figuratively the prologue, chapters one to nine, and the collections, chapters ten to thirty-one, respectively. The house, which is the introductory prologue, is now finished, and the banquet, that is the Proverbs of Solomon in the following chapters, is about to begin.

Her messengers, that is the parents, have been sent to invite the uncommitted and dull youth to eat and drink her sumptuous fare. Their sons are already waiting for wisdom to open her doors. End quote.

Waltke's imaginative reading is, of course, not the only possible reading. Raymond van Leeuwen recently showed the affinity between wisdom's house, the Israelite temple, and even the cosmos itself. Building on his insight and combining it with our discovery of the imaginative potential of the wisdom metaphor, a reading that is complementary to Waltke suggests itself.

There may indeed also be a mythological background to the idea of wisdom's house. Since the Assyro-Babylonian Apsu, the underground sweet water mass has been designated as the house of wisdom. Since it is the realm of the god Ea, Enki, one of whose epithets is Lord of Wisdom, this does indeed seem likely.

Fox and Waltke argued that this mythological background has been demythologized, and this seems correct. This does not mean, however, that the mythological background can be or should be neglected. Rather, the deliberate allusion to mythology, even in its sanitized form, has two powerful rhetorical effects, the first of which was almost certainly intended.

First, the mythological allusion has added a sense of mystique and supernatural flair to wisdom's portrayal. The inevitable question arises whether personified wisdom is more than a figure of speech, whether she might indeed have a personal, perhaps supernatural, existence in the real world. Readers through the ages have responded eagerly to this rhetorical invitation as the reception history of personified wisdom amply demonstrates.

Second, this and other traces of mythology in wisdom's portrayal have prompted numerous modern scholars to identify in personified wisdom the sanitized rudiments of various ancient Near Eastern deities. Such scholarly notions are generally misguided. What is important, however, is to recognize first that the various pieces of circumstantial evidence for mythological precursors indicate various deities with various kinds of similarities from various geographical locations and various periods of time.

There is no one deity that fits all or even most of the mythological allusions. In my view, this suggests that the purpose of the mythological material in wisdom's portrayal is not to indicate that personified wisdom is or is like this or that other deity. Those who have taken it upon themselves to find ancient Near Eastern goddesses behind personified wisdom have therefore responded in a way that was unintended by the authors of Proverbs 1-9 in a way that failed to appreciate the imaginative impact of the imagery.

Again, the danger was and the trap that many people have fallen into is to demetaphorize the metaphor. This also suggests that the mythological indicators are not traces left behind unintentionally by careless syncretizers. Rather, the mythological materials are deliberate signposts indicating to the reader that personified wisdom is more than meets the rhetorical eye.

In the remaining part of this lecture, I now want to just engage in some more detailed interpretations, imaginative interpretations, of verses 1, 2, and 3 in Chapter 9, and then we will draw this lecture to a close. Verse 1. Scholars generally note the similarity between wisdom's building of a house in Chapter 9-1 and the similar statements in Proverbs 14-1 and Proverbs 24-3. There is a lively debate as to whether the text in 9-1b should be read as she has hewn its seven pillars or whether it should read as she has erected its seven pillars.

For our purposes, the resolution to this dilemma is immaterial. What is important, however, is the architectural imagery, which indicates that personified wisdom in her preparation has erected a sizable architectural structure. Waltke rightly noted that the verb *has built* denotes the process of bringing something into existence through a particular type of craftsmanship.

And remember our discussion of the meaning of Oman in verses 30 and 31 of Chapter 8. To be more precise, wisdom is portrayed as an architect. And this portrayal chimes well with Plato's Demiurge, the craftsman creator, and the development of that image in Philo's city-planning architect in some of his writings on wisdom. The sequence of building, slaughtering, inviting, and feasting through eating and drinking in Proverbs 9 is another evocative textual gem.

Since numerous ancient and recent texts associate the dedication of buildings with lavish feasting, a custom ubiquitous across the globe through the ages, personified wisdom's invitation is pictured as being issued on the occasion of the dedication of a house, probably the completion of Proverbs 1 to 9. The detail that Wisdom's house has seven pillars is equally evocative and has spurred the imagination of commentators ancient and modern. In the literary fiction of Proverbs 9, the number seven symbolizes perfection. At the very least, it suggests that Wisdom's house is a grand building, fit for her prominent landlady and the many guests she expects.

Fox, in line with his overall approach that is focused on original meaning, downplays the details in the description. Quote, The details of the scene are not significant individually, but together they show that wisdom has much to offer and is eager to do so. To listen to wisdom, to live within her house, and to partake of her food and wine are different ways of envisioning a lifetime of learning.

End quote. He captured well at least the primary purpose of the originally intended rhetorical function of the depiction. Personified wisdom's generosity and the practical significance of the banquet imagery, lodging and feasting, equals learning.

Yet again, however, a prose paraphrase is a pallid substitute for the real thing. And both Waltke's and Fox's minimalist interpretations of the imagery's symbolic meaning is in the final analysis reductionistic. This can be seen most clearly in Fox's evaluation of the many symbolic interpretations through the ages.

He compiled an interesting list of symbolic readings of the number seven. End quote. Identifications include the seven means of perceiving the creator.

This is Rikam. The first seven chapters of Proverbs, Hitzig, who argue that they were inscribed in seven written columns. Then the seven antediluvian sages or Apkallu of Babylonian mythology, so Greenfield.

Or the seven firmaments or the seven lands, according to Midrash Proverbs. Or the seven planets or the seven days of creation. And then the seven sacraments of the church or the seven gifts of virtues of the Holy Spirit, so Delitzsch.

Or the seven liberal arts. Instructive is Fox's verdict on these readings. Quote, all such decodings are arbitrary and unsupported by context.

End quote. Waltke, listing many of these and several other intriguing interpretations, including various rather fancy proposals in recent scholarship, came to a similar conclusion. Quote, all of these interpretations are eisegetical, not exegetical.

End quote. The impression gained from this mini-survey of interpretations is that of an interpretative free-for-all, in which just about anything that comes along in groups of seven could be identified as the pillars of wisdom's house. The point of our enumeration of these interpretations, however, is to show the high degree of imagination that the imagery evoked, even though much of it is rather fanciful.

The identifications are indeed largely arbitrary and often fancy, but against Fox and Waltke, I believe that they are not entirely unsupported by the context inasmuch as the mention of the number seven appears in the context of two entire chapters that are spiked with figurative and symbolic language. We quoted earlier Fox's comment that the details of the scene are not significant individually, but the question must be

raised. Quote, if the detail that there are seven pillars is not significant, why specify the number in the first place, and why choose such a highly symbolic number? Surely a statement like, she has hewn or set up many pillars, or any other number higher than three, would have achieved the desired effect if the only intention was to signal that Personified Wisdom's house was big.

We conclude, therefore, that interpreters through the ages were prompted by the wider context and the specificity of the number seven to seek a hidden significance in the reference to Wisdom's seven pillars, just as scholars still do today. I now move on to verse two. Slaughtering in verse two probably refers to preparing meat dishes in general, rather than religious sacrifices.

Interestingly, both the building work in verse one and slaughtering traditionally were male activities. The description of the preparations, especially the mention of specially mixed wine, evokes the anticipation of a lavish and joyful feast, in contrast with the comparatively meagre rations offered by personified folly later on in the chapter, where all we get is water and food. Waltke's suggestion that the reference to Wisdom preparing her table quote signifies that Solomon's proverbs are arranged most felicitously for the enjoyment of those who study them, end quote, has the advantage of interpreting the various individual metaphors throughout the chapter in a consistent manner that treats the various metaphors associated with the personification of Wisdom as part of the one complex conceptual metaphor of personification.

It also has the advantage of having support from the context. Nonetheless, Waltke's identification of the feast with the actual proverbial collections alone seems too specific. Since the lavish provisions offered at Wisdom's banquet clearly do refer to the contents of Wisdom's teaching, the luxurious party food she offers includes the contents of the teachings and the proverbs as a whole, including chapters one to nine, as well as any other authentic teaching and character virtues that Wisdom represents, including the teaching of wise parents, of both genders, and the teaching of the sages in general, whether it is from elders in the family or village, or whether it is from the more professional sages who served as advisors at the various centers of public life, including the royal court.

It is, by the way, not surprising that later Christian writers consistently saw here references to the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper. Intriguingly, Ambrose sees a parallel even to Plato's Symposia. Quote, Plato judged that the discourse over this bowl should be copied into his books.

He summoned forth souls to drink of it, but did not know how to fill them, for he provided not the drink of faith, but that of unbelief. End quote. If I understand this correctly, Ambrose is suggesting that the very custom of Symposia in Plato's philosophical dialogues was copied from Lady Wisdom's banquet.

I now turn to verse three. Waltke and others wrestled with the question as to whether it was seemly in ancient Near Eastern culture for a female host to go herself rather than send female servants to invite male guests. Meinhold, followed by Waltke, pointed to the Ugaritic legend of King Keret around 1400 B.C., in which the king instructs his wife to prepare a meal and invite his guests.

The queen reports to completion of her task with the following words. Quote, To eat, to drink I have summoned you. Your lord Keret hath a sacrifice.

End quote. Waltke concluded, Even a queen could go out and invite males to a feast with perfect seemliness. End quote.

In my opinion, the problem only arises because the narrative metaphor is now again taken literally. There was, however, no real woman with the name Wisdom who cried her wares around the city. There were no real servant girls who rounded up would-be guests.

Rather, personified wisdom's public appeal presents the general appeal, permeating all of society through its wise members. For young people to learn and adopt society's highest values. The servant girls represent all in society who take an active interest in encouraging the younger generation to adopt society's highest ideas and values as represented by personified wisdom and taught through the trade-ins of these values in ancient Israelite society.

William McKane, another commentator on Proverbs, denied this identification. Quote, Since these, the sages, are neither youthful nor female. End quote.

Waltke rightly chastises him for, quote, demanding that the analogy walk on all four legs. End quote. But Waltke's verdict applies to all who dissolve the narrative metaphor into a referential scenario in the real world in which all the details of the extended metaphor must find a suitable real counterpart, including some of the interpretations of Waltke himself.

Waltke's comment that personified wisdom, sends out female, not male servants, to depict the teachers as enjoying the closest possible proximity and intimacy with wisdom, end quote, correctly interprets the metaphor for its rhetorical effect rather than for a putative, non-existent, real event. This may be correct in part, but perhaps there is more, as I intend to demonstrate with the help of a comment from William McKane. McKane, in my view, erroneously, adduced that the entire scene in Proverbs 9, 1-6 is fashioned on the model of the strange woman in Proverbs 7, 10-12, whom McKane had identified as a prostitute.

As such, personified wisdom is portrayed as a contrived antithesis of the goddess of love, and motives associated with the goddess Astarte and her devotees have been transferred to wisdom and her servant girls. I do not think that any real or specific goddess lies behind personified wisdom as portrayed in any of the biblical wisdom texts. However, it is possible that the metaphor deliberately attracted various features of traditional deities for rhetorical reasons.

Her portrayal includes subtle hints reminiscent of female deities to paint personified wisdom in a mysterious, almost divine, and thus attractive and fascinating light in order to attract young male attention. If this is the case, then her servant girls may indeed symbolize real females. These females are not, however, cult devotees or female deities, but symbolize an idealized picture of young women belonging to well-respected families, in traditional Israelite society, who would have been brought up according to the values that personified wisdom represents and are thus her servant girls.

In other words, young men who follow personified wisdom's invitation will encounter in her metaphorical house young eligible women who hold wisdom's values. Or, to put it differently, still, young women of reputable character will be attracted to young men who hold Wisdom's values. Consequently, young men who want to marry wise women, the kinds of women portrayed in Proverbs 31, 10-31, need to prove themselves worthy of the women they desire.

And the way to prove themselves worthy is to follow wisdom's invitation to learn and become wise. It is in this sense, then, that wise girls are personified wisdom's servant girls who invite immature young men.

This is Dr. Knut Hein in his teaching on the Book of Proverbs. This is Session 7, Metaphors and Personified Wisdom, Part 2.