Can Wisdom be Taught?

Implicit and Explicit מוּסָר as the

Aesthetic Pedagogy of Proverbs

Mr Nicholas John Widdows

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Preface

Writing a thesis is always a joint project and I could not have done this without the support of many others.

I must begin by thanking my supervisor, Dr Katharine Dell, who has put up with me for 7 years and has had to be patient, directive, encouraging, and challenging in equal measure - not to mention putting the occasional, judicious, rocket under me. Her support and guidance have been invaluable.

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This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to show how Proverbs endeavours to teach for wisdom and, in so doing, to further substantiate the argument that Proverbs is an educational collection of pedagogical merit, and to provide a stimulus for reflection when considering the more philosophical question: Can wisdom be taught?

A method of rhetorical analysis of the text of Proverbs is used, which draws out the מוּסָר (normally translated 'instruction' or 'discipline') of the collection. This מוּסָר is both advocated (i.e. Proverbs recommends certain courses of action) and inherent (i.e. the text itself educates the audience as they read Proverbs). The inherent מוּסָר employs several literary devices (e.g. structure, parallelism, and metaphor) to persuade, shape and direct the desires, reason, and habits of the hearer. Through exegesis of selected passages from Proverbs I have shown how the inherent מוּסָר is implemented within the text, discovering, not an articulated pedagogical system but clear pedagogical principles and methods. In Proverbs, I have argued, can be found a rich and fascinating approach to educating for wisdom and, more broadly, character, which displays a remarkable understanding of the integrated nature of the human self in its pedagogy, which I have termed the aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר.

When Proverbs was then considered alongside some of the insights of Virtue Education, the commitment to the significance of the emotions, the power of literary form, the importance of habit, and the formation of virtuous character were all found to be shared with other voices from this field, particularly Aristotle, placing Proverbs firmly within this area of educational thought. Nonetheless, Proverbs remains a distinctive text with its own distinctive pedagogy and aims which derive from Proverbs' underlying commitments as a text rooted in a Yahwistic worldview and operating within the covenantal framework of the wider Hebrew Bible.

Abbreviations

ASV	American Standard Version (1901)
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
ESV	English Standard Version (2001)
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
HB	Hebrew Bible
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1977)
NIV	New International Version (2011)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1971)
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*
TWOT	*Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Can wisdom be taught?

> In schools of antiquity philosophers aspired to impart wisdom, in modern colleges our humbler aim is to teach subjects. The drop from the divine wisdom, which was the goal of the ancients, to text-book knowledge of subjects, which is achieved by the moderns, marks an educational failure, sustained through the ages.[1] *A. N. Whitehead.*

Alfred North Whitehead, mathematician, logician, philosopher and educationalist, precedes the above citation with this observation: 'though knowledge is one chief aim of intellectual education, there is another ingredient, vaguer but greater, and more dominating in its importance. The ancients called it "wisdom".'[2] The pre-eminence of this nobler aim is, he believed, something the ancients understood more clearly than we do today.

How, though, did the ancients seek to teach it? And was that teaching effective? These are the questions which this thesis will set out to answer. I aim to tackle these questions with reference specifically to the ancient book of Proverbs, a collection of sayings which emerged in Israel during the first millennium BCE. Whilst Proverbs does not present a complete theory of teaching and learning, in the prologue (Proverbs 1:1-7), it states explicitly that its purpose is for מוּסָר (normally translated as 'instruction' or 'discipline') and for gaining חָכְמָה (wisdom), demonstrating its fundamental orientation towards the task of educating for wisdom. From this one biblical book, I will argue, we can reconstruct an Israelite pedagogy which is not simply about teaching knowledge, but which endeavours to impart wisdom. Whilst several scholars have written about the pedagogical approach and educational themes of Proverbs, there is still more work to be done to construct a full picture of its wisdom-focused pedagogy.

[1] Alfred North Whitehead, *Aims of Education and Other Essays,* New York: Macmillan, 1929, 29.
[2] Whitehead, *Aims of Education,* 30.

This is the aim of my thesis, which will build on existing scholarship, drawing on work by Michael Fox and Anne Stewart as a foundation, developing Fox's idea of 'pedagogy as מוּסָר'.[3]

Methodologically, I will adopt an analytical framework of inherent מוּסָר and advocated מוּסָר to illustrate Proverbs' pedagogical approach, before bringing these findings alongside the insights of Educational Theory (specifically, Virtue Education). Most of the thesis will be taken up with answering the question: *how* does Proverbs seek to teach wisdom? Then, through comparison with other educational philosophies and theories, I will attempt to assess whether the methods of Proverbs can stand alongside these theories as pedagogically coherent and effective. Lurking behind this endeavour is the more significant question after which this thesis is titled: *Can* wisdom be taught? This is a matter more suited to philosophy than to biblical studies but, given this is the claim of Proverbs (Proverbs 1:2), my thesis will conclude with a reflection on one way in which it might be answered in light of my findings from this investigation.

[3] Michael Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2'. *JBL* 113, no.2 (1994): 233–43, 243.

1.2 In defence of Proverbs' educational credentials

1.2.1 Proverbs and borrowing

Before proceeding, it should be mentioned that Proverbs' claim to be a pedagogically significant text is not universally accepted among scholars, with some suggesting that Proverbs is primarily indebted to the literature of other cultures (and hence pedagogically unoriginal); and others arguing that Proverbs' claims of educational prowess are not reflected in its content. I will address these concerns in turn, beginning with borrowing from other cultures.

In his seminal work, *History Begins at Sumer*, Noah Kramer shows how evidence abounds for a developed system of education in ancient Sumer, stretching as far back as the third millennium BCE. Education focused on scribal training, but eventually expanded to include the study and copying of literary and creative compositions, almost all in poetic form: myths, epic tales, hymns to the gods, and proverbs.[4] This early system of Sumerian education extended right through the Akkadian Empire and on into the Babylonian empire with students learning the Sumerian language and studying Sumerian literary 'classics' for centuries after they had been written.[5] Large collections preserving these texts have been found in both public and private 'tablet houses' (i.e. libraries) throughout the population centres of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, indicating widespread knowledge of these texts and suggesting their pedagogical use.[6]

A developed educational system is also attested in the archaeology of ancient Egypt. There is a wealth of data relating to Egyptian schools, including school exercises, schoolbooks, and references to school activity in textual sources. Education in Egypt incorporated strict discipline as the norm, but also recognised the importance of other methods of teaching and

[4] Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1956, 3-4. For examples see *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi (translators), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
[5] See Steve Tinney, *Texts, Tablets and Teaching: Scribal Education in Nippur and Ur*, Expedition, Vol. 40 (2), 40-50, (1998), 46.
[6] Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*, London: SPCK, 1998, 22.

learning. Teachers were referred to as either *nb* (master) or *jtj* (father), perhaps reflecting an original pedagogical setting of domestic relationships. The educational syllabus appears to have begun with basic literacy, geography, geometry, and mathematics, before subsequent exposure to more complex literary works and to the didactic wisdom instructions which focused on ethics.[7]

Ancient Israel stood at the crossroads of these empires and their associated cultures, and the educational practices of the Hebrews probably shared much in common with them. Yet the evidence from which to recreate these practices is much sparser. The earliest documented school in Israel is the 'house of learning' of Ben Sira in the second century BCE (Sir 51:23) and whilst there are earlier examples of Palestinian inscriptions (held by some as compelling evidence for the existence of schools[8]) no significant evidence has yet been unearthed that adds substantive weight to theories of earlier schools in ancient Israel.[9]

This lack of primary evidence for schools is compounded by a lack of secondary evidence within the HB as a whole. Various texts are held to contain references to a school but, as Crenshaw shows in his important study, *Education in Ancient Israel*, they are usually ambiguous and can be used to propose the existence of education more generally, but not of schools specifically:

[7] Nikolaos Lazaridis: *Education and Apprenticeship* in Elizabeth Frood, Willeke Wendrich (eds.), UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, Los Angeles: digital2.library.ucla.edu.

[8] André Lemaire, for example, famously makes the case that these inscriptions would only have been used within a school context and so from this assumption he posits a relatively complex educational system. André Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981. Whilst much of his analysis has been widely acknowledged to have merit, others find that the evidence for schools is inconclusive, implicit at best. Crenshaw (James L. Crenshaw*, Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence,* New York: Doubleday, 1998, 101) notes the merits of Lemaire's argument but offers some robust challenges to the extent of Lemaire's conclusions. See also, Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 153; Katharine Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 26. For a catalogue of Palestinian material found see W. Horowitz, T. Oshima, and S. Sanders, 'A Bibliographical List of Cuneiform Inscriptions from Canaan, Palestine/Philistia, and the Land of Israel', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 122, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 2002), 753-766.

[9] Even Lemaire acknowledges the fragility of his proposals and believes that future discoveries will be the key to proving his theory. *Les écoles*, 84. One promising discovery was the Tel Zayit Abecedary, however, it is doubtful that this lends significant further weight to Lemaire's thesis. R. E. Tappy, and K. P. McCarter (eds), *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context*, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008, 70.

> The only texts that may allude to formal schools can also be understood without positing such an institution, although the more natural way of reading them seems to indicate an actual place where students learned to read and write.[10]

I am inclined to agree with Stuart Weeks who concludes that the evidence for a large system of formal schooling, particularly in the pre-exilic period, is 'very weak indeed'.[11]

Given this absence of evidence for developed schooling, and the proximity of ancient Israel to the highly advanced Akkadian and Egyptian cultures, a question arises: could it be that the literary sophistication found within the book of Proverbs (for example) is the result of foreign literary influence and education, rather than being reflective of the educational and intellectual reality of ancient Israel? The HB certainly bears witness to frequent interactions with these empires and there can be no doubt that there was some cultural exchange. Might *this* therefore be the basis of much Israelite literature? In this argument, Proverbs is mimicking the literature of other cultures, rather than embodying a distinctive Israelite culture and pedagogy.[12] Such a possibility was widely aired following the discovery of textual links and possible borrowing between Proverbs 22:17-24:22 and *The Teaching of Amenemope*, an Egyptian instruction, which was translated and published in 1923. There is a clear relationship between these two texts which contain numerous direct and close parallels. From this point onwards, scholars observed a number of other similarities and links between Israelite and Egyptian wisdom literature, leading some to propose a dependent relationship between Proverbs and its 'parent' Egyptian counterparts, notably in the sections 1-9; 22:17-24:22; 30:1-14 and 31.[13]

In 1994, R. N. Whybray, summarising seventy years of robust discussion on the topic, found an emerging consensus which acknowledged the existence of significant influence and

[10]Crenshaw looks at the various possible references to schools in the HB (e.g. Isaiah 28:9-13, 50:4, Proverbs 22:17-21) and shows how they are all ambiguous at best. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel,* 90-99.

[11] Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 156. Weeks believes that Proverbs can't convincingly be argued to have been primarily a school text; this is particularly true if Proverbs is dated as a predominantly pre-exilic text (see 1.4.1 below). It may have been used in schools in later stages of its composition, after the exile when the existence of schools is better attested (Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 24-28).

[12] This is more plausible if Proverbs is certainly the later text, as suggested in my discussion on dating (1.4.1).

[13] See Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, 753-767 for a comprehensive overview of the relationship of Proverbs to Egyptian material. See also chapter 9 of this thesis for a detailed analysis of Proverbs 22:17-24:22 and further discussion of the relationship with the Instruction of Amenemope. See also Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 88-89 and 23-24 for a discussion of the particular alignment of these sections of Proverbs to Egyptian material and the parallels with the 'instructions' of Proverbs 1-9.

borrowing from Egyptian and other cultures within Proverbs, but which nonetheless understood the collection as a fundamentally Israelite text.[14] This was an important turning-point in the scholarly discussion. Some twenty years later, a compelling study by Nili Shupak argues along similar lines, surveying the many 'points of contact' between Egyptian and Israelite wisdom literature (such as their 'wisdom vocabulary', structure and poetic form) but noting also the significant points of divergence, especially the polytheistic vs. monotheistic religious framework of the two corpora, that indicate the distinctiveness of the Israelite material.[15] Following Shupak and Whybray, I will take the position in this thesis that, whilst the Egyptian wisdom corpus contains interesting and sometimes illuminating links with aspects of the collection, Proverbs' underlying theological and philosophical commitments are distinctive, as are its pedagogical and rhetorical features, suggesting that, what we have in Proverbs, is more than mimicry. To take one example, noticed by Michael Fox - it is only in later Egyptian wisdom literature that there is an emerging awareness of the divergent paths within life and of a person's propensity to choose the wrong one, [16] by contrast, this awareness of two ethical paths is characteristic of Proverbs throughout the book. Beginning in the first chapter (with the picture of the man enticed to follow sinful companions by the promise of camaraderie and wealth), and continuing throughout the collection, Proverbs contains acute observations of the human psyche and the human propensity to make the wrong choices. [17]

This difference between Egyptian and Israelite wisdom literature is also illustrated in the semantic difference between the key pedagogical terms *sbzyt* (teaching/punishment[18]) and מוּסָר (this is normally translated in English as instruction or discipline, see 2.3.1). Nili Shupak sees these terms as a point of contact between the two bodies of literature. However, it is

[14] Roger N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study*, New York: Brill, 1994, 16.
[15] Nili Shupak, 'The Contribution of Egyptian Wisdom to the Study of Biblical Wisdom Literature' in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Studies*, M. Sneed (ed.), Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015, 265-304.
[16] Michael V. Fox, 'Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs', *Hebrew Studies*, Volume 48, 2007, 75-88, 76. Miriam Lichtheim (whose extensive translations of Egyptian texts remain widely used) also observes how the epilogue to the Instruction of Any (a later work) contains a 'novel' feature by introducing the idea that the son may choose to reject the instruction and walk a different path. Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Volume II*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978, 135.
[17] Fox, 'Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs', 75-77 and Michael V. Fox, 'Three Theses on Wisdom' in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Studies*, M. Sneed (ed.), Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015, 69-87, 70.
[18] *sbzyt* derives from the Egyptian verb *sbs*: 'The determinative depicting a man holding a staff, it designates both teaching and corporal punishment, thereby indicating the process whereby knowledge was transmitted from teacher to pupil in the ancient world – that is, by beating words into the student.' Shupak, 'The Contribution of Egyptian Wisdom', 266-7.

precisely in this word that I believe a significant divergence between the two is evidenced. Shupak's analysis of מוּסָר is, in my opinion, a little thin, allowing her to characterise Israelite pedagogy, with Egyptian pedagogy, as being an authoritarian approach to educating, heavily reliant on physical discipline. Yet, whilst Israelite pedagogy clearly includes the use of 'the rod' and invokes authority (through the different voices within the text, for example), in fact, מוּסָר has a much wider semantic range as I shall show below. This range of meaning is suggestive of a highly nuanced understanding of the educational task in ancient Israel and hints at Proverbs' distinctive approach to pedagogy.[19] In summary then, whilst Israelite wisdom may well draw on the principles, forms and content of earlier Egyptian wisdom, it builds on these to create, in Proverbs, a distinctive, pedagogical, wisdom-focused text. [20]

1.2.2 Proverbs as a pedagogical collection

Some scholars are rather sceptical of Proverbs' vaunted educational claims based on its content. For example, Stuart Weeks notes that:

> In broad terms, the wisdom literature is certainly educational… [however] …Nobody seeking rhetorical skill, a precise knowledge of etiquette, or almost any practical ability, would turn to the wisdom literature, which is at best sporadically helpful in such matters. In view of this, the Israelite literature might make elevating reading for adults or children but would be of little use in training them either for a profession or for a way of life.[21]

Weeks believes that, rather like the Instructions used in Egyptian schools, Proverbs would have been employed educationally in some respects but that readers, whilst encountering 'elevating' reading, would not be trained or shaped in a way of life. In a similar vein, James Crenshaw disparages Proverbs' educational merits, particularly in comparison to more reflective wisdom texts such as Job and Ecclesiastes, arguing that the sayings of Proverbs

[19] Shupak, 'The Contribution of Egyptian Wisdom', 267. See also section 2.3 of this thesis. I should add that Egyptian pedagogy may also have been more nuanced than Shupak allows.
[20] The direction of influence is highly likely to have been this way round since the Egyptian texts almost certainly emerged well before Proverbs. Amenemope, for example, can be dated fairly reliably to the 11th/10th century BCE which is almost certainly earlier than Proverbs (see 1.4.1).
[21] Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 159.

'tend towards the banal, hardly commending themselves as worthy of careful study by serious students.'[22]

Might it be that this view arises from a failure to read Proverbs with sufficient imagination? Whilst Weeks is surely correct that Proverbs is not a manual for etiquette or a profession, the contention of this thesis is that the form, rhetoric, poetry, and subject matter of Proverbs is pedagogically effective for training in a way of life. Could it be (for example) that looking to Egyptian parallels limits interpretation and that there is potential benefit to looking further afield, perhaps to more contemporary texts from the Greek world? Contrary to Weeks, Michael Fox has linked the ethical framework of Proverbs to Socratic principles, believing that Socrates's three great principles - (1) virtue is knowledge; (2) no one does wrong willingly; and (3) all virtues are one – can be observed as 'deep but unarticulated' premises within the collection.[23] Whilst he sees this as applicable primarily to Proverbs 1-9, itself likely to be the latest part of Proverbs, he successfully demonstrates that, within this part of the collection, ethical and educational paradigms are at work with a philosophical quality that sit comfortably alongside the thought of Socrates.

Christopher Ansberry builds on the work of Fox by linking Proverbs with the moral vision of Aristotle rather than Socrates, a paradigm he believes is a better fit for the entirety of the collection:

> Aristotle's emphasis on character not only supplements Socrates' ethical theory, but it also serves as a more comprehensive framework through which to view the variegated materials within the book of Proverbs.[24]

The work of these scholars suggests that the pedagogy of Proverbs might be more at home in the milieu of Classical Greece (5th to 4th centuries BCE) and the subsequent Hellenistic world (which arose in the late 4th century BCE and of which Israel was part) than amongst the educational practices of the ancient Near East.

This thesis seeks to further explore and substantiate these theories. Such a venture must, by necessity, be cautious, since the primary evidence (the wealth of tablets and other

[22] Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel*, 27.
[23] Fox, 'Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs', 78.
[24] Christopher Ansberry, 'What Does Jerusalem have to Do with Athens? The Moral Vision of the Book of Proverbs and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics', *Hebrew Studies,* Volume 51, 2010, 157-173, 161.

archaeological data) is not available to the historian of ancient Israel as it is to the Egyptologist or Sumerologist.[25] However, the book of Proverbs has its own enviable and distinctive qualities and its rhetoric, advice, and clear educational agenda is, contra Weeks, central to the pedagogy of this Israelite text and the ground from which to unearth some of Fox's 'deep but unarticulated premises'.

[25] Whilst many interesting Hebrew inscriptions have been found (e.g. Graham Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance, Volume 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, Davies, Graham and James Aitken, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance, Volume 2,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.), particularly dating from the 8th century BCE onwards, we are still remarkably reliant on extra-biblical material for our analysis and dating of texts in the HB.

1.3 Summary of aims and approach

Reconstructing the pedagogy of Proverbs must be undertaken carefully, drawing on both textual and comparative evidence. Whilst Proverbs is more introspective than its Egyptian counterparts, it is not systematic, as was observed provocatively by William Davison over a century ago when he wrote about Proverbs:

> The absence of systematic thought, which is one of its characteristics is, overall, neither a disadvantage nor a drawback. The pride of system making has been the ruin of many theologies. The desire to be complete is the besetting sin of philosophers and dogmatists and explains the transient character of many of their elaborate constructions.[26]

In accordance with this warning, what I am looking for is not an articulated 'system' but a set of pedagogical principles and methods, unarticulated and instinctive, but woven unmistakeably, embedded into the text.[27]

To discover these principles and rhetorical methods, I will begin by laying out my working assumptions regarding the date, authorship, setting and audience of Proverbs, before considering the work already done on education and pedagogy within the book. I will then build a detailed methodological approach, setting out my exegetical and analytical tools, before exegeting several sections of Proverbs, chosen for their relevance to this topic. Using this exegesis, I will then summarise my observations of the pedagogical methods and principles at work within the collection and consider them alongside the educational theories of Classical Greece, in particular those of Aristotle, and the subsequent tradition of Virtue Education which is rooted in Aristotelian pedagogy.

[26] W. Davison, *The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*, London: Charles H Kelly, 1900, 9.
[27] Fox, 'Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs', 78.

1.4 Date, authorship, and social setting of the Proverbs collection

1.4.1 Date and authorship

The book of Proverbs is resistant to being firmly dated, not least by nature of its ahistorical genre and concerns. The primary evidence for dating is in the attributions of its sub-collections (Proverbs 1-9, 10-22:16, 22:17-24:22, 24:23-34, 25-29, 30, 31). Apart from this, Proverbs excludes any historical reference and addresses topics and themes, many of which have universal and ongoing relevance.[28] Neither does Proverbs have an identifiable 'author' in the traditional sense, for proverbs are, by their very nature, often authored by communal recognition rather than by individuals.[29] There is nothing to suggest that the proverbs were 'authored' by the various figures to whom Proverbs is attributed, rather that they were collected and arranged by them.[30] This is an important distinction, suggesting that the earliest material in Proverbs could predate the collection itself by an unknown length of time before the various sub-collections came into existence.[31]

The attributions are as follows: Proverbs 10:1 suggests that King Solomon is responsible for Proverbs 10:1 to 22:16; there are 'thirty sayings of the wise' in 22:17-24:22 and further 'sayings of the wise' in 24:23-34; the men of Hezekiah are said to compile more of Solomon's proverbs in chapters 25–29; chapter 30 records the sayings of Agur; and finally, chapter 31 of King Lemuel. Proverbs 1-9, although including a Solomonic superscription in Proverbs 1:1, should not necessarily be understood as being included in the primary Solomonic collection since, as Kidner argues, these chapters could more naturally be read as an extended introduction *to* the proverbs of Solomon which then begin at 10:1.[32] However, as Ansberry (for example) argues: 'Rather than functioning as a declaration of the document's "author,"

[28] Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 19-20.
[29] Murphy, *Proverbs*. Vol. 22. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1998, xx.
[30] The wisdom tradition associated with Solomon states only that he 'spoke 3000 proverbs' (1 Kings 4:32, ESV) and the 'Teacher' in Ecclesiastes (also traditionally associated with Solomon) 'pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs..,' (Ecclesiastes 12:9 ESV).
[31] Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 18.
[32] Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, London: Tyndale Press, 1964, 22.

the title of Proverbs may introduce the voice of the tradition.'[33] In this case, the whole of the collection, including Proverbs 1-9, should be read as introduced by 1:1. Whilst some direct Solomonic involvement with the material should not be ruled out,[34] it is likely that, given his reputation for wisdom, the superscription to Solomon is employed honorifically across more material than he was responsible for. This locates Proverbs within an Israelite and international[35] wisdom tradition in which Solomon is recognised as an authoritative figure.[36]

Taking this as an admission of uncertainty when it comes to date and authorship of the Solomonic material, I find fewer reasons to question the remaining attributions. Unfortunately, because most are either unknown or collective and non-specific, this means that only the attribution to the men of Hezekiah (Proverbs 25:1) is of any use in dating the collection.[37] Here we find the phrase: 'These *also* are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah copied.' (Proverbs 25.1, ESV, italics mine), suggesting that a previous collection was already in existence by the time this copying began, perhaps much of Proverbs 10:1-22:16,[38] and suggesting a date (eighth to seventh centuries BCE) at which the collection

[33] Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs,* Germany: De Gruyter, 2010, 45.

[34] Whilst it is wise not to speculate, it would go beyond the evidence to discount his personal involvement as a possibility. It seems likely that there is some historical reality behind the accounts of Solomon's reign in the HB and that therefore his reputation for wisdom and the accounts of his reign are not simply post-exilic fabrications. The 'minimalist' school of archaeological thought, which suggests that most of Israelite history is a fiction, has fallen from favour in recent years and a growing number of archaeologists now take a more moderate view. E.g. William Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know, and When Did They Know It?: What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001, 97–157; Israel Finkelstein, Amihay Mazar and Brian B. Schmidt*, The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel.* Vol.17. Archaeology and Biblical Studies, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007, 107; Nadav Na'aman, *Ancient Israel's History and Historiography: The First Temple Period*, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006, 56; and Garfinkel et al., 'State Formation in Judah: Biblical Tradition, Modern Historical Theories, and Radiometric Dates at Khirbet Qeiyafa'*, Radiocarbon* 54, no. 3-4, 367.

[35] For a discussion of Solomon's possible international links, see Katharine J. Dell, 'Solomon's Wisdom and the Egyptian Connection', in *The Centre and the Periphery: Festschrift for Walter Brueggemann*, eds D J A Clines, J Middlemas and E Holt, Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2010, 21-36 and Shupak, 'The Contribution of Egyptian Wisdom', 295.

[36] Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 3.

[37] This position is argued for, among others, by James Crenshaw (*Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, Louiseville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998, 25) who can see no reason for this attribution if it is not historical. See also Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 69. Michael Carasik disagrees, attempting to show through connections between these proverbs and those of earlier collections that this attribution could be a literary phenomenon. His connections are a little tenuous however and appear to simply demonstrate the importance of reading Proverbs within the wider context of the HB. Michael Carasik, 'Who Were the "Men Of Hezekiah" (Proverbs XXV 1)?'*, Vetus Testamentum,* XLIV, (1994), 289-300, 289.

[38] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31,* 776.

first begins to resemble something like the one we have today, with its roots in the earlier period of the monarchy, perhaps as far back as King Solomon (mid-tenth century).[39]

This gives a *terminus post quem* for the collection, however the final form may have been reached much later. Some scholars, for example, believe that Proverbs 1-9 were the last to be written, suggesting a fairly late date for their composition.[40] The sophistication of these chapters is central to this theory: they appear to be primarily literary compositions, instructions and poems rather than groups of individual proverbs arranged together as in the later chapters of Proverbs.[41] Yet, to conclude that Proverbs 1-9 is therefore an entirely late composition, particularly given the links they have with the form of the (much earlier) Egyptian Instructions, seems hard to defend. As Katharine Dell shows, whilst some aspect of arrangement and editing may well have taken place in the post-exilic period (for example), to conclude that they are an entirely post-exilic composition is extremely difficult to justify on the basis of the evidence available.[42]

All of this suggests that the processes of collection, arrangement and editing of Proverbs would have taken place over several centuries, before and (possibly) after the exile. The cohesive final form of Proverbs (which mutely witnesses to the hand of a later, unknown editor, or multiple editors, who redacted the collection into its final form), substantiates this

[39] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000*,* 6. These early roots are not universally accepted. Philip Davies, for example, suspects that much of what we now have within the HB is the result of a period of intensive post-exilic scribal activity. He argues that: 'To assume that the canonized writing originated in the monarchic period, other than in the form of dimly recognized archived source material, is no more than a hunch.' (Davies, *Scribes and Schools*, 87) Davies is, however, an advocate of the minimalist school of archaeological thought and therefore fails to consider the absolute priority a group in exile would give to both the oral and literary preservation of their stories, history, traditions and poetry. (Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible,* Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2007, 9-15).

[40] E.g. William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, London: SCM Press, 1970, 2; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 48-49, Christine Yoder, *Proverbs.* Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Abingdon Press, 2009, xxiii; Milton P. Horne, *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*, Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2003, 20; Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, 55. William Brown is comfortable saying that 'Most scholars agree that the *book* of Proverbs was finalized in the late Persian period of Israel's history'. *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder,* Oxford; New York: OUP, 2010, 162.

[41] Murphy, *Proverbs,* xx; Whybray, *Proverbs,* 14; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 48-49.

[42] Katharine Dell makes this case in *Social and Theological Context*. Whilst recognising the possibility of some earlier oral components, she believes these chapters were mostly literary in origin (though recognising the uncertain nature of such assertions). See chapter 1, especially pages 29 and 49. See also 1.4.2 below for a discussion of Proverbs and the oral-literary continuum. Dell also notes the paradox of saying, on the one hand, that their literary form suggests a more recent date whilst, on the other, that they resemble an Egyptian Instruction – a very ancient form indeed (*Social and Theological Context,* 20). See Weeks *Instruction and Imagery,* chapter 2 'Proverbs 1–9 as an Instruction', 33-66 for an extended discussion of this issue.

conclusion.[43] Nonetheless, whilst Proverbs may have a post-exilic completion date, it evidently existed in its current form well before the time of Ben Sira (early second century B.C.E) who emulates its proverbial style at points.[44] This gives a *terminus ante quem* sometime between the return from exile towards the end of the sixth century BCE and the late Hellenistic period in the third century BCE.[45]

This discussion recommends several conclusions with relevance for the approach of this thesis:

1. The material within Proverbs includes sayings collected from the life, culture, and religion of the nation of Israel (notwithstanding some degree of international borrowing) over a period of several centuries. One of the results of this long process of expansion is that Proverbs is not a univocal text. In a recent study of the composition of Proverbs 1-9, Achim Müller finds that the way in which these different voices have been brought together over a long period of time creates 'eine kunstvolle Polyphonie von aufeinander bezogenen, widerstreitenden Stimmen'.[46] I will argue that the careful arrangement of the collection uses this polyphonic character (among other things) for important pedagogical effect.
2. Whilst it may be interesting to know exactly which parts of the collection were composed when, such proposals are extremely speculative. I will therefore focus on the final form of the text, recognising in the collection as it stands an intentional and carefully edited piece of literature.
3. The late completion suggests that the final editors (at least) would have been aware of much of the remainder of the HB when Proverbs was completed. This will be

[43] Some scholars turned to Form Criticism and other literary-historical methods in an alternative attempt to date the Proverbs collection, identifying layers of composition and redaction using historical markers which allow them to show how different parts or phases of the collection correspond to different historical periods or stages of historical development. For example, McKane proposed that the proverbs themselves developed from the one-limbed form to a two-limbed form to longer 'instructions', and that the more explicitly 'theological' proverbs are later religious additions to an inherently 'secular' wisdom (McKane, *Proverbs*, 1-2). It is now widely accepted however that, whilst providing some useful insight into the different types of literary forms found in the text, this approach does not do justice to the inner textual complexities of the collection. See Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1988, 3 and Katharine Dell, *Get Wisdom, Get Insight: An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Literature*, London: DLT, 2000, 27-31.

[44] Leo Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History.* Louiseville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, 234.

[45] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 6.

[46] Achim Müller, *Proverbien 1-9: Der Weisheit neue Kleider*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011, 295.

important when it comes to considering possible intertextual links between Proverbs and the remainder of the HB.

1.4.2 Social setting of the collection

The discussion above indicates that the collection probably existed in various spheres and at various times during its long composition. A pre-exilic, courtly origin is likely given Proverbs' early roots, its Solomonic attribution and the involvement of the men of Hezekiah.[47] Beyond this, determining the wider social setting of the collection is more challenging, particularly in the later stages of its creation and use.

As discussed above (1.2.1), there is not currently enough evidence for a widespread school tradition in Israel to make a strong case for Proverbs being primarily a school text (despite its clear focus on education), even in the later stages of its formation. It will certainly have been used educationally from its earliest stages, but this is not to say that it is a school text-book, rather the text implies a more intimate, domestic setting and no compelling external evidence appears to justify locating Proverbs in the context of a school when envisaging anything comparable to the schools of the wider ancient Near East. It also, as Stuart Weeks points out (discussing Proverbs 1-9), does not have the form of a classical school text: 'if we are to give weight to its association with the instruction genre, that association should lead us to read Proverbs 1–9 as sophisticated poetry, not as a school textbook'.[48] This offers a further reason why, without discounting its possible use in schools, the school is unlikely to have been its primary context.

Proverbs is also unlikely to have been the product of a distinct scribal class. Comparison with scribal texts from Egypt shows that such Egyptian Instructions make self-conscious

[47] Ansberry argues that a courtly nature can be observed throughout Proverbs. I would suggest that, this need not always be a literal court setting - it could also be a rhetorical tool, used (in part) to increase the ethos and pathos of the text, placing each reader in the position of a 'royal son'. Nonetheless, Ansberry's theory is carefully constructed and offers compelling reason to propose the most likely home for the origins of the text of Proverbs as being within the royal court (Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son*, especially 184-190).

[48] Stuart Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 60. Weeks believes this makes Proverbs a text fundamentally unsuited to education, a position which I disagree with (see 1.2.2 above).

references to scribes, a feature lacking in Proverbs.[49] In any event, to propose too much correspondence in scribal function between these cultures, as Katharine Dell remarks, 'raises again the question of how far one can reconstruct the situation in Israel from ancient Near Eastern parallels.'[50] Looking forward within Hebrew culture to the writing of Ben Sira (who was of a scribal class), there is a description of the ideal sage which exalts the profession of the scribe and scholar of the law as the most noble (Sir 38:24-39:11).[51] This, again, suggests that the absence of such accolades in Proverbs mean that its primary source was not a scribal class. Scribes undoubtedly existed in Israel since they would have been needed for record keeping and drawing up treaties, contracts and other legal documents, but the observation above implies they were less of a discrete group and operated as individual administrators (as Baruch does in Jeremiah 32), possibly organised into small, functional guilds.[52]

There must, though, have been some kind of literary and educated elite in Israel who handled the editing and transmission of Proverbs, and it seems their most plausible identity, particularly in its later stages of Proverbs' composition, is 'the Wise', whose attribution is found in 22:17 and 24:23. Von Rad proposes the existence of such a group, but highlights the challenges presented in defining them. He draws on the portrait of the wise man in Sirach as a later image he believes can be partially read back into the 'old wisdom' teachers.[53] The focus of the wise was: the study of the law; seeking out the wisdom of the ancients; a concern with prophecies, the subtleties of parables, the hidden meanings of proverbs and devotion to prayer (see Sirach 39:1-11). Precisely how much of this can be read back into the wisdom teachers of Israel several centuries earlier is a question that may never be conclusively answered. However, there is likely to have been a degree of continuity and thus, drawing on von Rad's insights, I imagine a fluid group of devout, literate men, not priests, but those who operated within the upper echelons of Israelite society, possibly in proximity to the King

[49] See for example chapter 30 in The Instruction of Amenemope, The Instruction of Amunnakhte, and The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage, pages 243, 221 and 197 respectively in Edward Wente, R. O. Faulkner, and William Simpson. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1973.
[50] Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 28.
[51] See Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*, 228-230 for a discussion of the role of the scribe at the time of Ben Sira.
[52] See the Satire on the Trades, and Papyrus Sallier which highlight the exalted nature of the scribal profession. Wente et al, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 432–441. McNutt also makes a case for the more limited nature of scribes in Israel. Paula McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999, 168. James Crenshaw suggests that scribes may have formed (and been educated within) small, vocational guilds (*Education in Ancient Israel,* 107-108).
[53] von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 20-23.

(under the monarchy), who had a reputation for and interest in wisdom.[54] The 'men of Hezekiah' might indicate such a group, or the 'scholar scribes' imagined by Karel van der Toorn in his study of scribal culture within the HB.[55] Such a group, it seems to me, are the most likely custodians and editors of Proverbs.

What are we to conclude then, on this assumption, of the wider social context within which the material of Proverbs may have been used in the context of education? The widespread assertion that its early home was the court and then the nomenclature of 'the Wise', suggests a text limited to the homes of the elite with few students outside the upper echelons of Israelite society. Yet its non-nationalistic, more universal focus and the likely communal origin of so many of its proverbs, suggests that Proverbs could also have been of interest to many outside this educated elite.[56] Throughout the period of its composition, the predominance of rural dwelling in Israel would have meant that traditional family and clan structures were the primary units of organisation, and the locus of education among most of the populace.[57] Whilst the primary concerns of this illiterate rural population would have been related to daily existence, there would probably have been some (oral), education in the national narratives, songs, poetry, proverbs and law.[58] Within this setting, a collection such as Proverbs, with its

[54] One is reminded of Luke's depiction of the men of Athens (the home of classical wisdom) who spent their time discussing all the latest ideas (Acts 17:21).

[55] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 81-82. He locates the home of these scholar scribes within the Temple, but also acknowledges a wider sphere of operation. Given the absence of liturgical, cultic and legal material within Proverbs and the breadth of sphere identified by Van der Toorn, it is eminently plausible that, among these scholar scribes, were some whose particular focus was wisdom ('the wise') who were responsible for editing the wisdom texts and represented the immediate social context of its composition.

[56] Stuart Weeks makes this point very strongly: 'The universality of so much in wisdom literature is probably the single most important reason for its wide dissemination', *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 16.

[57] Avraham Faust (ʹAbandonment, Urbanization, Resettlement and the Formation of the Israelite State'. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66, no. 4, 147–61) argues from his studies of household archaeology, for a larger scale urbanisation, occurring from the late 11th to the 8th century BCE and particularly in the 10th century, accompanied by the abandonment of various rural sites. Faust uses his evidence to suggest a reasonably complex administrative system throughout Israel, particularly in the urban centres and particularly in the northern kingdom. Nonetheless, his analysis stands in opposition to the prevailing view and, even under his scheme, the occurrence of true urbanisation remains at the level estimated by others (around 30%, e.g. McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, 152), as those subject to forced urbanisation would probably have retained their rural, pastoral characteristics.

[58] Michael A. MacDonald, ('Literacy in an Oral Environment', in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard*, Millard, A. R., Piotr Bienkowski, C. Mee, and E. A. Slater (eds), 49-118, New York; London: T&T Clark, 2005, 52-54) provides an insightful analysis of societies with little or no use for literacy. From nomadic societies in the middle east and north west Africa to Sweden in the 18th and 19th centuries MacDonald demonstrates that a fundamentally oral society can interact with, and even use literature and the written word, without changing its fundamentally oral nature.

widespread appeal, could have been orally transmitted and preserved. As Susan Niditch claims in her book, *Oral World and Written Word*:

> Even once there are kings in ancient Israel... ...the vast majority of people continue to lead agrarian lives. They work the land, live in villages, led by elders, and continue to tell stories, preserve custom and law, and cite proverbs orally.[59]

Thus, whilst the collection might have been most at home in literate circles, a more widespread oral transmission could have been accomplished by virtue of Proverbs' appositeness for oral transmission, its universality, and porous societal boundaries.

Such a possibility must remain speculative but, regardless of the particular societal sphere in which proverbial material was studied, there is arguably more evidence on which to base conclusions regarding its specific educational setting in regard to the characters and relationships revealed in its pages. Proverbs itself suggests that a primary locus of education is the parent-child relationship – i.e. the home (e.g. Proverbs 1:8-9). This possibility is one that Claudia Camp thinks is particularly likely based on the unusual equality given to the mother in Proverbs with regards to the educational task, suggesting some correspondence with a real-life home education setting.[60] This is emphasised through the parallelism of the father/mother in the text since, were the father figure and home setting metaphorical rather than literal, it is unlikely that the mother figure (for whom there would be no natural metaphorical equivalent) would be given such prominence.[61] Ansberry also notes this phenomenon, asserting that the inclusion of the maternal appellation 'seems to indicate a domestic setting, for it assumes a relational dimension that transcends the teacher-pupil

[59] Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature*, London: SPCK, 1997, 24. Whilst there may have been some requirements for literacy or record keeping due to the interaction of the rural communities with the growing urban population and with the state, these requirements are likely to have been slight. Niditch has a problem with an overly literary account of the genesis and evolution of the HB. She does not believe that it is simply a record of an oral tradition, rather that the whole lies at varying points on the 'oral-literate continuum.' This theory requires the existence of a small literate and educated class (as outlined above) but it also requires that much of the HB, including Proverbs, would have been accessible orally to the wider population, to a greater or lesser extent, held in a collective treasury of national oral material.
[60] Claudia Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Vol. 11, Bible and Literature Series, Almond (JSOT Press), 1985, p.82 and 248-53. Camp believes that the weight of evidence for this setting pushes the likely date of the final editing of the collection into the post-exilic period when the family unit became of even greater significance to the stability of Israel and the preservation of its religious and cultural heritage.
[61] There are, for example in Sumer, known occasions in the ancient world of teachers being labelled as 'father' but no corresponding examples exist for the use of 'mother'. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 6.

relationship.'[62] No doubt this strict domestic setting would not have been the only context in which material from Proverbs would have been used: it would almost certainly have extended to tutor-pupil relationships and to small schooling groups, but it will be assumed as the primary context for the purposes of my rhetorical analysis.[63]

In summary, this study will proceed on the premise that Proverbs is a predominantly early (pre-exilic) text, some of it having existed orally and possibly used in the education of the wider population, but probably put together in written form within a courtly setting and finally by 'the wise' during the centuries before and after the exile. This does not mean that the setting for its use was not primarily domestic, rather the evidence points towards the collection being used for education within a parent-child relationship, as the text itself asserts.

This sets the context for the creation and use of Proverbs which will be assumed throughout the thesis as it attempts to reconstruct the pedagogy represented in Proverbs. Whilst the text will be treated as a complete piece of literature, I will remember that it may often have been heard and spoken rather than read. For this reason the recipients of the collection will be referred to as 'reader' and 'hearer' interchangeably since the collection exists on an oral-literary continuum.[64] No attempt will be made beyond the discussions in this chapter to more precisely locate the text in different segments of society or periods of Israel's history. The source criticism and form criticism of the latter half of the twentieth century, which attempted just this, brought helpful and varied insights. However, many of the conclusions drawn rest on extensive historical and literary speculation and there has been an increasing recognition that 'Israel and its literature are much more complex than that.'[65]

[62] Ansberry, along with Whybray, thinks that the domestic setting is a reality but was most likely a high ranking one. Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son,* 41 and R. N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the book of Proverbs*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990, 45.
[63] Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son*, 42-45. Leo Perdue approaches the question of setting from the opposite direction, arguing that it was the existing practices of education in the home which were transmitted to the centres of wisdom first via fathers – the 'sages' of the family – and then by village elders into clan and tribal wisdom which made its way eventually into sapiental literature (Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 70).
[64] See Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 74 and Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning*, 3 for a discussion of this continuum.
[65] Katharine Dell and Will Kynes (eds), *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, London: T&T Clark, 2019, 2.

1.5 Approach to translation

When translating the text of Proverbs, I will pay particular attention to Robert Alter who, discussing translation of the poetry of Proverbs, remarks that:

> The poets in Proverbs constantly exploit this terrific compactness to which Hebrew lends itself, and the effect is often blunted or destroyed in the wordiness of translations… In Proverbs… …where so often compactness is all, translation frequently flattens a pointed thrust into a clumsy ruler swat.[66]

This will be the strategy of my own translations which will seek to capture the compact, blunt, and often ambiguous nature of the statements within Proverbs. I will consider the translation decisions made by other commentators and translators, referring at points to the Masoretic Hebrew Text as reconstructed in the *BHS* with reference also to Fox's eclectic edition,[67] but I will diverge from other translators to follow a literary approach to translation which reflects the convictions of this thesis that much of the pedagogical effectiveness of the proverbs lies in their literary form and rhetoric. Literary representation will therefore be given precedence over linguistic equivalence in my own translations.

מוּסָר will be rendered as *musar* in recognition of the inadequacy of any single English word to convey this term.

Hebrew text will normally be pointed within the thesis, except for verbs where the root will usually be given without pointing. The reason for pointing or otherwise will normally be to try and best illustrate the vocal similarities and repetition within and between proverbs.

[66] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, New York: Basic Books, 1985, 166.

[67] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition with Introduction and Textual Commentary,* Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015. Karl Elliger, Willhelm Rudolph, and Adrian Schenker, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2014. An eclectic edition has the advantage of taking into account multiple sources and points of textual criticism, and, whilst the author's stated primary aim for the edition is the conservative reconstruction of the MT and any deviations from the BHS or other significant scholarly positions are clearly stated, the final decision is mediated by an author with certain subjective prior commitments (for example, in Fox's case, to the relative dating of different sections of Proverbs). Fox, *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition,* 2-3.

Chapter 2 Pedagogy in Proverbs: a review of scholarship and a consideration of the etymology of מוּסָר

2.1 The pedagogical focus of Proverbs

The centrality of education and pedagogy to Proverbs is well attested. As Carol Fontaine writes: 'Here we find ourselves confronted with literature produced by a didactic, intellectual tradition'. She continues, 'the boredom and frustration inherent in pedagogy have even been cited as the life setting of personifications found in Proverbs 1-9, as wise teachers attempt to motivate male students more interested in Dame Folly than Lady Wisdom.' [68] The educational nature of Proverbs also infuses the whole of Dell's monograph on social context in Proverbs;[69] whilst Fox remarks that: 'The book of Proverbs is, above all, a didactic text'; and Perdue, writing on Proverbs 1, that, '…the introduction serves as an invitation to pursue the study of wisdom.'[70]

Several scholars have been more specific, suggesting that these pedagogical goals are focused around the ethical formation of character. For example, Carol Newsom believes that there is an emphasis within Proverbs on the 'acquisition of proper insight and the formation of proper desires, so that one does not in fact experience moral conflict but is drawn reliably to what is right.'[71] Claudia Camp, whilst acknowledging Newsom's ideas, disagrees that this therefore assumes the absence of moral conflict. Rather, she sees the pedagogical methods of Proverbs as directed towards negotiating a way *through* this moral conflict. She believes that Proverbs acknowledges the relative, and often conflicting, desires of human beings and that, whilst it asserts the ideal of 'the self in-control', factors outside such control make it a rhetorical and pedagogical ideal rather than a reality.[72]

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[68] Carol Fontaine, 'Proverb Performance', *JS0T* 12 no.1 (1985) 87-103, 87.
[69] Dell, *Social and Theological Context.* See especially the introduction and chapter 1.
[70] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 233; Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 78.
[71] Carol Newsom, 'Models of the Moral Self: Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism', *JBL*, Vol. 131, No. 1 (2012), 5-25, 14.
[72] Claudia Camp, 'Proverbs and the Problems of the Moral Self', *JSOT*, Vol 40 no.1 (2015), 25-42, 30, 35, 38.

How then does Proverbs achieve this pedagogical goal of developing character and shaping desire? Through what strategies are such goals realizable? This leads me first to the work of Christine Yoder who proposes that:

> repetition and contradiction [in Proverbs] buttress vital claims in the book about the limits of human knowledge; that is, the reader's experience of repetition and contradiction reinforces certain proverbial content, making it more likely that readers will emerge with the humility characteristic of "fearers of Yahweh."[73]

Yoder here, in her articulation of the pedagogical approach of Proverbs, gives an important example of Proverbs' approach, suggesting that *a literary device* (repetition and contradiction) *will develop character* (humility) in the reader. This converges with one of the arguments made in this thesis: that the pedagogical methods of the collection may be embedded within the proverbial form, the arrangement of the sayings, or in associated literary features. Yoder also, in her socio-economic study of Woman Wisdom, cites personified Wisdom as a 'pedagogical figure used to teach young boys,' which is, likewise, a claim that the pedagogy of the collection is found in a literary feature of the text.[74]

Daniel Estes, in his 1997 monograph *Hear, my Son*, operating from similar convictions, has attempted to find, within Proverbs 1-9, a 'more systematic statement of the pedagogical theory that underlies its teachings.'[75] This is a project like that being attempted here (though I avoid speaking in terms of 'systems'), but draws only on Proverbs 1-9 and uses a primarily thematic and connective approach, rather than working within the existing layout of the text (as this thesis sets out to do). Nonetheless Estes makes several useful observations which bear relevance to this thesis. In particular, he explores the rhetorical strategies of the text used to develop character, highlighting the different forms he observes, such as: command, rhetorical questions, illustration, and invitation. Estes says that these strategies are employed in the pedagogical vision of Proverbs by a teacher with authority, but who is also a guide and

[73] Christine Yoder, 'Forming "Fearers of Yahweh": Repetition and Contradiction as Pedagogy in Proverbs' in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty Fifth Birthday*, Ronald L. Troxel et al (eds), Winona Lake, In.: Eisenbrauns, 2005, 167-184, 169.
[74] Christine Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 1-9 and 31:10-31*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001, 114.
[75] Daniel Estes, *Hear, My Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1-9*, Nottingham: IVP, 1997, 13.

facilitator, ensuring that the learner is carefully and appropriately taught to navigate the paths of life in the way of wisdom as they develop their own independent competence.[76]

More recently, William Brown revised and expanded his earlier work *Character in Crisis,* a seminal work in exploring character formation in Proverbs.[77] The revision is titled *Wisdom's Wonder* and recognises two distinctive features of the Wisdom Literature as a category: a concern with the formation of character and a focus on creation as wisdom's central theme: 'For the biblical sages, the world — both natural and international — was their classroom. The will, specifically its desire and formation, was their goal.'[78] The hermeneutic key that Brown finds for unlocking the way in which these themes fit together is the idea of wonder and, in a fresh and insightful analysis, he brings the concept of wonder to bear on Wisdom studies showing how:

> …wonder instils a reverent, even fearful, receptivity toward the Other, a posture of standing back or bending the knee. Such is wonder's affinity with awe, even fear. At the same time, wonder also quickens the desire to venture forth to know more, to know the Other. Wonder ignites the "eros of inquiry," the love of knowing.[79]

It can immediately be seen how this overlaps with one of the pivotal claims of Proverbs - that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10) - and gives Brown a position from which to construct a pedagogy so that he can go on to state that: 'If the (trans)formation of character is wisdom's overarching goal, then the means to that goal involves, I hope to show, the cultivation of wonder.'[80]

Whilst Brown has done an admirable job of bringing an important aspect of Wisdom Studies to the fore, I remain unconvinced by his attempt to make wonder a heuristic framework through which to view the entirety of the Wisdom Literature. This is especially true when it comes to his analysis of the pedagogy of Proverbs where his emphasis on the cultivation of wonder as a synthesising concept leads him to neglect other significant means at the disposal of the collection for the formation of character. This is seen especially in his analysis of

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[76] Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 124 and 134.
[77] William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.
[78] William P. Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder: Character, Creation, and Crisis in the Bible's Wisdom Literature,* Kindle Edition: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014, 5.
[79] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 23.
[80] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 27.

Proverbs 10-22:16 which includes (for example) only a cursory mention of the possibility of larger structures but assumes a contemplative, 'wondering', approach to individual proverbs. The problem here is that he arrives at this view based on a prior commitment to a framework and thus, arguably, misses several the pedagogical tools that Proverbs effectively deploys in the formation of character. Nonetheless, Brown offers an insightful exegesis of the prologue and other component parts of Proverbs 1-9, and his approach is especially helpful at identifying the way Proverbs attempts to shape and form desire.

Prior to this, Brown wrote an essay entitled 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9'. This is an analysis of the evolving nature of the wisdom within Proverbs as it moves towards the concluding depiction of the 'wife of noble character' in Proverbs 31:10-31. What Brown demonstrates effectively is that the whole of chapters 10:1-31:9, as he asserts, 'profile a certain direction of moral formation consonant with the pedagogical contours of the book as a whole.'[81] Whilst engaging with this 'pedagogical movement' is not the specific aim of this thesis it adds support to my theory that intentional arrangement and ordering of proverbs can be discerned outside of Proverbs 1-9.

What all these scholars find in common is a recognition that the pedagogy of Proverbs is neither simplistic nor encapsulated by a straightforward authoritarian model. Instead, there is a widely held view that Proverbs seeks to persuade and that the collection is a work of considerable pedagogical sophistication, directed towards the formation of character and the pursuit of wisdom. Two scholars, on whose work I will particularly rely, have articulated this conviction in more detail and their work will now be considered.

[81] William Brown, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9', in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community and Biblical Interpretation*, Brown, W. (ed), Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans, 2002, 150-82, 154.

2.2 The pedagogy of wisdom: the pedagogy of מוּסָר

One of the most well-known essays that directly addresses the pedagogy of Proverbs is by Michael Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2'. Fox asserts that the 'harsh and mindless' education imagined by modern scholarship as the norm in ancient Israel is undermined, in Proverbs at least, by 'far more subtle, nuanced and thoughtful ideas about pedagogy than the common picture would have it.'[82] After making the point, from the prologue of Proverbs, that the collection '..proceeds from, reflects, and expresses certain beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning', he goes on to examine the pedagogy apparent in Proverbs 2, a chapter that he believes 'devotes special attention to education as a topic in itself.'[83] Fox firstly notes the step by step process of wisdom education through which the chapter progresses. The son is encouraged first to 'imbibe and absorb' the words of the teacher, before beginning an ever more active search for wisdom. He is then incited towards this pursuit through the rhetorically sophisticated promises and warnings that follow, as Fox observes:

> Lecture II aims at encouraging the neophyte in the search for wisdom by leading him through the logic of the educational process… …Here it is the exordium that carries the central message of the chapter, while the lesson's function is essentially rhetorical, to illustrate the exordium's message. [84]

He follows Sa'adia Gaon, the medieval Jewish commentator, in seeing a two-stage pedagogy, including an essential divine dimension:

> It commences with the father's teaching and its rote incorporation by the child, but this must be complemented by the learner's own thought and inquiry. Then God steps into the picture and grants wisdom… Education is thus a cooperative effort of child, parents, and God. [85]

[82] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 233.
[83] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 234.
[84] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 243.
[85] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 243.

This assessment of pedagogy in Proverbs 2 leads Fox to the following concluding (and important) statement:

> Wisdom… …is a configuration of character, a compound of knowledge, fears, expectations, and desires that enables one to identify the right path and keep to it. Wisdom means not only knowing but also wanting to do what is right and to avoid sin… …the sage of Proverbs 2 believes that education, with God's help, can achieve this psychological rectification individually, in the present. This is pedagogy as מוּסָר, the training of moral character.[86]

Fox shows here how the acquisition of wisdom is centred on the both knowing and desiring what is right. It has an ethical purpose which, far from denying moral conflict (as Newsom asserts[87]), is an attempt to *resolve* moral conflict. To attain this wisdom, says Fox, Proverbs commends and models 'pedagogy as מוּסָר' i.e. the methods of education that will allow the pupil to become the possessor of wisdom. Whilst Fox does not have space in this article to expand on this idea, it is one to which this thesis will devote significant attention.

A similar concept is explored by Anne Stewart in her monograph *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs.* Whilst Stewart does not credit Fox directly with the concept of 'pedagogy as מוּסָר', he has clearly been influential in her approach and she arrives at a similar insight:

> [מוּסָר] …is not simply the lesson itself or the action of correction… …it is more broadly the nature of education that the sages advance. In this sense, it is a multifaceted concept that extends to the various modes of intellectual, emotional, and moral development.[88]

Stewart then expands on this understanding of the concept of מוּסָר, using the term as a framework to explore Proverbs' pedagogy. She explores the concept within Proverbs by separating it into four 'models of מוּסָר': rebuke; motivation; desire; and imagination. She points out that these are not categories distinguished by the book itself, but are heuristic categories used to clarify the 'complexity of pedagogy in the book.'[89]

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[86] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 243.
[87] Newsom, 'Models of the Moral Self', 14.
[88] Anne Stewart, Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 78.
[89] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 79.

Stewart's 'model of rebuke' extends to include 'both physical punishment and verbal correction.' Stewart asserts that the goal of rebuke in Proverbs is always the right orientation of character and is never an end in itself but a means of diverting the student away from the wrong path: 'The model of rebuke is ultimately about the acquisition of knowledge and the establishment of moral norms.'[90] This model of rebuke is, she believes, 'at the heart of Proverbs' pedagogy.'[91]

She moves on to discuss her 'model of motivation' which 'hinges on the convergence of a strong conviction about the operative structure of order in the world, as well as an understanding of human psychology.'[92] By this, Stewart means that Proverbs' motivational appeal takes into account the reality of human self-interest and is not naïve about the way in which people are motivated to action. After outlining different philosophical positions on moral motivation (which suggest that moral motivation is rooted respectively in emotion, intrinsic desire, belief, habit or some combination of these factors), Stewart uses several 'paradigms of motivation' to discuss the manner in which Proverbs seeks to motivate its readers. From this analysis she can conclude that the use of motivation is varied and pervasive within Proverbs, appealing to belief, harnessing desire, and activating emotive response.[93]

The model of desire that Stewart goes on to discuss, is not about harnessing desire (as in the model of motivation) but the process of shaping and directing desire:

> …the book participates in shaping the desires of its students as it patterns various desires and desirers over the course of the poems and proverbial sayings. In this respect, the book itself functions to shape the desires and, consequently, the character of the student.[94]

Stewart calls this process the 'poetic patterning' of desire, proposing that the primary means Proverbs employs to shape desire is closely linked to its poetic form. This form enlivens Proverbs' commendations and warnings to stimulate and shape desire for the path of wisdom. This focus on shaping desire suggests to Stewart an instinctive understanding that: 'The student's very self is at stake in the pursuit and consummation of desire, for the objects

[90] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 87.
[91] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 78.
[92] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 104.
[93] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 128.
[94] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 145.

of one's desire will reflect a particular kind of lack and shape the student's self in their resemblance.'[95]

As Stewart, finally, approaches the model of 'imagination' she reacts strongly against the '…notion that Proverbs' wisdom is simplistic or naïve' that she maintains is the predominant view in biblical scholarship. In contrast to this assertion, she finds strong support in much recent scholarship to support her claim that the 'wealth of figurative language and variety of literary forms, evidences immense imagination on the part of the sages who produced it and handed it on.' Given that predominant views in scholarship is subjective territory, she is on firmer ground when she claims that 'the significance of imagination for the pedagogical function of the book has not been fully appreciated'. This pedagogical function, she believes, is apprehended most clearly in the poetic form of the book which indicates that the sages responsible for editing the collection understood moral reasoning to be fundamentally imaginative:

> Proverbs suggests that moral reasoning relies not on the literal application of rigid doctrines or rules, as if memorizing the book would guarantee wisdom, but instead it presumes that the proper application of one's knowledge requires the mental acuity to discern how known concepts apply to new and unforeseen situations, which is essentially an imaginative enterprise.

The first tool of imagination that Stewart finds within Proverbs is the prototype. The prototype is the range of characters and scenarios depicted in Proverbs (the fool, the wise, the strange woman etc.) that are a binary conglomeration of characteristics or situations, each found individually, but never completely concentrated in a character we can term exclusively, say, 'a fool' or 'a prudent person'. Thus, imagination is required, for Proverbs calls its listeners to compare themselves to these extrapolated imaginary characters and to strive to be like one and not like another.[96]

Stewart then examines what she believes is the most prevalent means by which Proverbs provokes the imagination, the metaphor. She draws on the work of Mark Johnson in *Moral Imagination*[97] to put forward the idea that moral reasoning is fundamentally imaginative and

[95] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 169.
[96] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 177.
[97] Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

is structured by a complex web of metaphorical mappings.[98] Sophisticated usage of these metaphors then allows Proverbs to enhance the tangibility (in the imagination) of the possibilities it places before the student. The consequences of wisdom and foolishness are thus enacted in the student's mind and they are guided '…to evaluate the various possibilities in a way that aligns with the sages' viewpoint.'[99]

Stewart's views on imagination align closely with those put forward by Leo Perdue some years before in his chapter 'Theological Imagination in Wisdom Literature'. Perdue talks here about 'creative imagination' which can 'subvert orthodox conventions in order to usher into existence a new life-defining and life-orienting reality' and which is used by the sages in the 'shaping of a world view that provided the context of wise living and being.'[100]

These four models of מוּסָר, each of which 'impinge on the other', together make up what Stewart sees as a subtle and multi-faceted pedagogy of מוּסָר, seeking to impart wisdom and to construct a 'holistic moral self'.[101] Her study is fascinating and, I believe, makes a number of extremely valuable contributions to the expanding body of work that discusses Proverbs' pedagogical function. Whilst my own study approaches the idea of pedagogy as מוּסָר from a different angle, it complements much of what Stewart has done, building on several her insights. In particular, she identifies some of the most important tools used by Proverbs to persuade the student and to form the moral self. I resonate with this idea, arguing in this thesis that, in forming the young for the acquisition of wisdom, Proverbs intuitively understands the self to be integrated. My thesis reinforces Stewart's assertion of a 'Poetic Patterning', within Proverbs to shape this integrated self.

Despite its strengths, the reader may be left with a number of queries at the end of Stewart's book, foremost of which is perhaps a nagging sense that her heuristic model has left the word מוּסָר holding up much more weight than it was ever meant to bear, as well as moving it a significant distance from its common translation as instruction or discipline. This

[98] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 181.
[99] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 192.
[100] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 52.
[101] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 203.

concern, which applies equally to the insights of Michael Fox, is addressed in the next section since I too will be placing considerable weight on this term.

2.3 The etymology of מוּסָר

2.3.1 מוּסָר in the HB

מוּסָר is a noun, deriving from the root יסר, which also occurs in its verbal form five times within the collection. It is normally translated as instruction/instruct or as discipline, but is also translated variously as correction, (e.g. Proverbs 15:10, (KJV)), punishment (e.g. Proverbs 16:22, NRSV) and chastisement (e.g. Isaiah 53:5, ESV).

There is certainly no obvious single word that can be used to translate this idea. In Proverbs it is linked with: instructing for right action, "for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity" (Proverbs 1:3, NRSV); imperative or command, "Hear O Son a father's *musar*" (Proverbs 4:1, NRSV); advice, "listen to advice and accept *musar*" (Proverbs 19:20, NRSV); and punishment, "there is severe *musar* for one who forsakes the way" (Proverbs 15:10, NRSV).

A survey of various dictionaries reveals similar variation in the way in which these terms are defined. In *HALOT* the verb יסר and noun מוּסָר, though considered separately, are defined similarly. The primary emphasis of meaning is 'discipline that leads to wisdom.' However, the semantic range is acknowledged to include training, exhortation, chastisement and warning.[102] In the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (DCH), the entry for מוּסָר is categorized, using examples, into several meanings, all with the primary meaning of discipline. In this definition מוּסָר can either be: 'discipline as instruction, training'; 'discipline as correction, chastisement'; or discipline as a 'warning'. The entry notes that מוּסָר is most commonly 'heard', 'taken' and 'known', implying that it is something requiring action on the part of the recipient.[103]

In the *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* (*TWOT*), the writers argue that 'From the usage and parallels in the OT, one must conclude that *yasar* and *mûsar* denote correction

[102] Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, Johann Stamm, and M. E. J. Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden; New York: Brill, 1994, 556-557.
[103] David Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, vol. 5, 177.

which results in education. This aligns with the LXX which translates primarily as *paidea,* which emphasises the notion of education.'[104] Their idea that this education must always include an element of discipline seems to be based particularly on the usage of the words in Deuteronomy, with a lot of weight given to the context of מוּסָר in Deut. 11:2. Here, the mighty arm of Yahweh, his greatness, and his signs and deeds are equated with his מוּסָר which is uniformly translated as discipline. This is used by *TWOT* as a controlling interpretation of the word.[105]

The *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament (TLOT)* considers the noun מוּסָר and the verb יסר together. It usefully divides the occurrences of the words (as the table below also details), distinguishing between the usage of these words in the wisdom literature and in the law and the prophets.[106] However, to define exactly what מוּסָר is, *TLOT* turns to the occurrences within the law and the prophets, and its usage in Proverbs is given only secondary weight . Here, *TLOT* observes, the idea of God's discipline and punitive judgement are normally implied by the terms and they often occur in texts with covenantal overtones and in connection with God's love and salvation. This leads the lexicon to conclude that יסר/מוּסָר normally means chastisement/chastise, chastisement that is given for the benefit of its object, not to its detriment (e.g. Isa. 53:5, Job 5:17, Deut. 8:5, Ps. 94:12).

Branson and Botterweck, conversely, gives weight to the fact that the number of occurrences within the Wisdom Literature account for over a third of the total occurrences of יסר in both its verbal and noun forms (38% to be precise). From this fact they conclude that the Wisdom Literature is the '...natural *Sitz im Leben...'* for יסר and מוּסָר. Especially when occurrences within the HB are considered alongside similar terms from several Ugarit texts (from which the root may have originally derived), the dictionary concludes that the basic meaning of the verb יסר is to 'instruct'. [107] The form and purpose of this action could include

[104] Gleason L. Archer, R. Laird Harris, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1980, 386-387.
[105] Gleason *et al*, *TWOT*, 386-387.
[106] Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, 550.
[107] R. D. Branson, R.D. and G. J. Botterweck, '*yāsar*; *mûsār*', in G.J. Botterweck & H Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 6, transl. J.T. Willis, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986, 128.

any activity that seeks to '...communicate knowledge in order to shape specific conduct.' For Branson and Botterweck this includes correction and discipline but does not make it the controlling definition. It also includes punishment, but always with a specific remedial outcome.[108] They go on to define the primary meaning of the noun מוּסָר as 'a body of knowledge' (the content of instruction) that can be assimilated. It highlights the close relationship of the term with wisdom, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. It explains why the content of instruction ranges from wise and common sense observations (as in Proverbs 24:32) through to the requirements of the covenant and the message of Yahweh.[109] The idea of punishment and discipline is mentioned as a secondary meaning of מוּסָר, but always with redemptive intent.

As this discussion demonstrates, מוּסָר is not a straightforward term to define and it has a wide semantic range making it challenging to represent in English translation. However, the analysis by Branson and Botterweck is convincing and points towards what is perhaps the most comprehensive consideration of מוּסָר to date, found in a monograph by J. A. Sanders: *Suffering as Divine Discipline*.[110] In his book, Sanders isolates each occurrence of the root יסר (both verb and noun) and considers them individually, a book at a time. From his review of יסר in the prophets, most significantly in Jeremiah, Sanders concludes that here the basic meaning of יסר carries the idea of a lesson to be learned or taught. In almost all of these occurrences the one who imparts יסר is God and there are three clear methods by which יסר is given: through the words or voice of the instructor being made known and heeded; through suffering being experienced and learnt from; and through the observation of other people's sufferings or God's activity, which results in learning.[111]

In his review of the Pentateuchal and historical books, the occurrences of the root are likewise shown to concern, fundamentally, a lesson to be learnt. Again, the three methods noted in the Prophets are present, although the suffering involved has, perhaps, more of a

[108] Branson and Botterweck, *TDOT, vol.6*, 128-129.
[109] Branson and Botterweck, *TDOT, vol.6*, 132.
[110] J. A. Sanders, *Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism*, Vol. 28. Bulletin (Colgate Rochester Divinity School); Special Issue, New York: Colgate Rochester Divinity School, 1955, 19.
[111] Sanders, *Suffering*, 19.

punitive element, particularly in the books of Kings and Chronicles.[112] In the Psalms and Job, Sanders finds no evidence for lessons learned through observation, but every occurrence he places into the other two categories of the scheme he is devising: lessons learned, either through suffering on the one hand or through the words of an instructor on the other. In the Psalms and Job, as in the Prophets, the one who imparts the lesson is, in almost all instances, God.[113]

Finally, Sanders considers Proverbs. Here he finds occurrences of יסר that fall into all three categories he has previously identified. However, here he also discovers two further, clear meanings. First, that of parental instruction (although this can still be categorised in accordance with his previous categories), and second, that of general learning or wisdom. Sanders describes this usage as denoting a 'general instruction or education which is a step leading to, or is close to, wisdom.' He categorises this as 'a lesson taught by verbal instruction' within his scheme.[114] Sanders' study spends little further time on many of the occurrences within Proverbs since his primary concern is with divine discipline which is absent from the meanings of יסר in Proverbs, except in Proverbs 3:11 & 15:11. However, he concludes his analysis of the root with an important table, which places יסר into categories.[115] This table has been partially replicated below (with some further categories and some re-categorisation) for what it shows is that all occurrences of יסר do fit into his semantic scheme of 'a lesson to be learnt'.

[112] Sanders, *Suffering*, 24. Also see 1 Kings 2:11&14.
[113] Sanders, *Suffering*, 28, 31.
[114] Sanders, *Suffering*, 40-41.
[115] Sanders, *Suffering*, 44–45.

Method	**Instrument of Teaching**	**Recipient**	**Verses**
Suffering	God	Nation	Zeph. 3:2,7, Jer. 2:19,30, 5:3, 30:11,14, 31:18, 46:28 Ez. 23:48, Isa. 26:16, Lev. 26:23,28, Deut. 8:5, Ps. 94:10, 118:18, Hos. 5:2, 7:12
Suffering	God	Individual	Jer. 10:24, Ps. 6:2, 38:2, 39:12, 94:12. Job 5:17, Pr. 3:11, 15:10
Suffering	Parent	Offspring	Deut. 21:18, Pr. 13:24, 22:15, 23:13, 29:17, 19:18
Suffering	King	People	1 Kgs. 12:11,14, 2 Chr. 10:11,14
Suffering	Elders	Man	Deut. 22:18
Suffering	Man	Slave	Proverbs 29:19
Verbal Instruction	God	Nation	Hos. 7:15, Jer. 6:8, 7:28, 35:13, 17:23, 32:38
Verbal Instruction	God	Individual	Ps. 16:7, 50:17, 94:12, Job 33:16, 36:10.
Verbal Instruction	Parent	Offspring	Proverbs 1:8, 4:1, 5:12,23, 6:23, 8:33, 13:1, 15:5, 19:27, 31:1
Verbal Instruction	Men	Other men	Ps. 2:10, Job 4:3, Job 20:3, Proverbs 9:7.
Verbal Instruction	Job	God	Job 40:2
Verbal Instruction	Man	Idol	Jer 10:8
Verbal/written instruction	An approved vendor	Reader/hearer	Proverbs 23:23
Verbal/written instruction	An approved teacher	Reader/hearer	Proverbs 1:2,3, 7, 4:13, 10:17, 12:1, 13:18, 15:32, 19:20, 23:12
	Wisdom	Reader/hearer	Proverbs 8:10
Verbal/written instruction	The fate of others	The people	Jer 2:30
Observation/ Verbal inst.	The fate of Judah	The nations	Ezek. 5:15
Observation	The '*Ebed*'	The Kings	Isa. 53:5
Observation	Egypt's fate	The nation	Deut. 11:2
Observation	A sluggard	The author	Proverbs 24:32
All	Fear of the Lord	Reader/hearer	Proverbs 15:33
All	An instructor	Fools	Proverbs 16:22

Based on this analysis, but contrary to several the dictionaries, Sanders does not believe that the controlling meaning יסר is the idea of discipline or chastisement. Discipline and punishment are included in his table as methods by which a lesson may be delivered but are only two possible vehicles among several. This table offers some compelling evidence in support of Sanders' understanding of יסר as a 'lesson to be learnt' and מוּסָר as the process of communicating that lesson.

Sanders' definition is therefore the one which I will adopt in this thesis and means that, instead of representing מוּסָר as follows (as per, e.g., *HALOT*, *TWOT* and *TLOT*):

מוּסָר: Discipline/Chastisement			
Emphasis 1	*Emphasis 2*	*Emphasis 3*	*Emphasis 4*
Verbal discipline, with the purpose of instruction.	Physical discipline with a remedial intention.	Punishment with a remedial intention.	Punishment.

A better representation is:

מוּסָר: The communication of a lesson from teacher to learner.			
Emphasis 1	*Emphasis 2*	*Emphasis 3*	*Emphasis 4*
A lesson communicated through verbal/observed advice and command.	A lesson communicated through verbal/observed discipline and reproof.	A lesson communicated through physical/ observed discipline/suffering.	A lesson communicated through punishment/ observed punishment.

Whilst there is some overlap between these definitions, the second comes much closer to the way in which it is understood by Stewart as the 'nature of the education which the sages advance'.[116] It places מוּסָר squarely in the pedagogical arena and allows it to be considered as

[116] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 78.

a polysemous term for pedagogical method and, in Proverbs, to stand as the communication of all that is necessary for the acquisition of wisdom, using a variety of rhetorical methods. Further support for this position can be found by considering the centrality of the term מוּסָר within Proverbs.

2.3.2 The significance of מוּסָר within Proverbs

The table below ranks the usage of educational terms within Proverbs and shows that מוּסָר/ יסר is used twice as much as any other clearly pedagogical word within the collection and outstrips 'rebuke' even when the noun and verb denoting that concept (תּוֹכַחַת and יכח) are combined.

Vocabulary of Education within Proverbs			
Word	**Common Translations**	**Occurrences**	**Verse List in Proverbs**
מוּסָר	Instruction, discipline.	30	1:2,3,7,8, 3:11, 4:1,13, 5:12,23, 6:23, 7:22, 8:10,33, 10:17, 12:1, 13:1,18,24, 15:5,10,32, 33, 16:22, 19:20, 19:27, 22:15, 23:12,13,23, 24:32.
יסר	Verb (*qal, piel, niphil*): Discipline, correction.	5	9:7, 19:18, 29:17,19, 31:1
תּוֹכַחַת	Reproof, correction, rebuke.	16	1:23,25,30, 3:11, 5:12, 6:23, 10:17, 12:1, 13:18, 15:5,10,31,32, 27:5, 29:1, 29:15
יכח	Verb (*hiphil*): Rebuke, correct, reprove.	10	3:12, 9:7,8(x2), 15:12, 19:25, 24:25, 25:12, 28:23, 30:6
לֶקַח,	Learning, instruction.	5	1:5, 4:2, 9:9, 16:21,23
תּוֹרָה	Teaching, law, commandment.	13	1:8, 3:1, 4:2, 6:20,23, 7:2, 13:14, 28:4,7, 9, 29:18, 31:26
מִצְוָה	Teaching, commandment.	10	2:1, 3:1, 4:4, 6:20,23, 7:1,2, 10:8, 13:13, 19:16

Vocabulary of Education within Proverbs			
Word	**Common Translations**	**Occurrences**	**Verse List in Proverbs**
לִמֵּד	Verb (*qal, piel*): Learn, teach.	2	5:13, 30:3
יָרָה	Verb (*hiphil*): Teach, taught.	2	4:4, 4:11
עֵצָה	Counsel, advice.	11	1:25,30, 8:14, 12:15, 16:30, 19:20,21, 20:5,18, 21:30, 27:9.
תַּחְבֻּלָה	Counsel, guidance.	5	1:5, 11:14, 12:5, 20:18, 24:6.

Not only does this table show that the usage of מוּסָר outstrips other educational terms numerically, its placement is also significant. As the table shows, this term occurs three times in the prologue (in Proverbs 1:2, 1:3 and 1:7) and often at the beginning of sections and chapters (for example, Proverbs 1:8, 4:1, 12:1, 15:5).

Whilst this set of observations is not conclusive proof, it provides another piece of evidence that it might be appropriate to use מוּסָר as the linguistic cornerstone for the pedagogy of Proverbs. Further evidence can also be found by considering other contexts (beyond the HB) in which מוּסָר is used.

2.3.3 מוּסָר beyond the HB: the Septuagint

The sense and significance of the pedagogical use of מוּסָר is attested by the time the Septuagint was translated for it uses the word παιδεία to translate it. This Classical Greek word can mean 'training' or 'education', extending possibly as far as 'verbal rebuke' as I shall go on to discuss. It can also incorporate the object of instruction as well as its subject. Thus, Greek παιδεία referred not simply to the act of educating, but also to the literature that formed the syllabus of that education which, in Greek society, would have included study of Homer and

of Greek poetry.[117] A recent work by Patrick Pouchelle considers the reasons behind the decisions of the Greek translators at this point.[118] Pouchelle notes that the words do not have an identical semantic overlap in the Greek and Hebrew, yet the translators of the Septuagint consistently use παιδεία and its cognates to translate יסר.[119] This suggests, either, that they see this root as firmly pedagogical, or, that they have chosen to appropriate a Greek word for the concept despite its imperfect correspondence.[120]

Pouchelle argues for a position somewhere between these two poles, concluding that the use of παιδεία in the Septuagint does not exactly correspond to the Classical Greek meaning but that it suggests an understanding of the root יסר which is more nuanced than the strong overtones of punishment that, Pouchelle believes, are apparent at first glance.[121]

Pouchelle's work is carefully argued and includes some impressive textual analysis, however, I do not believe that he is comprehensive enough in his definition of מוּסָר. Whilst this term includes (in the HB) some fairly draconian methods of instruction as he observes, it is nonetheless, as Sanders asserts, *always* remedial and instructive in intent.[122] Pouchelle cites Deuteronomy 22:18 as an example of a 'less pedagogical' occurrence of יסר, yet, in this verse, a man who has sought unjustly to abandon his wife is administered יסר by the elders – the form of which is not specified – before he is forced to make recompense. No doubt this יסר included physical punishment but, even here, its intent is remedial not simply punitive. Compare this to the rather harrowing consequences of the following verses which all end in death and in which there is no mention of מוּסָר.[123] This aside, Pouchelle is surely correct that the use of παιδεία to translate יסר stretches the original Greek meaning to include an aspect of rebuke and punishment. Nonetheless, I maintain that the concept behind the word is

[117] Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek παιδεία*, Harvard University Press, 1985, 91.
[118] See especially his recently published thesis, Patrick Pouchelle, *Dieu éducateur: ne nouvelle approche d'un concept de la théologie biblique entre Bible Hébraïque*, *Spetante et littérature greque Classique*, FAT 2/77, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015.
[119] Patrick Pouchelle, 'Kyropaideia versus Paideia Kyriou', in *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, K. Hogan, M. Goff, E, Wasserman (eds.), Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017, 108-131, 110.
[120] Pouchelle, 'Kyropaideia', 128-129.
[121] Pouchelle, 'Kyropaideia', 128.
[122] Sanders, *Suffering*, 40 - 41. Pouchelle does not appear to have engaged with the work of Sanders.
[123] Pouchelle, 'Kyropaideia', 126.

something instructive and educational which always has a remedial intent - to centre the meaning of מוּסָר on 'rebuke' (as Pouchelle does[124]) does not seem justified by his analysis of the HB. Instead, the semantic scheme outlined in 2.3.1 above which *includes* rebuke but centres around instruction (education), seems to be a more faithful rendering of the meaning of the root, as well as making the decision of Septuagint translators to equate מוּסָר with παιδεία a more natural one.

2.3.4 מוּסָר beyond the HB: Hebrews 12:5-6

Hebrews 12:5-6 quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 and is the only direct quotation of a text containing מוּסָר in the NT. This makes it worthy of our attention at this point in the discussion.

Ellen Aitken considers this passage in her paper 'Wily, Wise, and Worldly: Instruction and the Formation of Character in the Epistle to the Hebrews.' In this paper she examines 'the matrix of instruction, character formation, and community formation as these take place in Hebrews through scripture and its interpretation.'[125] This leads her to Hebrews 12 which reflects on the nature of instruction, using the image of 'running the race' and explaining the idea of divine discipline using a quotation from Proverbs 3:11-12 where παιδεία (in the Hebrew, מוּסָר), comes from the Lord.[126]

The author to the Hebrews would have been using the Septuagint but this is evidence that, at this stage, the idea of παιδεία in Proverbs was associated with a pedagogical concept that extended as far as 'suffering as discipline' ('endure hardship as discipline', Hebrews 12:7, New International Version (NIV)) but also incorporated formation by rhetorical means (e.g. Hebrews 12:1-3) as Aitken postulates, highlighting the manner in which 'the text performs

[124] Pouchelle, 'Kyropaideia', 128.
[125] Ellen Aitken, 'Wily, Wise, and Worldly: Instruction and the Formation of Character in the Epistle to the Hebrews' in *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, K. Hogan, M. Goff, E, Wasserman (eds.), Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017, 305-327, 310.
[126] Aitken, 'Wily, Wise, and Worldly', 316.

instruction… …engaging the resourcefulness and versatility of its audience and challenging them consistently to "get" the right message.'[127]

There is thus a plausible link from the concept of παιδεία here in Hebrews back to Proverbs and its concept of מוּסָר (via the Septuagint). As Aitken demonstrates, this concept of 'biblical' παιδεία has a broad semantic range, incorporating both suffering and rhetorical instruction at either end of a spectrum, as devices of character formation. Thus, by the time Hebrews was authored, this definition (which resonates with that put forward in 2.3.1 above) must have been the accepted understanding of the term מוּסָר.

2.3.5 מוּסָר beyond the HB: the *musar* movement

The growth of *musar* literature and the *musar* movement within Jewish practice gives further weight to the centrality of this term pedagogically. *Musar* literature is ethical, didactic literature which aims to offer practical instruction for someone seeking a life of righteousness, extending back as far as the second and first centuries BCE and which takes its name from the very term, מוּסָר, currently under consideration.[128] The use, study and continuance of this literature developed into the Mussar Movement in 19th century Lithuania and continues to the present day in the form of various institutes and organisations, mainly focused on North America.[129] In Jewish tradition therefore, the term clearly bears the weight suggested by Fox and Stewart and is used to denote a pedagogical method (though precisely what this is varies across movements and institutions). It seems reasonable to propose that this is the extension

[127] Aitken, ' Wily, Wise, and Worldly', 318.

[128] 'Jewish Thought and Philosophy: Jewish Ethical Literature.' *Encyclopedia of Religion* (December 4, 2018). https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/jewish-thought-and-philosophy-jewish-ethical-literature. Musar is the simple transliteration of מוּסָר, sometimes it is also transliterated with a 'ss' as Mussar. Musar is taken as almost synonymous with 'ethics' in the modern Musar Movement.

[129] The different mussar movements have developed in both Orthodox and non-Orthodox Judaism. Some examples include the Mussar Institute which promotes a way of *mussar* at the heart of which is practical, applied knowledge (https://mussarinstitute.org/what-is-mussar-practice/), and the Orthodox AishDas Society which exists to promote and guide the whole-life application of Musar in the modern world (http://www.aishdas.org/about/mission/).

of an existing understanding of the concept in Jewish thought and that Fox and Stewart have recaptured an important dimension of this term by proposing 'pedagogy as מוּסָר'.

2.3.6 Summary: defining מוּסָר

In summary, it seems clear that both the textual analysis of מוּסָר and the subsequent life of the concept in the Septuagint, the NT and beyond, all point to it being of deep pedagogical significance, and hence to its appropriateness as the defining term for Proverbs' pedagogy. Its meaning orbits around an instructional centre of gravity, captured in the multivalent and firmly pedagogical definition, *the communication of a lesson from teacher to learner,* which allows it a wide semantic range from persuasion to punishment. This is supported in wider Proverbs scholarship, particularly in the work of Michael Fox and Anne Stewart, and suggests that it will bear the nuanced shades of pedagogical meaning imparted to it in the following analysis of different categories of מוּסָר.

Chapter 3 Inherent and Advocated מוּסָר

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to continue the exploration of the book of Proverbs to understand more deeply its pedagogical aims and methods. I will categorise the different pedagogical devices of the text under the headings of *inherent* מוּסָר and *advocated* מוּסָר.

The inherent מוּסָר is the pedagogy of the text itself, the methods by which the text shapes the learner: its structure, poetical and literary devices (such as parallelism, metaphor, and wordplay) and its intertextual fabric. Together these constitute a pedagogical rhetoric that can be labelled as 'inherent מוּסָר'. This equation of rhetoric with pedagogy in Proverbs is not new, Daniel Estes, for example, remarks in his book *Hear, My Son* that:

> The teacher uses language to great effect in instructing the learner. Consequently, appreciating the rhetorical devices employed in Proverbs 1-9 is essential if one is to discern how the teacher influences the student.[130]

A further appreciation of the way in which the text uses language, as Estes suggests, is one of the primary aims of this thesis as it seeks to uncover the inner rhetoric, the inherent מוּסָר, of the text.

The advocated מוּסָר complements the inherent מוּסָר and is the pedagogy encouraged by the text: the methods that it suggests a teacher should adopt and to which a student should submit. These include, for example, rebuke (from verbal rebuke through to the rod), listening to parental commands, holding to תּוֹרָה, keeping the right company, listening to advice, and, above all, the pursuit of wisdom.

Together this inherent and advocated מוּסָר make up a pedagogy that I will argue is intentional and which permitted the compilers of Proverbs to believe that the collection will

[130] Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 102.

shape and instruct for wisdom. In the following section I will outline in greater depth, exactly what constitutes these concepts.

3.2 Inherent מוּסָר

3.2.1 Structure

My thesis is that Proverbs is a text that sets out to teach and shape those who encounter it through its inherent מוּסָר. In this section I will argue that one of the ways that it does this is through careful structuring and arrangement of the text. However, the existence and nature of structure within the collection is much debated, and so the position taken by this thesis will first be defended.

The existence of structure in Proverbs 1-9 is widely accepted. R. N. Whybray's assessment expresses it well: 'On the whole these chapters consist not of short, independent proverbs like those which make up most of the book, but of longer, structured poems of a quite clearly literary character.'[131] Ten poems (or instructions/interludes) are normally identified and, whilst precise divisions vary and more detailed structures within each are analysed variously there seems to be broad agreement on the existence and nature of structure within these chapters.[132]

In the remainder of the collection there is much less agreement over structure, especially in chapters 10-22:16 where there are many different scholarly positions on the existence and nature of proverbial structure. It is necessary at this point to sketch out some of the most influential positions.

At one end of the debate are those who see very little, if any, formal arrangement. William McKane is an influential proponent of this view, describing in his commentary the 'random way in which sentences follow one upon another'.[133] He is joined by scholars such as Stuart

[131] R. Norman Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*. Vol. 168. JSOT Supplement Series; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994, 11.
[132] E.g. Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. NICOT. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004, 186; Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 45; Knut Heim, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs: Variant Repetitions and the Nature of Poetry*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012, 37.
[133] McKane, *Proverbs*, 10.

Weeks, who does not believe that any larger or more complicated structures than that found through 'near neighbour' analysis can be convincingly identified.[134]

Knut Heim represents the other extreme, asserting that the whole of the Proverbs 10-22 is carefully structured in a manner that can be recovered through careful analysis.[135] He provides a thorough and useful review of the scholarship on structure, beginning with the insight of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, that it is more appropriate to speak of 'proverb performance context' rather than 'proverb meaning' for a proverb is inherently applied to a specific context and has limited meaning without a knowledge of that context.[136] From this observation Heim proceeds to the work of Carole Fontaine and Claudia Camp (considered above) who lay the groundwork for his confident assertion that the collection itself provides a literary performance context for the individual sayings, without which the proverbs risk becoming trite and simplistic. Heim then surveys a range of other scholars who affirm the importance of context and the possible intentionality of arrangement which he can describe as a 'growing consensus about the theory of contextual groupings and their significance for interpretation.'[137]

Heim then goes beyond this growing consensus, proposing a method for dividing the text of Proverbs 10-22 into 'clusters', like a bunch of grapes, that have been intentionally placed and designed to be read together. His strategy uses a range of literary devices to delineate the clusters and, whilst occasionally leaving a proverb in isolation, normally identifies clusters of between 3 and 7 proverbs in length.[138] Heim is doing something similar to that recommended by Van Leeuwen in his study, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27* who

[134] Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 35.
[135] Knut Heim, Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: An Interpretation of Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10:1-22:16, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001, 105-108.
[136] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Toward a Theory of Proverb Meaning', *Proverbium* 22 (1973), pp. 821-27, 823.
[137] Fontaine ('Proverb Performance', 95) highlights the rhetorical purpose of proverbs and the significance of context to meeting that purpose: 'The linguistic intent of the use of proverbs and sayings in social contexts is traditional argument which seeks to evaluate past actions or affect future behavior. The strategy pursued is that of calling attention to the presumed correspondence between the kernel of the groups' accepted lore and some current state of affairs, as understood by the proverb user.' The literary context offers the 'current state of affairs' for the user of the collection, i.e. a diversity and plurality of proverbs which together paint pictures of characters and situations in life.
[138] Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver,* 107.

suggests that his methods of analysis (which define structure within the text) can and should be deployed across the remainder of Proverbs 10-29.[139]

Michael Fox represents an influential middle ground and draws on medieval Jewish commentaries to demonstrate that this is not a new debate and that the identification of clusters began at least as early as Ramaq in the twelfth century C.E. These clusters were based around thematic cohesion, a concept that has continued to unite a middle ground of scholarship on this issue. Fox describes these as the product of 'associative thinking', arguing that this accounts for both thematic cohesion, and other supposed editorial strategies such as alliteration, wordplay, catchwords, and repetition. Fox then surveys modern commentators, attempting to find compelling arguments for clear clusters or larger structures, but he is left unconvinced by the arguments from literary devices and rhetorical effect. Given the lack of agreement on these structures or their aim he cannot believe that literary artistry or rhetorical strategy could be a plausible motivation for their existence as more uniformity of recognition might be expected in this case. In conclusion, whilst Fox does not discount some deliberate grouping and a degree of subconscious associative thinking, he believes that:

> There is, in any case, no literary motive for elaborate designs. A proverb is like a jewel, and the book of Proverbs is like a heap of jewels. Indeed, it is a heap of different *kinds* of jewels. Is it really such a loss if they are not all laid out in pretty symmetric designs or divided into neat little piles? The heap itself has the lushness of profusion and the charm of a "sweet disorder in the dress"[140]

The position taken in this thesis lies somewhere between Heim and Fox. 'Associative thinking', per Fox, seems to be a useful term to describe the process that took place as the compilers or editors of Proverbs were undertaking their task, yet this was not necessarily a subconscious process, but could well have been part of the rhetorical strategy (per Heim) which Fox is doubtful exists. The number of scholars identifying clusters and connections are so numerous (beginning, as Fox himself acknowledges, at least as early as the twelfth century) that, rather than discounting them for their lack of homogeneity, the possibility of conscious arrangement

[139] Van Leeuwen (*Context and Meaning*, 147) uses poetic (or rhetorical) analysis and structural analysis (in the formal linguistic sense of the word) to determine the boundaries of the different 'proverb poems' within the collection.
[140] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 477-481.

and rhetorical intent should, in my view, be given more weight. The absence of consensus on precise structures does not imply, as Weeks asserts, that the idea of intentional arrangement must be discarded for, citing Knut Heim:

> Reading-together allows for inferences and cross-references which lead to a cross-fertilization and inter-animation of meaning through the creative combination of the common truths and the emotive language of all members of the group.[141]

The significance of reading proverbs together is also articulated by Peter Hatton. Whilst resisting the identification of structures and preferring to talk about a 'flow' of sayings, he sees the way in which tensions are set up between the proverbs as a key component of its educational method:

> Proverbs achieves its goal of awakening its readers to wisdom by introducing contradictions into the flow of its sayings. This 'defamiliarizes' not just the sayings concerned but also the context, the other sayings around them… …the point where this clash of languages and their associated connotations and perspectives occurs is the boundary point at which new understanding and fresh insights can be generated.[142]

Christine Yoder, commenting on the apparently indiscriminate nature of the arrangement, sees this disorder or tension as an invitation to 'wisdom making'. She argues that understanding the 'mosaic' of 10-30 is the job of the reader wherein the pedagogical thrust of the proverbs is to be found:

> Borrowing a metaphor from James Boyd White, [143] we may say that Proverbs 10–30 reads like a literary mosaic: a text formed by small pieces of variously coloured proverbs, each a polished entity unto itself, placed next to other equally polished and vibrant sayings. Viewed up close, where interpreters have long positioned themselves, the eye focuses on each proverb, then on those immediately around it, noting ways the colours interact with or are distinct from one another. From a step or two back, however, the bits of polished colour blur together into something beyond what any of the pieces, standing alone, resembles— the "overarching pedagogical movement" that Brown suggests. We might say, then, that the proverbs generate "patterns of experience" that, as much as their content, instruct readers in the ways of wisdom.[144]

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[141] Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold*, 107.
[142] Peter Hatton, *Contradiction in the Book of Proverbs*, Oxford: Ashgate Publishing, 2008, 13-15.
[143] James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 41.
[144] Yoder, 'Forming "Fearers of Yahweh"', 169.

Hatton and Yoder together articulate one of the convictions of this thesis; that the wisdom of the collection is generated primarily through the creative spaces – both in tensions and synthesis - found in the interactions between the proverbs, not simply in the content of the proverbs themselves. Both tension and synthesis are significant and important components of the inherent מוּסָר of the collection. The danger of a structural maximalism that requires precise and definite structures to be identified is that it misses some of these productive and wisdom-forming tensions and syntheses. This will therefore be resisted. However, my analysis will demonstrate that the associations set up in the collection can be shown to be part of a subtle rhetorical strategy which undergirds the pedagogical intent of Proverbs to the extent that, whilst a proverb still has value and rhetorical impact on its own, it is much richer and more effective when read as part of a succession of proverbs and in parallel with its companions. It doesn't seem necessary to resist structure to the extent to which Peter Hatton suggests (he chooses to simply read across the entire collection in Proverbs),[145] for such an approach becomes unwieldy and risks becoming a purely thematic analysis. It also risks ignoring natural units of thematic organisation for which 'cluster' is a useful term, even if not as tightly defined as Heim would have it.

The contention of this thesis is therefore that the proverbs should be read in groups or clusters to allow individual proverbs to come to life within their immediate context. The precise limits and size of these clusters should remain open and, whilst close attention should be paid to identifying sections with some literary and semantic unity, it is likely that combining the proverbs differently on different occasions will yield fruitful and new clusters, insights and emphases. Van Leeuwen articulates the principle behind this approach when he posits that the boundaries of a literary unit are discovered '…through a process of intuition or *apperception* of elements which somehow belong together, albeit complexly.'[146]

For the current study this means that semantic, linguistic, thematic, and other structural reasoning will be used to define boundaries and structures within the text for the purpose of analysis. The structural analysis will not take place only at a linguistic level (as per Van Leeuven who, despite his observation regarding intuition above, goes on to use a very complicated

[145] Hatton, *Contradiction in the Book of Proverbs*, 15.
[146] Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning*, 35.

and technical approach[147]), rather clusters of proverbs and larger groups will be decided upon using a combination of other factors. Repeated proverbs, phrases, or words in proximity to one another will be treated as possible structuring devices, as will repeated or similar thematic material. I will consider thematic progression and intensification, as well as looking for more remote repetition that may indicate a formulaic expression signalling the beginning or end of a cluster. Parallelism occurring beyond the immediate couplet is also regarded as significant in determining how the text is structured.

The identification of boundaries and clusters are understood simply as helpful hermeneutical methods in the task of distilling the rhetoric of the text. The defining of a cohesive group does not preclude identifying overlapping clusters or finding sections of the text with very little evidence of cohesive structure. It does mean though, that a proverb, whilst being worthy of consideration in its own right, will always also be interpreted in its context and never in isolation, in the belief that the arrangement of the proverbs is vital to the pedagogical aims of the collection.

Once an overall structural framework is in place, I will begin to build a picture of the semantic tensions and progressions created within the section to show how the arrangement of the proverbs facilitates the pedagogical aims of the text. This analysis will consider first the parallelism within the text, a phenomenon to which I now turn.

[147] Van Leeuwen builds on the structuralist essay of Glendon Bryce to propose his own structuralist approach to the text based on the identification, typing and ordering of Sayings and Admonitions, 'the objective correlative of subjective apperception' (*Context and Meaning,* 35). This method is unnecessarily complex (*Context and Meaning*, 44-50) and, whilst producing some useful results, does not appear to arrive at conclusions which could not have been reached using slightly more intuitive techniques.

3.2.2 Parallelism

A widely acknowledged and prominent feature of Proverbs is parallelism, the placing of two lines in parallel, normally to form a couplet, first identified by Bishop Robert Lowth over 200 years ago: 'The poetical conformation of the sentences, …characteristic of Hebrew poetry, consists chiefly in a certain equality, resemblance or parallelism between the members of each period.'[148] He identified the following basic categories, still followed to this day:

1. Synonymous Parallelism, '…when the same sentiment is repeated in different but equivalent terms.' In synonymous parallelism the sentences answer to each other, not by the iteration of the same image or sentiment or by the opposition of their contraries, but merely by the form of construction. E.g. 'She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown' (Proverbs 4:9 ESV).
2. Antithetical Parallelism, 'when a thing is illustrated by its contrary being opposed to it'. E.g. 'The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.' (Proverbs 11:26 ESV).
3. Synthetic Parallelism, in which there is the development of a thought across the couplet such that one line builds on another.[149] E.g. 'The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.' (Proverbs 15:3 ESV) is a proverb which develops one thought over two lines, the second expanding on the first. Crenshaw also identifies an 'important variation' in synthetic parallelism in the form of the 'better than' proverbs, in which the hearer is invited into a comparison of two concepts, one of which is deemed 'better' than the other.[150]

Recent studies have built on this work to arrive at a more developed understanding of this important poetic device of parallelism. Adele Berlin and Lidiia Knorina, who have conducted

[148] Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, G. Gregory (tr.), published by Joseph T. Buckingham, 1815, 259.
[149] Lowth, *Lectures*, 259-267.
[150] James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, Louiseville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998, 57. Sun Myung Lyu observes the rhetorical significance (especially with regards to righteousness) of 'better than' proverbs, observing particularly the subtle manner in which these proverbs 'affirm that the advantage of material comfort is subservient to the benefit of choosing righteousness over wickedness, and urges its readers to adjust their priority reflecting this hierarchy.' Sun Myung Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, Mohr Siebeck: Tubingen, 2012, 93.

one of the widest and most well-respected studies of parallelism to date, describes it as follows:

> Parallelism, then, consists of a network of equivalences and/or contrasts involving many aspects and levels of language. Moreover, by means of these linguistic equivalences and contrasts, parallelism calls attention to itself and the message which it bears.[151]

They construct the following useful schema to aid in identifying parallelism:

> a) the proximity of parallel terms,
>
> b) the similarity of the surface structure or word order of possibly parallel terms,
>
> c) the linguistic equivalence in terms of repeated words, word pairs and semantic equivalence,
>
> d) the expectation of parallelism: i.e. a phrase that scores lower on the preceding criteria may be given the benefit of the doubt as a parallelism if it occurs in a section of text already marked by parallelism.[152]

This scheme suggests that parallelism is normally identified within a couplet (close proximity, high expectation), however it opens the possibility of parallelism occurring between lines that are further apart; either neighbouring proverbs or proverbs occurring at the boundaries of couplets and larger sections. As Heim asserts: 'Many unusual features in poetic lines can be explained from the perspective of parallelism *beyond* the individual line.'[153]

This thesis contends that the equivalences, repetitions, and contrasts of parallelism, supported by the wider structures and other literary devices of the text, are one of the most important rhetorical devices in Proverbs. The use of parallelism was surely instinctive and creative rather than laboured and mechanistic, yet this does not mean it was not intentional, rather, it is a significant strategy of inherent מוּסָר and offered the compilers of Proverbs, as von Rad puts it: 'virtually inexhaustible possibilities of inflection of poetic thought.'[154] It will be identified and examined in the exegesis that follows, both within and between couplets,

[151] Adele Berlin and Lidiia Knorina, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008, 141.
[152] Berlin and Knorina, *Dynamics*, 134. Heim (*Poetic Imagination*, 22–24) provides a useful history of the debate around parallelism.
[153] Heim, *Poetic Imagination*, 637.
[154] von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 27.

for its literary and poetic features, its structuring capacity and its persuasive power. This will require a careful reading of the text for, as Alter notes, even 'within the confines of the one-line poem nice effects and sometimes suggestive complications are achieved through the smallest verbal movements.'[155]

3.2.3 Metaphor

The arrangement, structure and parallelism of Proverbs is animated by its colourful and imaginative use of the Hebrew language. This focus on vivid imagery is an important strategy, inherent to the text itself, that is part of the pedagogy of the collection. Discussing proverbial metaphor, William Brown remarks that: 'good metaphor effectively weds together analogy and anomaly; it creates conceptual and emotional friction by which new meaning is achieved.'[156] It is through the use of metaphor, Brown argues, that many of the didactic aims of Proverbs are met. He holds that metaphors '…teach by generating connections that would otherwise remain undetectable by the reader.' [157] Or, as Heim puts it:

> The importance of imagery for the construction of biblical poetry cannot be underestimated. Frequently we find that the creation of powerful imagery – whether through unusual idioms, daring metaphors, or ingenious wordplays – took precedence over the aesthetics of parallelism.[158]

This imagery is the primary expression of the 'imaginative' facet of מוּסָר identified by Stewart (see 2.2 above) and of the 'theological imagination' discussed by Perdue. Central to this imagery is the use of metaphor to communicate concepts and ideas; as Perdue puts it: 'Imagination is the place where metaphors function to posit the nature and identity of reality – that is, to create a world view.'[159]

[155] Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry, 175.
[156] William P. Brown, 'The Didactic Power of Metaphor in the Aphoristic Sayings of Proverbs', *JSOT* 29.2 (2004) 133-154, 136.
[157] Brown, 'The Didactic Power of Metaphor', 639.
[158] Heim, *Poetic Imagination in Proverbs,* 637.
[159] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 59.

Metaphor was first defined by Aristotle (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1457b) and, whilst much has been written on the theory of metaphor since that point, a useful overview of the field is provided by Bálint Károly Zabán, who concludes that 'the trail of metaphor definition seems to be returning to the Aristotelian point of departure, which is similitude and analogy'.[160]

This is the basic definition and understanding of metaphor I will use but, perhaps of more interest, is Aristotle's opinion of metaphor. He called it the 'mark of genius', 'for to make good metaphors implies an eye for previously unnoticed resemblances.' (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1458b [Halliwell LCL]). James Geary writes in his acclaimed work on metaphor that '…there is no aspect of our experience not molded in some way by metaphor's almost imperceptible touch.'[161] This is certainly true of the book of Proverbs which uses both repeated, thematic metaphors which run throughout the collection, as well as containing some of the most unusual and striking metaphors in the whole of the HB and using 'stock images' in unconventional ways.[162] The use of these metaphors is one of the most important poetical devices employed by Proverbs in its attempts to persuade the listener. Geary points us towards the troubled poet, Hart Crane, who responds to criticism of his use of metaphor with the following statement:

> [The paradox of metaphor] …is that its apparent illogic operates so logically in conjunction with its context in the poem as to establish its claim to another logic, quite independent of the original definition of the word or phrase or image thus employed.[163]

It is in this appropriation of 'another' logic that some of the most powerful poetic logic of Proverbs lies and it is worth noting Crane's belief that a metaphor will only establish that logical claim within the context of the poem as a whole. To take an example to demonstrate this, in Proverbs 15:6 is a proverb that reads:

> In the house of the righteous there is much treasure,
>
> but trouble befalls the income of the wicked. (NRSV)

[160] Bálint Károly Zabán, 'Metaphors in the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible and Contemporary Art', *Religions* vol. 7, no.9, 2016: 106-130.
[161] James Geary, *I is an Other*, New York: Harper Collins, 2012, 7.
[162] M. B. Szlos, 'Body Parts as Metaphor and the value of a Cognitive Approach: A Study of the Female Figures in Proverbs Via Metaphor' in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, Pierre Van Hecke, P. (ed)., Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005, 185-196, 186.
[163] Hart Crane, *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane*, Oxford: OUP, 1968, 235.

Here, it is unclear whether the first line is referring to literal or metaphorical treasure (חֹסֶן) and, if the latter, what that treasure might be. The surrounding verses provide a useful context and if, as my exegesis suggests (see chapter 8), this verse should be read in conjunction with the whole of 15:5-32, then the treasure being referenced is not literal but: the fear and favour of the Lord; an audience with the Lord; a cheerful heart; and a treasury of wise and life-giving words. This offers a very different understanding to the proverb than that provided by a more literal interpretation of the saying and shows how Proverbs can appropriate a 'different logic' through metaphor. In chapter 15 treasure is defined, not in material goods, but in immaterial blessings. Identifying such metaphorical moves can bring to life sayings which, at first glance, seem simplistic and bland.

Identifying these metaphors, whilst not entirely straightforward, is made easier by using the theory of metaphor introduced by Lakoff and Johnson in their seminal book *Metaphors We Live By.* They explain the way in which metaphors map from one linguistic domain to another, such that a 'source domain' is mapped onto a 'target domain', allowing the source domain to reveal something fresh about the target domain.[164] They use this image to outline various categories by which metaphors can be classified. For example, structural metaphors are broad metaphorical ideas that can be mapped onto a different concept or object and which then provide a language for talking about that concept.[165] This is helpful to remember when considering the book of Proverbs which uses a number of structural metaphors throughout the collection. For example, one of Proverbs' most widely used structural metaphors is the idea that: life = a journey along a path. This overarching metaphor gives a language for talking about the idea so that, for example, when Proverbs 3:26 says that 'the Lord will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared', there is an immediate understanding that this is not a promise to protect the son from physical snares in which his feet might happen to get entangled but is rather using the language of journeying to refer to a metaphorical 'snaring' that might prevent the son from walking on the path of wisdom. To give a further example, another central structuring metaphor in Proverbs is the idea that: The benefits of wisdom = precious goods. Recalling this structural metaphor adds weight to the

[164] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, 38.
[165] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4.

conclusion drawn above that the treasure of Proverbs 15:6 is metaphorical and refers to the benefits of wisdom not literal treasure.

Other categories identified by Lakoff and Johnson include: orientational metaphor, for example, life is directionally 'up', death is 'down' (cf. Proverbs 2:18),[166] and ontological metaphors which relate abstract concepts to an entity or substance, for example, the heart as a stream or river (cf. Proverbs 21:1).[167] These structural metaphors will be used to aid in identifying and interpreting metaphors within the following exegesis.

There will still, nonetheless, be metaphors which are difficult to identify and interpret: Heim's 'daring metaphors.' In discussing this kind of metaphor Adrian Pilkington proposes that it is the range and indeterminacy of the implicatures which give these metaphors their poetic force and which explain why they are often so hard to adequately identify and translate. He also believes that these poetic metaphors can be extremely difficult to understand when they are presented on their own, and require the reader to do significant work in order to uncover meaning, which is only possible when contextual assumptions are applied.[168] This is a further endorsement of the importance of paying attention to the context of both the couplet and the wider cluster in order to fully understand and interpret individual proverbs.

3.2.4 Personification

Personification is a literary and rhetorical device, a form of extended metaphor sometimes becoming allegory, and a means of animating and energising an object or concept. It is referenced briefly by Aristotle (*Rhetoric,* chapter X) but the first extended discussion of it occurs in Demetrius of Phalerum's third-century B.C. treatise *On Style* (*Peri Ermeneias*) where he describes exactly the phenomenon found in Proverbs:

> Another figure of thought – the so-called 'prosopopoeia' – may be employed to produce energy of style, as in the words: 'Imagine that your ancestors, or Hellas, or your native land, assuming

[166] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14.
[167] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 25.
[168] Adrian Pilkington, *Poetic Effects*, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000, 102.

a woman's form, should address such and such reproaches to you. [169] (Demetrius, *On Style*, [W. R. Roberts], 165)

The purpose of this device is outlined by Claudia Camp, who has written extensively on personification within the context of Proverbs. She notes that, particularly with reference to personified wisdom (though these observations are surely also of relevance to other personified concepts within the collection), several literary functions of this device are significant:

1. 'Personification calls attention to the unity of the subject'.[170] This means that, whilst a variety of character traits are used by Proverbs (understanding, insight, prudence etc.), the personification of wisdom unites these aspects of character under a single umbrella.
2. 'Personification makes generalizations of human experience.' Thus, against the backdrop of the nuanced and atomised picture of reality which Proverbs encourages the reader to make sense of, are several unifying concepts and characters. This facilitates the persuasive force of these concepts allowing, for example, the creation of *ethos* through the means of direct address by a pre-eminent virtue.[171]
3. 'Personification combines a clear literal subject with a metaphorical predicate.' For Camp, the significance of this literary unification of the '…general and the particular, the abstract and the concrete' is that it '…theologically unites the human and the divine', pointing readers towards both human wisdom and its concrete expression and also towards the divine source of that wisdom.[172]

Camp's points will be heeded in the exegesis which follows as the impact of personification on the rhetoric of the text is considered.

Scholars have considered the possibility that the personification of Wisdom goes beyond being a sophisticated literary device and that Wisdom is conceived in the Israelite Wisdom Tradition *as* a goddess.[173] Parallels are drawn with the Egyptian goddesses *Maat* and *Isis*.

[169] Quoted in J. J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification*, Cambridge: CUP, 1994, 12.
[170] Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 214.
[171] Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 215.
[172] Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 222.
[173] Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined*, New York: Pilgrim, 1986.

Stuart Weeks, summarising this debate, argues convincingly that the evidence available on which to draw any such firm conclusions is slim and that the farthest one can go is to say that the personification of Wisdom may have been shaped by depictions of goddesses in other religions of the ancient Near East and that the distinction between literary and mythical figures may have been less clear cut to the original audiences of the Proverbs collection.[174] Michael Fox goes a step further, showing how Egyptian religion included, alongside their divinities, personified virtues which were not 'mythological hypostases' and that a distinction between hypostatization and simple personification is perfectly plausible to expect within the cultures of this time. He also demonstrates that links between Wisdom and the Egyptian goddesses Maat and Isis are extremely hard to substantiate making their interdependence a very speculative assumption.[175] Given the tenuous evidence for Wisdom being depicted as a goddess, instances of personification will be read as literary and metaphorical within this thesis.

3.2.5 Repetition and Contradiction

Among the other literary devices and strategies within the text, repetition and contradiction are perhaps the most used and are worth discussing at this point, particularly in relation to their formative effect on readers.

Christine Yoder has written extensively on these features in her paper on repetition and contradiction where she highlights the significance of these devices for forming the reader. She understands the purpose of repetition differently in Proverbs 1-9 and Proverbs 10-30, arguing that its primary role in the instructions of Proverbs 1-9 is to reinforce and emphasise certain aspects of the father's teaching. This repetition, she believes, suggests these instructions aim to '…foster in readers the very discipline, receptivity and obedience to parental instruction that the book presumes necessary for attaining wisdom'.[176] In Proverbs 10-30, Yoder observes the number and clear rationale for repeated sayings disappearing, however she continues to see it as a pedagogical strategy, noting that the repetition serves to embody some of the foundational principles of the book such as the relative nature of

[174] Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, London: T&T Clark, 2010, 42.
[175] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 331-339.
[176] Yoder, 'Forming "Fearers of Yahweh"', 176.

human knowledge and experience and the resulting need for the lifelong pedagogy of wisdom and instruction, concluding: 'The [reader's] experience of repetition thus reinforces what the book's content teaches about the human need for lifelong education.'

These helpful observations show how repetition can be part of the inherent מוּסָר of Proverbs; reinforcing, emphasising, and embodying different aspects of its teaching. Whilst there is perhaps more overlap in the usage of this device between 1-9 and 10-30 than Yoder acknowledges, she is surely correct to observe that literary devices such as repetition often function slightly differently in the two parts of the collection.

Going on to discuss contradiction Yoder finds three primary purposes to the contradictions and ambiguities that can be observed across Proverbs. She believes that they alert the reader to the reality of ambiguity and competing discourses in the world, teach about the nature of the moral self in which conflicting and ambiguous thoughts and desires exist simultaneously, and moderate extreme impulses. The pedagogical effect of this is to encourage the reader to find the middle way and, crucially for Yoder, to teach humility that accords with the fear of Yahweh.[177] Knut Heim also identifies ambiguity as one of the expressions of poetic imagination - part of poetry's inherent celebration of the unusual - and he believes that the identification of deliberate ambiguity and wordplay will aid the interpreter in uncovering the intentions of the text.[178]

The observations of these commentators align with the idea put forward in this thesis of a creative tension between proverbs. Repetition, ambiguity and contradiction, as part of the inherent מוּסָר*,* are extremely valuable in setting up these tensions for they allow a number of perspectives to be expressed simultaneously or emphasised through repetition, increasing the semantic possibilities, tensions and strength of expression and, in so doing, encouraging the reader to engage with the Proverbs at a deeper level as they seek to synthesise the variegated narratives which emerge.[179]

[177] Yoder, 'Forming "Fearers of Yahweh"', 181-182.
[178] Heim, *Poetic Imagination*, 644.
[179] Joseph Wenzel, and Paul Goodwin, 'Proverbs and Practical Reasoning' in *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverbs*, W. Mieder and A. Dundes, (eds.), London: Garland Publishing, 1981, 143.

3.2.6 Other literary features

The collection of essays, *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* reveals a host of possible other literary features with rhetorical significance in the biblical text. Kenneth Kuntz identifies devices such as assonance and alliteration (the resemblance of sounds between nearby words), chiasmus (the inversion of the order of parallel words or phrases), *inclusio* (the repetition of the opening phrase at the conclusion of a literary unit), parataxis (words or clause placed together but without a coordinating connective that signifies their syntactic relationship), and paronomasia (wordplay).[180] David Clines identifies others, making use, for example, of the idea of tonality (in which the reader uses contextual data to attempt to understand the tone of an address which, in turn, can affect meaning and rhetorical force) and nodal sentences (the sentences around which a direct address pivots and which often govern both meaning and tone).[181]

Another set of literary features worth looking out for are the tools of narrative, helpfully articulated by Adele Berlin in her study, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative.* Whilst Proverbs does not contain extended narratives there are narrative vignettes throughout the collection, some of an extensive nature. Berlin highlights features such as point of view (observable, for example, in the first chapter of Proverbs where both the father (vv.10, 15-18), the sinners who entice (vv.11-14), and Wisdom herself (vv.22-33) all speak from their own perspective), characterisation (such as the forbidden woman in Proverbs 2:16-19), and plot (such as is found in Proverbs 7).[182] These narrative features are more common in the longer instructions of Proverbs 1-9, but I remain alert for them in the remainder of the collection also. Robert Alter also shows how Proverbs uses narrative, highlighting in particular the moral and natural narratives 'which are found as 'act' progresses to final 'consequence', to use traditional language of the 'act-consequence' relationship found in Proverbs.'[183]

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[180] Kenneth Kuntz, 'Rhetorical Criticism and Isaiah 51:1-16' in D. Clines, D. Gunn and A. Hauser (eds), *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature,* Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982, 142. This is not a complete list of the features he finds but are the ones that I have found to be most common and rhetorically effective within Proverbs.

[181] David Clines, '"Why have you abandoned me?" A Rhetorical Study of Psalm 22 ' in D. Clines, D. Gunn and A. Hauser (eds), *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature,* Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982, 172-198

[182] Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983. See especially the sections on characterisation (33-42, point of view (59-73) and narrative structure (101-110).

[183] Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry, 172.

Finally, Ruth Scoralick discusses the tool of 'direct address', observing, the uneven weighting of the singular and plural forms of person. She notes, for example, how the '*Frevlern*', wrongdoers, are often found in plural form, whilst the '*Gerechte*', righteous, are found in inverse proportion in the singular. This, she argues, is a pedagogical technique which aims to distance the reader from the category of wrongdoers whilst encouraging them to identify with the righteous and to hear the admonitions or observations to the righteous as a direct address.[184] The following exegesis will attempt to bear all these possibilities in mind when approaching each section, in order to draw out the most rhetorically and pedagogically significant in each instance.

3.2.7 Reading Proverbs Intertextually

Another powerful rhetorical tool is the use of words, phrases and direct quotations which connect the text of Proverbs to the narratives, laws, and poems of other texts within the HB. However, the idea of cross-connections is one without universal support in wisdom scholarship which has often emphasised the distinctiveness of the three major wisdom books (Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes) from the rest of the canon. What follows will seek to justify the approach of this thesis, which is in favour of intertextual links.

In his 1994 study *Wisdom and Creation* Leo Perdue remarks that: 'the dominant trend in OT theology has been either to neglect wisdom literature or to consider it to be outside the mainstream of Israelite faith'.[185] However, in a recent collection of essays, Mark Sneed argues that the 'paradigmatic position' he was taught (in which the wisdom literature was seen as an alien body within the canon), whilst still the view of some, now competes with a number of other views. Will Kynes, who has done a significant amount of work on intertextual relationships within the HB, goes on to survey the breadth of current opinion on the relationship of the wisdom corpus to other parts of the canon and observes a 'broad discomfort with the marginalization of wisdom from the rest of the Hebrew Bible' that he believes leads many to now place wisdom as central to the canon. This leads him to his

[184] Ruth Scoralick, *Einzelspruch und Sammlung, Komposition im Buch der Sprichwörter Kapitel 10-15*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995, 64.
[185] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 19.

proposed treatment that, as per Sneed,[186] instead of wisdom being a fixed and strictly delineated category, 'wisdom literature' should be a nominal category (we may, with Katharine Dell, want to speak of a 'wisdom family'[187]) that takes its place as '…simply one of many ways to draw intertextual connections among them and other texts in the Hebrew Bible'.[188] This points towards his earlier work on intertextuality where he observes that 'some of these similarities may be the result of later authors intentionally referencing earlier texts (diachronic intertextuality) and others may be the products of readerly comparison (synchronic intertextuality).'[189] Thus, even if the original authors did not intend an allusion, an intertextual relationship can still be established once the two texts are in co-existence. This is the point made by T. S. Eliot in his essay on canon when he notes that a canon of texts is modified by the introduction of a new work such that the meaning of all the texts is altered by the newcomer.[190]

Proverbs therefore cannot be fully understood in isolation, nor can it be understood simply with reference to other books within the wisdom family. Rather, there is a growing awareness that, across many texts of the HB, there is a degree of commonality and cross fertilisation as regards the cultural, religious, and philosophical commitments of the texts of which the wisdom literature is simply one expression. Wisdom literature then, however defined, and delineated, must be interpreted with reference to this wider body of literature. The exegesis which follows will have a presumption in favour of intertextual connections which is a method that ranges together texts in their final form rather than worrying about earlier stages of the material. Nonetheless, as John Barton states, the intertextual method is not one to be used lightly and not only involves the 'detailed and painstaking work of searching out allusions,

[186] Mark Sneed, 'Introduction' and 'Grasping After the Wind' in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, M. Sneed (ed.), 2015, 1-11 and 39-69, 1, 40.
[187] Katharine Dell, 'Deciding the Boundaries of Wisdom' in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, M. Sneed (ed.), 2015, 145-161, 155. Dell brings several different voices together in the current debate and suggests that a sensible middle ground is to speak of a 'family' of wisdom texts in which Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are the parental figures.
[188] Will Kynes, 'The Modern Scholarly Wisdom Tradition and the Threat of Pan-Sapientialism: a case report', in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, M. Sneed (ed.), 2015, 11-39, 31.
[189] Will Kynes, 'Intertextuality: Method and Theory in Job and Psalm 119' in *Biblical Interpretation and Method: Essays in Honour of Professor John Barton*, Dell, K. and Joyce, P. (eds), Oxford, U.K. : Oxford University Press, 2013, 203.
[190] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919) in *Perspecta* 19 (1982): 36–42, 37.

quotations and echoes of one biblical work in another' but also requires careful thought before conclusions are drawn on the basis of these connections.[191]

My approach to intertextuality can be illustrated by a recent debate between Bernd Schipper and JiSeong Kwon. In 2013 Schipper produced a careful piece about the relationship between Proverbs and תּוֹרָה, using a historical-critical approach to attempt to trace the significant links between Proverbs and the rest of the HB (particularly Deuteronomy[192]). He uses these links to build a theory of the redaction of Proverbs, arguing that the final editors of Proverbs are seeking to emphasise a reductive view of wisdom which emerges progressively through the collection as they respond to the late prophetic understanding that humanity requires the direct intervention of the Lord in order to live righteously and wisely. Furthermore, that the concept of wisdom as all-sufficient (a view presented in Proverbs 8) is then subtly superseded by the overarching narrative of the collection.[193] Responding to this view, Kwon argues that, in fact, the links with Deuteronomy are overstated by Schipper and are not direct quotations as Schipper asserts. He believes instead that a more cohesive approach towards wisdom can be discerned by understanding the relationship between the text in terms of a 'broad cultural knowledge in the compositional process'. From this point Kwon argues for a 'new covenant' concept of wisdom which is more consistent throughout the collection.[194] In a later piece Schipper himself seems to come to a similar conclusion, noting in a summary (contra his previous assertions) that:

> In sum, the interplay between Proverbs and Deuteronomy is much more complex than previous research has acknowledged. There are cases where the world of wisdom has influenced biblical law or even the literati which stand behind Deuteronomy. But there are also examples where Deuteronomy has been taken by the authors of Proverbs as a norm, whether in arguing for a

[191] John Barton, '*Déjà Lu:* Intertextuality, Method or Theory?' in *Reading Job Intertextually*, Katharine J Dell, and Will Kynes (eds), New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, 1-19, 16.
[192] E.g. David Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction*, New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 418; Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 156-160, The links between these texts have been well documented and whilst, as Carr notes, the direction of dependency between the texts is unclear, per T. S. Eliot above, this is not necessarily the most important thing to establish since they have a relationship simply by virtue of participating in the same canon.
[193] Bernd U. Schipper, 'When Wisdom Is Not Enough! The Discourse on Wisdom and Torah and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs', in *The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, B. Schipper and A. Teeter (eds), Leiden: Brill, 2013. 55-79, see especially 75-76.
[194] J. J. Kwon, 'Calling-not-Answering and Internalisation of Torah in Proverbs 1-9: Jeremiah and Israelite Wisdom Literature' *in Jeremiah in History and Tradition*, J. West (ed), London: Routledge, 2019, 15-16.

connection between the divine law, YHWH's Torah, and human wisdom, or in marking a contrast between the two.[195]

Kwon's attempt to synthesise the pictures of wisdom within the collection and this acknowledgement by Schipper outlines the way in which I am proposing to approach Deuteronomy in particular, but also intertextuality more generally, within Proverbs.[196] The position of this thesis is that the philosophy of parallelism – the bringing alongside one another of similar but different concepts – can be extended to Proverbs' approach to intertextuality. I am contending that the frequent allusions to different parts of the HB (law and narrative) are very possibly intentional (at least in the later stages of editing) and an important strategy of Proverbs' inherent מוּסָר which brings Proverbs alongside the wider body of literature of which it is part, encouraging the reader to consider it within that context, and to wrestle with and synthesise the different (sometimes apparently contradictory) voices which emerge as they are heard alongside one another. This chimes with the observation of Raik Heckl who, discussing how the wisdom texts became part of the canon, observes a similar feature when he talks of a '…synthetic interest within the completion of the Pentateuch that connected wisdom themes to the *Torah*.'[197] Leo Perdue expresses it neatly when he asserts that the sages could not have simply created their world in a vacuum but constructed it from inherited tradition and, whilst they may have reshaped it through creative freedom, 'inherited images still pressed themselves into their imaginations.'[198] Following the categories used by Katharine Dell and Will Kynes, I will therefore, when considering intertextuality, highlight the allusions (implicit, probably intentional references) and echoes (implicit, probably non-intentional references), looking for synthesis rather than discord and above all allowing the resonances of the wider context their full rhetorical impact.[199] Whilst recognising in general terms that many of these intertextual relationships were likely to have been intentional, no attempt will be made to decide on the order or direction of influence in each specific instance

[195] Bernd Schipper, ''Teach them diligently to your son!': The Book of Proverbs and Deuteronomy' in Dell, *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, 32.
[196] For a survey of the different opinions on the links between Proverbs and Deuteronomy and a consideration of some of the key examples, see Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 155-160 and 167-178.
[197] Raik Heckl, 'How Wisdom Texts became part of the Canon' in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition?*, M. Sneed (ed.), 2015, 221-241, 233.
[198] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 52.
[199] See, for example, Katharine Dell, 'Exploring Intertextual Links Between Ecclesiastes and Genesis 1-11,' in Dell, *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually,* 5. This shares common ground with the observation of T S Eliot above.

for such a task is destined to rest on speculative assumptions. Katharine Dell articulates a helpful approach to this issue, noting:

> Whether these connections were in any way meant by an author is a separate question to the fact that these resonances are found in the text in its present form. I shall treat them as synchronic intertextual resonances leaving the possibility open that diachronic resonances may also have been intended. I am coining the phrase 'didactic intertextuality' to explain this phenomenon.[200]

This is a much more integrative approach than that reliant on relative dating and its accompanying uncertainties and will be the one adopted by this thesis.

Most intertextual issues will be addressed as they are encountered during the following exegesis, however, two issues are worth discussing in advance because of their prevalence and significance. The first is the relationship of Proverbs with Deuteronomy (discussed above and on which nothing further needs to be said), the second is the meaning of תּוֹרָה when used within the collection. Can it be taken to include (or as identical with) the Mosaic Law? Or is it referencing a separate, 'secular' and generic body of teaching? Or is it (as I shall argue) somewhere in between these extremes?

Within Proverbs study commentators tend towards dissolving the link between wisdom and law. To take a fairly representative example: Michael Fox, whilst acknowledging that, outside Proverbs, תּוֹרָה is used predominantly to refer to God's law, and that there is a significant overlap in language between Deuteronomy and Proverbs, still finds that, when used within Proverbs, 'both *Torah* and *miswah*' are 'basically secular words and carry with them no allusion to divine law.'[201] This position overturns a connection which is assumed even in documents originating from the centuries just after Proverbs was completed. For example, in the classic texts of Mussar Literature, there is a strong emphasis on, and often a conflation of, wisdom, *musar* and *Torah*. *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers), one of the earliest *mussar* texts that includes sayings from between 200 BCE and 200 CE, includes the following statement from Rabbi Joshua the son of Levi equating wisdom and *Torah*:

[200] Katharine Dell, 'Didactic Intertextuality: Proverbial Wisdom as Illustrated in Ruth', in Dell, *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, 105.
[201] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 79.

> Great is *Torah*, for it gives life to its observers in this world, and in the World To Come. As is stated (Proverbs 4:22): "For they are life to he who finds them, and a healing to all his flesh." And it says (ibid. 3:8): "It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones." And it says (3:18): "She is a tree of life for those who hold fast to her, and happy are those who support her."[202]

Much later, in 1858, the founder of the Mussar Movement, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, writes in Iggeres Hamussar (Mussar Letter) that the primary spiritual device used to empower with holiness and diminish the force of impurity is the '…contemplation of fear of Hashem and Mussar, which emanate from the pure תּוֹרָה.'[203] This shows that, within these later traditions, the equation of the term תּוֹרָה in Proverbs with 'pure תּוֹרָה', the Mosaic Law, and its intrinsic link to wisdom and מוּסָר are well established.

A similar assumed relationship between תּוֹרָה, wisdom and instruction can be found even earlier in the apocryphal wisdom literature. Already, by this stage, the term 'תּוֹרָה' had become synonymous with the Mosaic law (versus earlier usage when it could have referred to a more generic teaching or command).[204] This evolving understanding of תּוֹרָה is connected by Ben Sira with wisdom in 24:23 where he asserts that:

> All this is the book of the covenant of the Lord most High, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob. It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom, and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits. It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding, and like the Jordan at harvest time. It pours forth instruction like the Nile, like the Gihon at the time of vintage. (Sirach 24:23-27 NRSV)

The word for the law here is *νόμος*, the Greek word used for תּוֹרָה, and it is closely linked with wisdom (*σοφία*) and instruction (*παιδεία*). Wright postulates, using passages such as these, that Ben Sira's sapiential pedagogy can be thought of as 'two poles'. The first is the content of the sapiential tradition: wisdom, embodied above all in תּוֹרָה, and the second is the

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[202] Rabbi Joshua the son of Levi, *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers): Chapter 6*, no page numbers. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/682522/jewish/English-Text.htm. Accessed 5 Jan 2020.
[203] Yisrael Salantar, *The Mussar Treatise,* 401. https://www.aishdas.org/igeresHamussar.pdf
[204] Benjamin Wright, 'Torah and Sapiential Pedagogy in the Book of Ben Sira', in B. Schipper and A. Teeter, *The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, 157-86, 159.

mediation of this content through instruction (מוּסָר) by the sage himself as exemplar and instructor in תּוֹרָה. He shows how, in Sirach 6:32-27, the activity of listening to the sages' wisdom ends with reflecting on the תּוֹרָה, such that, even here, wisdom, instruction and תּוֹרָה remain ultimately separate but dependent on one another.[205]

Clearly therefore, within these traditions and by the time of Ben Sira (2nd century BCE), the use of תּוֹרָה within the wisdom literature is understood as referring to the Mosaic law and is seen to be inextricably linked to the content of wisdom and מוּסָר. Whilst this connection cannot simply be read back into Proverbs as it was being compiled, unless strong evidence can be found to suggest an alternative relationship, it should be assumed that these later traditions are developing an existing or evolving relationship.[206] Since such strong evidence is not apparent, the dissolution of any relationship between תּוֹרָה (as used within Proverbs) and the Mosaic Law is hard to defend (despite its widespread adoption within much recent Proverbs scholarship).[207] Moreover, if Proverbs was only finalised in the centuries following the exile (see 1.4.1), there is a strong argument to suggest that, *at the very least*, during the later stages of its development the inclusion of the term תּוֹרָה within the collection has an intended meaning that is somewhere between that of 'wise teaching' and the Mosaic Law. Whilst the apocryphal wisdom literature undoubtedly represents a reinterpretation of earlier

[205] Wright, 'Torah and Sapiential Pedagogy', 179-181. See also Lydia Gore-Jones, 'Torah as Wisdom in Late Second Temple Judaism by Examples of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch', paper presented at the SBL International Meeting, 2017. Accessed via Academia: https://www.academia.edu/34199041/Torah_as_Wisdom_in_Late_Second_Temple_Judaism_by_Examples_of_4_Ezra_and_2_Baruch , accessed 5 Jan 2020.

[206] In a recent essay Gordon McConville provides a useful overview of the debate about the relationship between wisdom and law, concluding that, whilst Deuteronomy and Old Testament wisdom literature share much in common: 'It is difficult to express the relationship of the two corpora neatly in terms of either similarity or difference: neither is one the child of the other, nor are they reducible to some kind of commonality.' What this means for McConville, from a Deuteronomic perspective, is that תּוֹרָה and wisdom remain as closely related but separable concepts and that, for example, 'to say that the תּוֹרָה is wise, therefore, is not the same as postulating an absolute congruity between תּוֹרָה and wisdom. Gordon McConville, 'Wisdom and Torah in Deuteronomy' in *Sepher Torath Moshesh: Studies in the Composition and Interpretation of Deuteronomy*, D. Block and R. Schultz (eds), Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2017, 271-274.

[207] Many twentieth/twenty first century commentators hold a similar position (e.g. McKane, *Proverbs*, 268), however older nineteenth century commentators, such as Franz Delitzsch, normally assume a correspondence with the Mosaic law (see, for example, Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, M. Easton (tr.), Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874, 60).

traditions, to suggest that is represents an abrupt discontinuity with an inherently secular literature seems unlikely.

There is an argument for going further even than this: Gerhard von Rad spends a significant portion of his influential monograph, *Wisdom in Israel,* adeptly demonstrating the way in which Proverbs contains very few ethical benchmarks, norms, and instructions, concluding that:

> The teachers, with their perceptions and their rules, address themselves to a life which, from the point of view both of its social order and of its standards and examples, had long reposed in fixed forms and concepts. They are not concerned with modifying these given concepts or even replacing them with better ones.[208]

From this point he addresses the question of whether these fixed forms and concepts could have been derived from, for example, the Decalogue and other parts of the HB. His answer, however, is a 'blunt negative', that it is 'quite impossible to describe the Decalogue as the 'ethical norm' from which the teachers of the sentences began.' Yet this, it seems, follows a perceptive piece of analysis with a pre-determined conclusion. Von Rad ignores the remarkable echoes and allusions and synergies between Proverbs and the remainder of the HB, so fully articulated (for example) by contributions to the recent volume by Katharine Dell and Will Kynes, *Reading Proverbs Intertextually.* This is not to assert that all intertextual interactions were intentional (as explained above) but rather that, contra von Rad, the evidence points firmly to the integration and alignment of Proverbs with the norms of the wider HB. In this case, the norms which he observes must underly much of Proverbs are, surely, very likely to have included the rest of the HB, certainly from the later stages of Proverbs' formation. As Scott Harris puts it when speaking of Proverbs: 'The parent's discourse is framed in such a way that one hears both elements of the תּוֹרָה and the Prophets in the context of Proverbs.'[209]

A position in which מוּסָר is understood to *include* instruction in the content of the Mosaic Law, and in which תּוֹרָה*,* when used within the wisdom literature, is similarly taken to *include*

[208] von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 87.
[209] Scott Harris, *Proverbs 1-9: A Study of Inner-Biblical Interpretation*, Scholars Press: Atlanta, Georgia, 1995, 173.

but to go beyond the law (in much the same line of thinking as Wright and McConville pursue) therefore seems to be a fully justified reading of these terms within Proverbs. Longman puts it well: '…law and wisdom are not identical. They are different genres, and it is important to bear this in mind… …wisdom teaching is calling for something above and beyond the call of duty as defined by law.'[210]

[210] Tremper Longman, *Proverbs*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006, 81.

3.3 Rhetorical analysis

3.3.1. Biblical Rhetoric

The overall aim of the exegetical approach of this thesis to the inherent מוּסָר will be to identify and understand the effect of the devices outlined above within the text and on the hearer. This corresponds closely to the approach of rhetorical criticism which has been employed within biblical studies, especially over the last fifty years, and has similar aims. As James Muilenburg famously stated at the Meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature* in 1968, 'Form Criticism and Beyond', in which he set out to define a method for rhetorical criticism of the HB:[211]

> [Rhetorical Criticism means above all:] '…understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism.'[212]

Emerging from this rhetorical analysis of the HB, has come the concept of specifically 'biblical' rhetoric. The deductive task of defining this rhetoric is challenging because the texts are accompanied by such limited contextual data (the intended audience of a text and the rhetor are shadowy figures at best) and there is no explicit theory of Hebrew rhetoric (such as Aristotle provides us with for Greek texts).

Nonetheless, despite the challenges, an understanding of Hebrew rhetoric is emerging through careful, synchronic analysis of the structures and literary features of Hebrew text (such as has been described above). Meynet, for example, believes that biblical rhetoric can

[211] Jack Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism*, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013, 22.
[212] James Muilenburg, 'Form Criticism and beyond' *JBL* 88, no.1 (1969), 1-18, 8. This statement strongly influenced the direction of biblical rhetorical criticism. Jack Lundbom believes that, throughout the last 45 years it has followed Muilenburg's lead, '…if not done precisely along Muilenburg lines…' (Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 26). Likewise, in his *Treatise on Biblical Rhetoric*, Roland Meynet acknowledges that what Muilenburg defines as rhetorical criticism expressed '…exactly what I was doing.' (Meynet, Roland, *Treatise on Biblical Rhetoric*, Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012, 3).

be reduced to two essential characteristics of 'binarity and parataxis'[213] and Lundbom locates it primarily in repetition and parallelism.[214] Martin Kessler argues for a more flexible approach, noting the flexibility of the idea of rhetoric itself, and proposing it as the most suitable term for a serious, synchronic, literary analysis of the MT. He also recognises the widened perspectives of the new rhetoric and the corresponding need for an increasingly interdisciplinary approach which appropriates the insights of other fields of literary criticism.[215]

Following Kessler, I will begin by considering the literary features of the text, sketching out a picture of the rhetoric of Proverbs. However, I will go beyond the helpful but rather narrow definition of Muilenburg to include a wider range of literary approaches and also to bring the text alongside a limited number of insights from the field of literary (rather than biblical) rhetorical criticism, as an alternative framework within which to identify and assess the rhetorical techniques which exist within Proverbs. This breadth of approach will necessarily recognise a less formal definition of biblical rhetoric than Muilenburg offers, defining it more broadly as 'the art of persuasion' and admitting a greater diversity of rhetorical approach within Proverbs.[216] Applying this approach will help identify the 'arsenal of rhetorical devices' (as Crenshaw puts it) which are deployed within the collection.[217]

The field of rhetorical criticism has broadened significantly in recent years and the field now contains multiple methods of rhetorical criticism. Whilst applying each method would undoubtedly lead to fresh insights from the text, I have chosen the perspectives with the most obvious relevance to Proverbs and will consider the text primarily from the Traditional

[213] Meynet, *Treatise*, 7.
[214] Lundbom*, Biblical Rhetoric,* 4.
[215] Martin Kessler, 'A Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism' in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, D. Clines, D. Gunn and A. Hauser (eds). Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982, 10.
[216] Glenn Pemberton, *The Rhetoric of the Father: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Father/son Lectures in Proverbs 1-9,* Ph.D. Thesis, The Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver, 1999. He believes the field has been dominated by this central concern of Muilenburg to the detriment of a broader approach to rhetorical criticism (*The Rhetoric of the Father*, 58), however he observes a broadening in recent years, noting examples of the application of Classical Rhetoric, New Rhetoric and Socio-Rhetoric (*The Rhetoric of the Father*, 60–70). For some examples I direct the reader to Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002 and L. J. Regt, J. de Waard, and Jan P. Fokkelman, *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible*, Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1996 and George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion, University of North Carolina Press. 1984.
[217] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 66.

Perspective (Classical Rhetoric) but also, where relevant, make use of Fantasy Theme Analysis.[218] These are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.2 Classical Rhetoric

3.3.2.1 Origins of Classical Rhetoric

Classical Rhetoric is that described by the great philosopher Aristotle. He identifies three persuasive components to spoken Rhetoric: *Ethos*, *Pathos* and *Logos*:

> Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion… … Now the proofs furnished by the speech are of three kinds. The first depends upon the moral character of the speaker [*ethos*], the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind [*pathos*], the third upon the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove [*logos*]. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* 1356a [Freese, LCL])

As can be seen, the art of persuasion is not, for Aristotle, simply a matter of reason, but to persuade also involves engaging the emotions and is linked to the character of the person seeking to persuade. James Crenshaw shows how these components can be identified in the book of Job: my assertion is that they can also be found in Proverbs.[219] I will now outline each in more detail.

3.3.2.2 *Logos*

Aristotle roots the *logos* (logic) of rhetorical argument in the use of syllogisms (a premise drawn from two other premises and a form of deductive reasoning), enthymemes (in which one of the conditional premises is not stated), maxims (in which neither premise is stated) and induction (examples that allow conclusions to be induced). Behind these are propositions

[218] Fantasy Theme refers to an imagined stereotype or storyline.
[219] Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel*, 133.

– either facts, signs, or probabilities (as Aristotle categorises them) – from which these logical statements can be derived (Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* 1356b-1357 and 1394).

The *logos* of Proverbs is, perhaps, the opaquest aspect of its rhetoric and I will therefore spend some time exploring it further. Paul Goodwin and Joseph Wenzel have written an essay, 'Proverbs and Practical Reasoning', which articulates the kinds of reasonable argument embodied within different types of proverbs.[220] Though they use English proverbs to provide examples, this reasoning, as demonstrated below, is replicated within the Hebrew proverb. One form of reasoning they have identified is substantive reasoning from signs. Thus: 'Grey hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life' (Proverbs 16:31 ESV), is a maxim with the implicit premise that grey hair (the sign) is the result of a long life (premise 1) and that a long life results from a righteous life (premise 2). These premises deal with probabilities rather than facts and thus the maxim is rather provocatively phrased as fact, despite being built on probabilities. This is part of the rhetoric of an individual proverb since it would lose much of its force and power were it to be phrased in terms of probability: the hearer is asked instead to peer behind the bold maxims to the probabilities and examples on which they are built to reflect on whether, and in what circumstances, they hold true.

Another form of reasoning is cause and effect. For example Proverbs 16:18: 'Pride (cause) goes before destruction (effect), and a haughty spirit (cause) before a fall (effect)', is an encouragement to look at the facts of life and to draw conclusions about cause and effect on the basis of the observed effects. In this case the causes are pride and a haughty spirit.

Analogy is a form of reasoning which argues for an extended comparison, for example:

> My son, eat honey, for it is good,
>
> and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.
>
> Know that wisdom is such to your soul;
>
> if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off. (Proverbs 24:13-14 ESV)

Here, a whole proverb is devoted to honey and its appeal before it is compared metaphorically with wisdom.

[220] These forms of practical reasoning can be found, with associated examples from English proverbs in Wenzel and Goodwin, 'Proverbs and Practical Reasoning', 145-151.

Generalisation is the idea of arguing from a specific instance to a general principle. For example, Proverbs 22:29 says that: 'Do you see a man skilful in his work? He will stand before kings.' This generalisation is founded on two premises: first, that men of worth stand before kings; and, second, that those skilled in their work are men of worth.

Classification is the practice of argument based on the features of a class of person. This is a ubiquitous form of reasoning used in Proverbs which crops up in most of the sayings in conjunction with other forms. Whether it is the poor, the righteous, the wise, the fool or the wicked, almost all the sayings refer to some class of person. It is a form of reasoning rooted in example and encourages, throughout the collection, a developing picture of that class of person which finds a corollary in accumulated experience.

As these examples show, the form in which a proverb is presented sometimes 'short circuits' the underlying logic of the examples, facts and signs upon which it rests. Several rational premises lie behind most of the sayings which the reader is called upon to deduce and weigh. This 'hidden' logic is also part of the inherent מוּסָר of the text and, whilst the examples given primarily demonstrate its operation in individual proverbs, it is also synthetic and operates across proverbs as well, calling upon other features such as structure and metaphor to support and bring the wider *logos* to life as various logical assertions are placed in synthesis and in tension with other.

3.3.2.3 *Ethos*

Aristotle does not spend much time on *ethos* but notes concisely that:

> There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character - the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill (Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* 1378a).

This means that, to be persuasive, a speaker must be able to demonstrate or be known to possess good sense, good moral character, and goodwill toward the hearer. Proverbs creates *ethos* through its attributions to a range of authority figures: Solomon, the father and mother, the wise, and the Lord. These authority figures, in their idealized sense, display all three of

Aristotle's criteria to some degree and are the primary means by which Proverbs generates *ethos.* A form of *ethos* is also manufactured in its appeal to personified virtues, most famously, Wisdom, and through its inter-textual allusions which link it, for example, with authoritative תּוֹרָה (see 3.2.7 above).

3.3.2.4 *Pathos*

More consideration is given to *pathos* by Aristotle, who considers in depth the various emotions that a speaker may wish to activate in a rhetorical discourse, explaining the cause of each emotion in a person, which should then allow the rhetorician to engage that emotion in their discourse. The emotions which are of interest to the rhetorician are those which change people enough to affect their judgement. He includes in these emotions such things as anger, fear, calm, pity, shame, kindness, and friendliness. To use these emotions rhetorically Aristotle believes that the nature of the emotion, its usual object and its usual causes must be known. With this knowledge a skilled orator can evoke these emotions to affect the judgment of the listeners in favour of their point (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1378a-1388b). Many of the devices of inherent מוּסָר are effective at generating *pathos* and this category will be important to understanding Proverbs' rhetoric as it seeks to influence the emotions and to shape desire. This aspect of classical rhetoric will therefore be a particular focus of my exegesis.

3.3.3 Fantasy Theme analysis

The other rhetorical perspective I will use is Fantasy Theme Analysis. This was developed by Ernest Bormann and is particularly suitable for parts of Proverbs. This analysis is 'used to look at how a group dramatizes an event and at how that dramatization creates a special kind of myth that influences a group's thinking and behaviours.'[221] In this type of analysis one is

[221] T. J. Antoine, M. T. Althouse, and M. A. Ball. 'Fantasy-Theme Analysis' in *The Art of Rhetorical Criticism*, Jim A. Kuypers (ed.). 2005: 212–40, 212.

looking for a 'fantasy type' – a 'stock scenario repeated again and again by the same character or by similar characters' – and a 'rhetorical vision'. This is defined further as a 'composite drama' that is made up of related fantasy types and linked to form a larger rhetorical vision.[222] This perspective suits one of the rhetorical strategies of Proverbs which involves presenting situations and characters in vivid, binary form. Many of the characters appear throughout the collection as Proverbs builds two parallel worlds around the two paths one may tread.

This approach has similarities with the tool identified by Anne Stewart in her 'model of imagination' when she observes within Proverbs the 'prototype' - the range of characters and scenarios depicted in Proverbs (the fool, the wise, the strange woman etc.) that are a binary conglomeration of characteristics or situations.[223]

3.3.4 Summary: Rhetorical Analysis

Considering passages within these frameworks of rhetorical criticism will help to organise the inherent מוּסָר to show how it is effecting change in the hearer. The use of such frameworks will not impose an alien rhetorical form on the text but rather will help to draw out rhetorical subtleties in Proverbs which may be best articulated by holding it up against one or other of these rhetorical perspectives.

The result of this analysis should be a description of the distinctively Hebrew rhetoric of the text, helping to illuminate the pedagogical function of this inherent מוּסָר

[222] Antoine *et al*, 'Fantasy-Theme Analysis', 215.
[223] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 177.

3.4 Advocated מוּסָר

3.4.1 Rebuke and reproof

My exegesis will also consider the advocated מוּסָר. In the following sections the advocated מוּסָר most common within the collection is discussed.

Perhaps one of the most famous forms of advocated מוּסָר in Proverbs is the idea of rebuke and reproof, encompassing both verbal and physical discipline: 'Spare the rod and spoil the child', a paraphrased rendering of Proverbs 13:24. However, the idea of rebuke is much richer and more varied in Proverbs than can be contained in that single line. The most common noun for this concept is תּוֹכַחַת, a word used almost exclusively in Proverbs. In Proverbs it is used 16 times and is normally translated reproof(s). It is a word that carries the idea of reproach and is usually verbal in expression.[224] The verb most often used for reproof and rebuke is the closely related *hiphil* form of the root יכח, which occurs ten times within Proverbs. This action includes the idea of wise decision within the wider HB (e.g. Gen. 31:37, Job 9:33), an idea implicit within Proverbs since rebuke is only given by figures with a strong *ethos* (e.g. the Lord in Proverbs 3:12 and 'the wise' in Proverbs 15:12, 25:12).

The final term, occurring only three times, גְּעָרָה, is normally translated as 'rebuke' in Proverbs but, in Isaiah 30:17, is translated as 'threat' (e.g. NRSV, ASV, ESV). This highlights the term's implication of severity and punishment: outside Proverbs it is almost always used to describe the rebuke of the Lord in very physical terms. In Is 66:15 it is delivered with flames of fire and alongside the furious anger of the Lord; it stuns horse and rider (Psalms 76:7), causes the pillars of heaven to tremble (Job 26:11); lays bare the foundations of the earth (2 Sam 22:16); destroys (Psalms 80:17) and puts to flight (Psalms 104:7). It carries a similar

[224] Exceptions to this are Psalm 39:12: When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him (Pss 39:11 ESV), and when it is paired with the rod in Proverbs 29:15.

connotation of authority and judgement but is usually coupled with devastating consequences.

After מוּסָר, this idea of rebuke and reproof is the educational concept most common in Proverbs. Together these words account for over 60% of all the educational terms in the collection. Thus, Anne Stewart, in her chapter, 'The Model of Rebuke'*,* is surely right to observe that 'Rebuke is at the heart of Proverbs' pedagogy'.[225] In the nineteen references to the idea it is, almost without exception, presented as a positive and vital ingredient to the quest for wisdom and requisite for all who wish to avoid of the fate of the fool. Whilst I am not entirely convinced by Stewart's assertion that 'the book of Proverbs as a whole is the functional equivalent of rebuke', it is certainly at the heart of the advocated pedagogy and Stewart is right to observe the manner in which Proverbs' considerable poetic resources are deployed to promote the concept of rebuke.[226]

3.4.2 Trusted advice

On several occasions Proverbs advocates the habit of listening to good advice. Proverbs uses עֵצָה frequently, normally translated as 'counsel' or 'advice', which has a neutral moral force, dependent on its source.[227] תַּחְבֻּלוֹת is also used, a plural noun that probably originally referred to the steering ropes on a ship and which occurs outside of Proverbs only once in Job 37:12.[228] It is usually translated as 'guidance' or 'advice'. The practice of seeking and heeding advice (from a trustworthy source) is repeatedly advanced by the collection as critical to the pursuit of wisdom and so forms a core component of its advocated מוּסָר*.* Proverbs suggests that those who pursue wisdom should be characterised by a desire to seek counsel.

[225] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 83.
[226] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 86 and 88-93. Proverbs certainly contains rebuke (e.g. Proverbs 1:20-33) and a text can act as a rebuke, but the understanding of rebuke within the wider canon seems to include specific and knowledgeable judgement, absent from the necessarily general approach of Proverbs. Rebuke is certainly advocated by the text; however, it does not seem accurate to say that the book as a whole is a rebuke.
[227] It can, for example, refer to the counsel of the wicked (e.g Psalm 1:1) or be an attribute of God (e.g. Job 12:13).
[228] Probably a nautically derived term from the steering of a boat. Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol 2, 1716.

3.4.3 Law and commandment

As well as listening to advice, Proverbs commends obedience to authoritative (parental) teaching (מִצְוָה) and law (תּוֹרָה). Immediately after the prologue, the first instruction opens with an exhortation to listen to the father's מוּסָר and not to forsake the mother's תּוֹרָה. The significance of תּוֹרָה has already been discussed but, at this point, it is worth adding that Proverbs commends any teaching from an authoritative source, not merely the teaching contained within its own pages, and seems more interested in *who* one listens to than in *what* one listens to.

3.4.4 Developing habits

Proverbs does not advocate any of these practices as one-off or occasional activities. Rather they are presented as ongoing habits or permanent possessions that the wise should acquire. This is especially true in chapters 1-9. Throughout these chapters, the practice of listening to instruction and seeking after wisdom are surrounded by metaphors that suggest the habitual nature of this practice.

For example, in 2:1 the speech of the teacher is described as 'צפן', a word meaning to 'hide' or to 'treasure', suggesting that these wise words are not something to be moved on from quickly but to become part of one's nature, engrained in habits.[229] A similar idea is found in Proverbs 3:3 where, after being exhorted not to forget the teacher's instruction, the son is urged: 'Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them round your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart (ESV).' These images then occur again in 6:21 and 7:3 where similar exhortations are given. It is hard to resist hearing one of the strongest intertextual echoes in the collection here, from Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18.[230] In Proverbs, the parents are encouraged to talk about the commandments of God with their children and, at the same

[229] See also 3:1 ('forget not my law', ASV) and 4:4 ('Let your heart hold fast my words', NRSV).
[230] Dell, *Social and Theological Context,* 170.

time, bind them onto their own hands and fix them to their foreheads. This image is of the parental figures as the embodiment of the תּוֹרָה who communicate their habit of תּוֹרָה observance faithfully to their children, it is an image not simply of listening to commandments, but of memorising them, of internalising them and of shaping habits of life in accordance with them.[231]

Outside chapters 1-9 there is less explicit encouragement to develop good habits. Nonetheless, the character traits described in the couplets are normally described as settled and ongoing traits, using nouns or imperfect and participle forms of the Hebrew verbs employed. It is this that gives Proverbs its very binary feel since it does not, for example, refer to someone who has acted wickedly (for which a verb would also be needed[232]) but simply, uses a noun: רְשָׁעִים 'the wicked', hence implying an ongoing and fixed orientation towards wicked behaviour. This is also articulated in a verse like Proverbs 12:5 where the thoughts of the righteous are just (מִשְׁפָּט) but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful (מִרְמָה). Both characteristics are also given as nouns – the implication being an ongoing and settled habit, such that it can be described in this static form. This illustrates how Proverbs depicts the world in terms of habitual behaviour - whilst this is partly a rhetorical device, creating a binary and polarised choice for the reader, it is also an indicator of a pedagogical aim of Proverbs, which is to shape stable character.

3.4.5 Finding the advocated מוּסָר

Finding the advocated מוּסָר is an exercise in careful observation: identifying actions or habits explicitly or implicitly advocated by the text such as giving or listening to rebuke, seeking wisdom, or obedience to the commands of the teacher. This should bring out from the text

[231] Franz Delitzsch. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, James Martin (Tr.). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982, 86.

[232] For example, the books of Kings, even when describing a wicked king, reference their actions rather than their characters. E.g. 2 Kings 13:2 where we are told that Jehoaz 'did evil' which uses the verb עשׂה.

the key recommendations for the teacher or learner. When held alongside the inherent מוּסָר, it will demonstrate how Proverbs aims to persuade the reader towards its recommendations.

3.5 Summary of the exegetical method

The exegesis which follows will attempt to draw out the full extent of the inherent and advocated מוּסָר of the text. However, just as Proverbs is neither mechanistic nor systematic, the exegesis of the following passages will not be an exhaustive trawl through each of the different features outlined above. Rather these features will be spun across the text, as lenses of varying focus, before deciding which bring a sharpness to separate aspects of the selection and which best draw out the inherent and advocated מוּסָר of the section under consideration.

I will seek to remember that, when analysing a biblical text such as Proverbs, it is an art form not a mathematical equation or legal document which is being considered. Thus, whilst heuristic tools and literary classification are important and useful, there will remain an irreducibly instinctive and subjective feel to the exegesis. James Paxson puts it well:

> The conception of rhetoric as a mountain of data that involves the sheer naming and identification of all conceivable tropes, schemes, figures, and topics of invention is the degenerative legacy of classical logic and rhetoric in the Middle Ages and after.[233]

This will be avoided in what follows which will attempt, instead, to judiciously select some of these lenses, within a framework of rhetorical analysis, to demonstrate the rhetoric of Proverbs' more effectively inherent מוּסָר.

[233] Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification*, 11.

3.6. Explanation of the texts chosen

3.6.1 Overview

In choosing texts, a balance must be struck between an exhaustive analysis of Proverbs' inherent and advocated מוּסָר in a small segment of the collection, and a less detailed study of a fully representative sample of texts from across the collection. To prevent my exegesis becoming too diffuse, whilst endeavouring to apply my theory to a range of texts broadly representative of the whole book, I have opted for six passages. The prologue, two further texts from Proverbs 1-9 and three from Proverbs 10-31. Beyond this division, I have attempted to choose the most obviously pedagogical texts, on the assumption that this is where the pedagogical methods of Proverbs will be displayed most clearly. The rationale for each text is outlined below.

3.6.2 Proverbs 1 - 9

It is perhaps to be expected that the opening chapters of a pedagogical collection will be of great significance to understanding the pedagogical method and this is certainly the case with Proverbs. The collection opens with the prologue (1:1-7), which explains the purpose of Proverbs and comes closest to a self-conscious expression of Proverbs' pedagogical strategy. This is followed by the first exhortation to the son from the teacher (1:8-19) which, in a vivid narrative, explains why the collection is necessary, before the chapter culminates in the first of Wisdom's speeches, articulating the dangers of ignoring wisdom (1:20-33). Proverbs 2 then follows, a chapter widely acknowledged to have pedagogical concerns. Of these, I have chosen to focus my exegesis on the prologue and on chapter 2. The other section chosen to be considered in depth from Proverbs 1-9 is chapter 8. This includes an exploration of the nature and acquisition of wisdom through Wisdom's longest speech. It has a high density of educational terms and is representative of one of Proverbs' most well-known literary devices: the personification of Wisdom.

3.6.3 Proverbs 10:1-22:16

In 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9' William Brown develops his idea of the 'didactic movement' that he has observed within Proverbs. Within 10:1-22:16 Brown sees two distinct collections, 10:1-15:32 and 15:33-22:16, with their own distinct styles and focus. The move from one to the other, says Brown, '*may* indicate greater complexity of learning, particularly a move from a strictly binary mode of moral understanding to more synthetic modes.'[234] Given that this suggestion is made by a scholar committed to the pedagogical value of the whole collection, it is thus indicative of the pervasive belief that chapters 10–15 of Proverbs are among the most fragmented and simplistic. It is perhaps surprising therefore that the chapters in which I observed the highest density of educational terms and significant structural cohesiveness came in this section. Nonetheless, Proverbs 13:1-25 (which contains three occurrences of מוּסָר ,at pivotal points in the chapter, and two of תּוֹכַחַת, suggesting a pedagogical emphasis) and Proverbs 15:5-33 (four occurrences of both מוּסָר and of תּוֹכַחַת, again, at pivotal points) can both be argued to display thematic and rhetorical unity, making them good candidates for in-depth analysis.

3.6.4 Proverbs 22:17 – 31:31

These chapters consist of a series of discrete collections. Any of these collections would be worth analysing using the proposed heuristic framework of this thesis, however, I have chosen Proverbs 22:17-23:11, which has been famously linked to the Instruction of Amenemope and thus provides an opportunity to consider the rhetorical strategies of Proverbs alongside this Egyptian text.

[234] Brown, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9', 164.

Chapter 4 The prologue: Proverbs 1:1-7

4.1 Introduction

When discussing pedagogy in Proverbs, one must begin with the prologue in 1:1-7 which introduces the collection and includes a clear focus on pedagogical aims. A number of scholars believe it is likely that chapters 1-9 are the latest part of the book of Proverbs to be composed, in which case there is a strong argument that Proverbs 1:1-7 is intended as a general introduction to the entire book. Whilst there is some debate on the relative dating of Proverbs and conclusions must remain tentative,[235] as Leo Perdue argues, '*in its final redaction'*, Proverbs shows a cohesive integration of sapiential themes, with the description of the wise woman in Proverbs 31 providing a 'stunning symmetrical closure to the entire book'.[236] This view is made particularly compelling by the probability that the collection underwent several centuries of editing before it reached its current form, suggesting that, regardless of dating, the editors of the collection were content with the prologue's expanded scope. It will therefore be treated as an introduction to the whole collection in this thesis.

The prologue is, as Murphy puts it, an introduction 'unparalleled in the HB.'[237] It articulates the whole of Proverbs' pedagogical agenda but, more than that, it models its pedagogical approach, including many of the devices of inherent מוּסָר, in this compact introduction.

[235] For example: '...we cannot say much about the identities and dates of the individual composers' says Longman (Longman, *Proverbs*, 26), whilst McKane argues against the form critical conclusion that the instructions of 1-9 are compound developments from the sentence literature of 10:1 – 22:16 (McKane, *Proverbs*, 3-7), and Whybray questions the idea that the theological development of these chapters suggests that they were written at a much later stage. (R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs*, New Century Bible Commentary, London: Marshall Pickering, 1994, 29).

[236] Perdue, *Proverbs*, 63 (emphasis mine). Waltke likewise concludes: 'The title originally pertained to Collections I-IV (1:1-24:34), but the final editor employed it as a title for the final anthology, including Collections V-VII (25:1-31:31) (Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 15) and Clifford that there was an editor 'who believed that the book had its own unity and wanted to give it final definition,' and used the prologue to serve that purpose (Richard Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999, 6). See also chapter 1.4.1 of this thesis for further discussion of this issue.

[237] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 5.

4.2 Structural, literary, and rhetorical features

4.2.1 מִשְׁלֵי

Before embarking on a search for מוּסָר, the prologue is a good point at which to pause to discuss the nature of the material being considered. The opening verse (1:1) concisely states what follows: the מִשְׁלֵי (pl. construct of מָשָׁל) of Solomon. מָשָׁל is uniformly translated as 'proverb' in English.[238] Unfortunately, as Murphy highlights, this does not result in much clarity, since defining the English word 'proverb' contains difficulties in and of itself.[239] Not only that but, as Jacqueline Vayntrub has pointed out, the word proverb comes originally from the Latin Vulgate title, *Proverbia*, and is not derived from any direct translation of מָשָׁל but is 'a general impression of the book's contents in their entirety.'[240]

Likewise, there seems to be no straightforward meaning of the term מָשָׁל within Biblical Hebrew. It is used to refer to the oracle of Balaam in Numbers 24:15-23, the taunt against the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:4, a parable in Ezekiel 17:2, and (in the plural) to the whole contents of the book of Proverbs in Proverbs 1:1.

For reasons of practicality it seems unnecessary to deviate from the now widely accepted translation of מָשָׁל as 'proverb', but these observations should nonetheless ensure great caution when defining this term for there are no straightforward boundaries to the length, literary form and subject matter of a מָשָׁל. Scholars evince this caution in their definitions, for example, Horne concludes that '...the intuitive understanding of proverbs as short, catchy sayings that convey multiple levels of meaning and truth must either be modified or abandoned in the opening section of the book';[241] whilst Kidner believes that the term 'came to stand for any kind of sage pronouncement...';[242] and Murphy that '...its usage is so far-

[238] E.g. NRSV, NIV, ESV, ASV, KJV.
[239] Murphy, *Proverbs*, xxii.
[240] Jacqueline E. Vayntrub, *Proverbs and the Limits of Poetry,* The University of Chicago: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015, 85.
[241] Horne, *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*, 23.
[242] Kidner, *The Proverbs*, 58.

ranging that it is of little use for classification.'[243] This unwillingness to pin down a מׇשָׁל is understandable, particularly given the ongoing scholarly debate on the matter.[244] Nonetheless, there is a recognition amongst scholars that the task of defining a מָשָׁל is not hopeless, even if it must remain descriptive in nature.

A characteristic that frequently recurs in the various attempts at definition is that of similitude. This makes sense since one of the verbal forms of the root מׇשׁל means 'be like.' An analysis of this possible overlap in meaning leads Beyse to conclude that the noun '..in its original sense goes back to the basic meaning of the verbal root מׇשׁל, "be like."'[245] Fox, similarly thinks that a large number (although not all) of מְשָׁלִים can be defined as tropes, which are words, statements or images that represent something else '...by virtue of an imputed similarity.'[246] However, Fox does not think this can be used in any general definition and is disparaging of the attempt by David Suter to broaden this root meaning to the general concept of comparison, claiming that Suter has been misled by the English ambiguity of the word 'similarity'.[247] This does not seem quite fair to Suter's analysis which argues that the מְשָׁלִים seek to set up a 'meaningful relationship' between two words, concepts or phrases by asking how one is similar to the other. This seems to be a perfectly reasonable extension of the Hebrew root meaning of מׇשׁל.[248] This act of comparison is certainly at the heart of the concept of parallelism: the placing of two lines beside one another to accentuate similarity and difference. Following Suter then, the idea of similitude and comparison will be an important component of the מְשָׁלִים, and their use and interpretation.

[243] Murphy, *Proverbs*, xxii. See also: Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 57; Longman, *Proverbs*, 30 for similarly cautious definitions.
[244] See particularly Vayntrub's recent study, *Proverbs and the Limits of Poetry.* Also, McKane, *Proverbs*, 22-30, in which he disregards previous attempts to align the word with the verbal meaning of 'to rule' and instead opts for a definition of 'a concrete model or exemplar.' This conclusion is built on by Fox, (*Proverbs 1–9*, 54-55), when he puts forward a theory of a dual meaning as either a trope or a similitude.
[245] K. M. Beyse, 'māšāl I: מָשָׁל, *māšāl,* be like; saying, proverb', pages 64-68 in G.J. Botterweck & H Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 9, transl. J.T. Willis, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998, 67.
[246] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 54.
[247] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 55.
[248] David W. Suter, 'Māšal in the Similitudes of Enoch', *JBL* 100, no. 2, (1981): 193-212.

Another important attribute of the מְשָׁלִים is their authoritative nature. One definition by R. B. Y. Scott emphasises this particularly. He defines a מָשָׁל as follows:

> The *mashal* is an utterance of truth, hidden meaning, and right order. It embodies mysterious and powerful wisdom related to a particular matter, as this has been formulated by an authoritative speaker or in accepted tradition.[249]

As well as defining the term, this also serves to highlight one of the pedagogical strategies of the collection, the invocation of authority for its teachings (*ethos*). The designation of the material within Proverbs as מְשָׁלִים suggests authoritative weight, particularly since the מְשָׁלִים are attributed here to a specific authority, King Solomon, pre-eminent in Israelite history for wisdom, a king in his own right and (as the text reminds us) the son of David, the greatest king of Israel (Proverbs 1:1). This idea, that a מָשָׁל carries authority, is consistent with its other appearances within the HB. In particular, a מָשָׁל is often given by the Lord or claims to impart his teaching (e.g. Numbers 23:18, Deuteronomy 28:37, 1 Samuel 9:7, Isaiah 14:4) and thus lays claim to the highest possible authority in many examples.

In her thorough analysis of the term, Vayntrub likewise picks up on the idea that a מָשָׁל is authoritative. However, she resists a literary definition and argues for a definition of a מָשָׁל as oral literature, a representative performance enshrined in text.[250] For Vayntrub this means that, in Proverbs:

> the mɔšɔl can move from a discourse which uses words to establish categories and relationships in the world to a discourse whose purpose is to sharpen the skill of the discourse itself, an exercise in finding the right words in the right pattern.[251]

[249] R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs Ecclesiastes*, New York: Doubleday Religious Publishing, 1995, 13.
[250] Vayntrub, *Proverbs and the Limits of Poetry*, 90-91 and 358.
[251] Vayntrub, *Proverbs and the Limits of Poetry,* 359. Whilst Vayntrub would limit the definition of a *mashal* to a representative oral performance, the fact remains that this representation comes to us in literary forms which can helpfully be given names, albeit these signifiers are approximations from different languages and cultures and so will never map exactly onto the מָשָׁל.

Her work adds weight to the ideas in section 1.4.2 above regarding the possible oral nature of Proverbs, as well as to the central conviction of this thesis that a key component of Proverbs' מוּסָר is inherent to the text (the מְשָׁלִים) itself.

The opening verse, by designating the material as מִשְׁלֵי, therefore offers a guide to reading the collection which follows, highlighting a key method (that of comparison) and alerting the reader to the existence of patterns and layers of meaning in the discourse which follows. It also emphasises that these sayings are authoritative and, in this instance, are given the highest authority at the disposal of its composers, imbuing all that follows with this *ethos*.

4.2.2 חָכְמָה and מוּסָר

Before looking at the whole prologue, it is also significant for this study that מוּסָר is listed in 1:2 and 1:7 alongside חָכְמָה, marking them both as particularly (and equally) significant to this introduction. Whilst a number of commentators make little of their parallel placement in these verses,[252] some attempt to explain the pairing by showing that מוּסָר is a necessary characteristic and aim of the pedagogical task of educating for חָכְמָה.[253] Waltke, for example, argues for a close relation between the two ideas, venturing that 'wisdom cannot be possessed without instruction (מוּסָר, lit. "chastening lesson") to correct a moral fault.'[254] Waltke believes that מוּסָר incorporates the idea of submission to authority, always has an educational purpose and, since 'its aim is the edification of the individual, it is co-relative with "wisdom"... "knowledge"... "insight"... and "counsel"..'[255] For this reason, and because the responsibility to respond to מוּסָר remains with the learner they must 'listen to it (1:8), accept it (1:3, 19:20, 23:23), love it (12:1), prize it more highly than money (4:7, 23:23), and not let

[252] Some prominent examples are: Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 75; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 4; and Longman, *Proverbs*, 95.
[253] E.g. Perdue *Proverbs*, 76, or Horne, *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*, 25.
[254] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 175.
[255] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 175.

go of it (4:13).'[256] Several ancient commentators go a step further, combining מוּסָר and חָכְמָה into a single concept. Augustine, writing on the 'just judgement' of Jesus, likens it to the concept of Proverbs 1:2: 'Such an idiom is found in the Proverbs of Solomon, for the purpose of knowing wisdom and discipline.' Here Augustine sees the two concepts as complementary, closely related such that they together form a single purpose. Jerome uses a similar idea, but goes further, translating חָכְמָה and מוּסָר as a compound concept of 'true justice.'[257] Whilst this conflation is not justified textually, it recognises that the presence of מוּסָר at such a key point cannot simply be ignored. Proverbs is highlighting מוּסָר as of great significance to the wisdom seeker, alongside wisdom itself. Here, and throughout the collection, is a clear sense that the act of מוּסָר has innate value.[258] Perhaps this is what Brueggemann is getting at when he says that 'wisdom affirms that the goal of responsible living is intrinsic *in the very process itself*.'[259] This suggests that Proverbs is a pedagogical text with a dynamic and ongoing purpose (מוּסָר) alongside its fixed goal (wisdom).

4.2.3 The structure of the prologue

The syntax and overall semantic structure of Proverbs 1:1-7 are complex and the subject of recent scholarly debate. It is particularly significant since these verses have implications for the reader's approach to the whole collection. In what follows I will summarise the debate before drawing a conclusion based on this discussion and my own analysis.

Verse 7 is marked as the culmination of 1-6 (rather than the opening of vv.8-19) by the *petuchah* at v.7 in the MT. In English translations it is often presented as a conclusion to the preceding verses by a gap between v.6 and v.7.[260] Verse 1 is, likewise, normally presented as separate from vv.2-6. The position held by the majority of scholars is represented by Fox when

[256] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 176.
[257] Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, 4.
[258] E.g. Proverbs 3:11-12, 4:1-13, 5:23, 6:23, 8:10, 33, 10:17, 13:1,18,24, 15:32-33, 19:20,27, 23:23.
[259] Walter Brueggemann, *In Man we Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1972, 16 (italics mine).
[260] E.g. ESV, NIV, RSV, NRSV.

he says of vv.2-6 that: 'The statement of purpose proceeds in a series of infinitival clauses dependent on the title that describe the goals and functions of the proverbs.'[261] Most translations, consequently, end v.1 with a colon.[262] This means that, in the majority view, the proverbs of Solomon (v.1) are understood to be the primary medium for the actions then articulated through the infinitive verbs of vv.2-4 and v.6 and the finite verbs of v.5, with v.7 then acting as a conclusion, 'motto' and closing inclusio with v.2a.[263] Verse 6, whilst directly dependent on v.5, remains part of the same sequence but is also linked to the title through the repetition of מָשָׁל.[264]

Timothy Sandoval has recently argued that a different structure can be found which, he believes, articulates the syntax of the prologue more accurately. Sandoval makes a case for this division by arguing that the prologue is not such a neat string of prefixed infinitives as is sometimes claimed, with no prefixed ל in 3b or 6b, finite verbs in v.5, and a ל prefixed to a masculine singular noun in 4b. This is therefore not a set of dependent clauses flowing neatly from its governing statement but stands alone as a unit with the ethical virtues of 3b at its pinnacle. He concludes:

> The literary-aesthetic structure of Prov 1:2-4 thus suggests that these lines alone sketch the prologue's vision of the book's purpose, namely, to offer instruction in intellectual, practical, and especially social virtue. Subsequently, vv.5-6 should be regarded as articulating an invitation to the book's addressee to pursue this purpose.[265]

This, he believes, makes the most sense of v.3b and v.5 which are otherwise often regarded as late interpolations.[266] From here, Sandoval argues for a more subtly constructed addressee than is commonly found in the prologue.

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[261] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 58

[262] ESV, ASV, NRSV, NIV, NASB, Murphy, *Proverbs,* 3, Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-1,* 173, Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*. Fox, instead of a colon interpolates '(for use)'*, Proverbs 1-9,* 53. Schipper agrees with the dependency but omits the colon in his translation, better preserving the ambiguity of the prologue (Bernd U. Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15 (Hermeneia)*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019, 61). See also footnote 1 in Arthur Keefer, 'A Shift in Perspective: The Intended Audience and a Coherent Reading of Proverbs 1:1-7', *JBL* 136, no.1 (2017): 103-116, 103.

[263] E.g. Murphy, *Proverbs,* 4.

[264] Schipper comes closest to seeing vv.5-6 as independent but, in the end, retains them within the envelope of v.1 and v.7. Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15,* 62.

[265] Timothy J. Sandoval, 'Revisiting the Prologue of Proverbs' *JBL* 126, no. 3 (2007): 455-473, 462.

[266] Sandoval, 'Revisiting the Prologue of Proverbs'*,* 471.

Before continuing this discussion, it is important to outline the characters found in the prologue with some claim to be the among the addressees. Firstly, לִפְתָאִים,[267] 'to the simple', and לְנַעַר, 'to the youth/boy'. These terms probably connote innocence and the possibility of growth rather than suggesting a lack of potential.[268] They are indeterminate with regards to age and could conceivably refer to anyone from a child to a young adult male.[269] פֶּתִי is found primarily in Proverbs but also occurs in Psalms where the 'simple' are those who are made wise by the commands and testimony of the Lord (Ps 19:8), are preserved by the Lord (Ps 116:6), and are given understanding by the word of the Lord (Ps 119:130), demonstrating that this state is more likely to indicate the untutored not the wayward. Fox sees the terms as forming a 'distributed hendiadys' referring to 'unformed, gullible youths'.[270] Secondly, in v.5, the similarly composite figure of the wise (חָכָם) and discerning (בין) are addressed directly and are often understood as representative of the opposite end of the spectrum of envisaged addressees, indicating that Proverbs can benefit all who encounter it: the young and unlearned *and* those who are already deemed wise.[271]

Sandoval claims that his amended structure (in which the invitation is in v.5) means that the prologue's imagined audience is singular but incorporates v.4 and thus should be understood as 'anyone who is able simultaneously to assume the subject position of one who is in need of instruction *and* of one who is able to engage in the interpretive work necessary to understand the book's instruction (v.6).'[272] Curiously, Sandoval doesn't employ v.7 in his argument for this position (the idea that the beginning of wisdom is the Fear of the Lord certainly seems consistent with Sandoval's argument for an intended audience which is at once wise but also sits in the position of learner) but, especially when this is factored in, he

[267] An unusual plural form in which the א, according to the MT pointing, is not vocalised. Noted in GKC 93x but no different meaning or emphasis to the alternative plural form in (e.g.) Proverbs 1:22, 22:3 is implied.
[268] Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, 56; Sandoval, 'Revisiting the Prologue of Proverbs', 465. The Septuagint translation is 'innocent', lending weight to this theory; Fox *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition,* 85. See below for an alternative view presented by Keefer which I do not find to be persuasive.
[269] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 178.
[270] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 61.
[271] For example, McKane, *Proverbs*, 263; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 3-4; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 35; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 175–176. It is also sometimes suggested that v.5 which interrupts this flow of infinitives was inserted into the prologue in a final stage of editing. See, e.g., Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, New York: Scribner, 1899, 8; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 3.
[272] Sandoval, 'Revisiting the Prologue of Proverbs', 472.

presents a plausible reading of the prologue. The key weakness in his argument, however, is his failure to address the fact that the 'ideal reader' he proposes throws a spanner into his own division of verses. The first half of this 'ideal reader' – the simple youth – appears in the purpose section and not in the invitation. Arthur Keefer, to resolve this discrepancy, has built on Sandoval's work but argues for an alternative 'single audience' for the collection, namely: the wise. He proposes that: 'Instead of depending on the title, the infinitives [of verses 2 – 7] may depend on the finite verbs of verse 5. That is, "in order to know … to receive … to give … Let the wise one hear."' [273] The argument turns on an unusual but not, as Keefer points out, entirely unattested grammatical structure in which an infinitive in construct, with the prefixed preposition ל may precede its governing verb. He acknowledges that the situation in which infinitives both precede and follow this verb would be unique but argues it is not grammatically impossible.[274] This reading alters the meaning of the prologue more significantly than Sandoval's, for now the addressee is the wise who is to use Proverbs for the purposes of tutoring the unformed youth, in other words, the primary audience of Proverbs is no longer the learner but the teacher.[275] Keefer also argues (less convincingly) for this reading on the basis that the term פֶּתִי is not, as is sometimes claimed, a neutral term, but carries negative connotations implying that the reader would never be encouraged to inhabit the position of the פֶּתִי.[276]

Both readings present syntactically and semantically valid ways of reading the prologue. Although Keefer's reading relies on a unique (but not implausible) grammatical structure, even

[273] Keefer, *A Shift in Perspective*, 105.

[274] Keefer draws on GKC 114g which includes several examples in which the infinitive precedes the governing verb. In each case, however, this is to draw special attention to the infinitive verb, for example, in Genesis 42:9 Joseph accuses his brothers: *to see* (inf construct) the nakedness of the land *you have come* (governing verb). Here the emphasis is clearly on the activity of spying and hence the reversal of the normal order is justified. In Proverbs 1:5, however, the primary emphasis (in Keefer's argument) is on the governing verb ('let the wise one *hear*') making the syntax Keefer proposes less likely. Wilhelm Gesenius, edited and enlarged by E. Kautzsch, translated by A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar,* 2006, New York: Dover Publications, 348

[275] Keefer, *A Shift in Perspective*, 105. Michael Fox arguably reached this conclusion earlier when he wrote that: 'The implied reader of Proverbs is not the son addressed in the lectures of Proverbs 1-9 but the adult teacher who is encouraged to use the book both for the instruction of the young and for his own edification.' *Proverbs 1-9*, 73.

[276] He highlights especially Proverbs 1:22-27 and 7:6-23 as examples of the פֶּתִי being portrayed in parallel with the foolish. However, to take Proverbs 7 for example, part of the drama of the narrative of chapter 7 is the fall from 'innocence' (7:2) into fatal folly. It would perhaps be fairer to say that those who *persist* as פֶּתִי are viewed negatively by Proverbs but that it is also understood as a state of potential – for wisdom *or* folly.

the majority view requires a verb to be supplied in v.1 to make it syntactically complete, demonstrating that some significant subjective decisions have to be made somewhere.[277] Schipper helpfully opens his commentary on the prologue by warning that the 'unit has a complex formal structure',[278] and Fox goes further when commenting on the use of the infinitival construction with ל, describing the author of the prologue as 'stretching the use of an available syntactic resource'.[279] However, this complexity serves and illustrates the aims of Proverbs and I suggest that, rather than a problem with a single right answer, these different analyses illustrate some of the different ways in which the prologue could be heard by a reader whilst introducing the literary complexity and ambiguity one can expect to encounter in the rest of the collection.

Common to all the readings is a conviction that Proverbs is not intended to be fully accessible to those at the beginning of their wisdom journey. There is agreement that Proverbs sets out to equip the wise with greater wisdom (whether for teaching or for life) and, ultimately, that the instruction of the book (whether mediated by a teacher or accessed directly) seeks to make wisdom known to the untutored young. Finally, there is broad consensus that, in some way, it is the מְשָׁלִים which Proverbs considers effective in achieving these aims (how exactly is discussed further below).

In conclusion, whichever structure is chosen when translating the prologue, it should make space for these points. Furthermore, given that it could constructively be read in any of the ways outlined above, when translating the prologue, the ambiguity of the text should be preserved where possible.

[277] For example, Waltke suggests that a verb such as 'were collected' has been elided (Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 174) whilst Fox inserts 'for use' in his translation (Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 53).
[278] Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15,* 61
[279] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 58.

4.3 Translation of Proverbs 1:1-7 with commentary

Given its significance to the collection and to this thesis the prologue is translated here in full. Notes and a commentary follow the translation with particular attention given to literary features not yet discussed.

Proverbs 1:1-7

[1]The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel,

[2]to know wisdom and *musar*,

to understand words of understanding,

[3]to get *musar* in wisdom's ways,

righteousness and justice and equity,

[4]to give to the simple cunning,

to the youth knowledge and shrewdness,

[5] let the wise listen and increase in learning,

the one who understands obtain guidance,

[6]to understand a proverb and a saying,

the words of the wise and their riddles.

[7]The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,

but fools despise wisdom and *musar*.

I have divided the prologue into two sentences with vv.1-6 forming the first sentence and v.7, which is uniformly recognised as independent, forming the second. Considering the discussion above I have used only commas within the sentences to retain ambiguity and to convey the indeterminacy of the Hebrew text.

Verse 1. The only term here which involves an active translation decision is מִשְׁלֵי. As discussed in 4.2.1 above, despite its shortcomings, I have retained the ubiquitous translation 'proverbs' given the absence of a more felicitous English term. I end the verse with a comma instead of a colon to allow for alternative readings.

Verse 2a. The equivalence of wisdom and *musar* in this verse is discussed in 4.3.2 above, hence the straightforward pairing. The ל preposition is translated as 'to' meaning '[in order] to'.[280] This translation is retained throughout the prologue to highlight the repetition.

Verse 2b. This line uses the same root בין as a verb and a noun. The verb, used in the *hiphil* form, means 'to understand'[281] and the noun, בִּינָה, means 'understanding' or 'insight'. The phrase is therefore best translated 'to *understand* words of *understanding'.* Most translators and commentators instinctively react against such a translation as tautologous, however, the repeated root is perhaps used here to reinforce the implications of the previous line, that the aims of Proverbs incorporate both the goal and the process of the pedagogical task (wisdom and *musar*).[282] Contrary to most translations, this rendering preserves this literary device by using the same word as an activity (to understand) and an end (understanding).

These are important words in wisdom terminology, occurring 14 times in Proverbs (including 4 times within the prologue alone) and personified alongside wisdom in Proverbs 7:4. בִּינָה is translated here as *φρόνησῐς* in the Septuagint, which refers, in the Greek, to a practical (as opposed to intellectual) wisdom and is a word often rendered as 'practical wisdom' in English translations of ancient Greek texts.[283] This suggests that the Septuagint translators of Proverbs saw a close connection between בִּינָה and חָכְמָה, which they expressed in the close connection between *φρόνησῐς* and *σοφία* in their translation. These terms are also

[280] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 173.
[281] Francis Brown, Charles Briggs, Samuel Driver, Wilhelm Gesenius, *The New Brown, Briggs, Driver, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979, 392. It could also mean 'to discern' or to 'make understand' but the more common meaning fits best in this instance.
[282] For example: NRSV, ESV, ASV, KJV, Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15,* 61, Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 173, Murphy, *Proverbs,* 3. Fox is a notable exception translating it as: in understanding words of understanding' (*Proverbs 1-9,* 53), Keefer also (Keefer, *A Shift in Perspective*, 104).
[283] For example, Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics.* Translated by H. Rackham. Aristotle Volume XIX. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1926, book I, section 13, para. 20.

found beside each other in Deuteronomy 4:6 where the חָכְמַתְכֶם וּבִינַתְכֶם ('your wisdom and your understanding') of the people of Israel is to keep the commands of God. They are also found together in Job, Isaiah and Daniel (Job 28:12, 20, 28, 39:17, Isaiah 11:2, 29:14, Daniel 1:20, 9:22), and 'understanding' is often seen as a trait endowed by the Lord himself (1 Chron 22:12, 2 Chron 2:11 and 12, Job 38:36, Dan 9:22). This idea of understanding, that implies a practical wisdom, appears central to Proverbs' overall conception of wisdom.[284] A related observation is made by Gerhard von Rad who, discussing the חָכָם (wise man), notes that this character can also be translated as 'artisan' when coupled with 'nouns indicating trades' and is often used to refer to anyone who is particularly skilled in some area. [285] This evidence points to wisdom (in the HB) as having an inherently practical dimension.

Verse 3a. I have used 'get' to translate לקח in order to retain the active force of these opening verses whilst avoiding some of the negative overtones carried by 'take' (מוּסַר is not a nasty medicine which one must force oneself to swallow).[286] מוּסַר הַשְׂכֵּל has a debated meaning and needs particular attention given the topic of this thesis. Despite an unusual translation of מוּסַר in the LXX as *στροφὰς λόγων* (which Fox approximates as 'convoluted sayings'[287]) and some witness in the Syriac Version (Peshitta) to a connective waw between the terms, there is not sufficient evidence for modifying the construct as it is presented in the BHS. [288] Secondly, the term הַשְׂכֵּל is from the family of wisdom terms but is rare in the (very flexible and indeterminate) infinitive absolute *hiphil* form. It is normally translated as a genitive noun.[289] The translation I have opted for, 'to get *musar* in wisdom's ways' aligns with GKC by translating הַשְׂכֵּל as a genitive, whilst taking into account its occurrence in Proverbs

[284] Fox notes that בִּינָה is not always practical but that it includes the 'faculty used in solving problems', the aspect of this characteristic Proverbs appears to highlight (*Proverbs 1-9,* 30).
[285] Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 21. See also Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 167.
[286] This is normally translated as 'receive' here (Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1, 534) but, as Murphy argues, 'take' is a more natural translation in this context since the sapiential usage of this term is often quite active. Murphy *Proverbs,* 4.
[287] Fox, *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition,* 84.
[288] This is the only time the LXX translates it using this phrase.
[289] To give some examples: 'insightful instruction' (Murphy, *Proverbs,* 3), 'instruction in wise dealing' (ESV), 'instruction in prudent behaviour' (NIV), 'discipline that effects prudence' (Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15,* 61), 'discipline of insight' (Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 59), 'instruction of wisdom' (KJV). See GKC 113e where this case is cited as an infinitive absolute functioning as a genitive.

21:16 where death awaits those who wander 'from the path of understanding' (מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשְׂכֵּל), hinting at an association with the path of wisdom. This translation also highlights the conceptual similarity between הַשְׂכֵּל, מוּסָר, and חָכְמָה.[290]

Verse 3b. This line contains the most obviously ethical virtues in the prologue: צֶדֶק, 'righteousness', מִשְׁפָּט 'justice', and מֵישָׁרִים 'equity' which have been separated by commas in my translation. Whether they were a later addition, or part of the original composition, the sudden juxtaposition of these terms brings them forcibly to the attention of the reader. This is an example of parataxis since their syntactical relationship to the surrounding terms is unclear. Whilst this could be evidence of their later inclusion, their placement could also be an intentional device to draw attention to these character traits.

These terms are important characteristics of Yahweh. צֶדֶק, is attributed to the Lord, especially in Psalms and Jeremiah (e.g. Psalms 9:9, 72:2, 89:15, 97:2, 119 and Jeremiah 23:6), and to the Messiah (e.g. Isaiah 11:4 and 5); מִשְׁפָּט (justice/judgement) populates much of the law and the prophets as a characteristic of Yahweh; and מֵישָׁרִים (equity) is mentioned in Chronicles as the Lord's delight (1 Chronicles 29:17) and in the Psalms and Isaiah as his attribute (e.g. Psalms 9:9, 75:3, 98:9, Is 45:19). Particularly given the manner in which they are grouped together, it is almost impossible to hear these words without being reminded of their deep significance throughout the HB and this is an example of Proverbs' use of evocative language and allusion to other significant texts and themes within the HB.

The juxtaposition of these ethical qualities with wisdom terms is a pattern throughout the collection and the terms 'righteous' and 'wise' (especially) are closely related throughout. Sun Myung Lyu argues that the 'emerging portrait of the righteous person therefore approximates the educational goal of Proverbs, namely shaping the ideal person through moral instruction and its internalization.'[291] Lyu's use of 'righteous person' where one may expect 'wise person' does not claim synonymity for the terms, rather that: 'their relationship may be described as

[290] As Delitzsch puts it: 'מוּסַר הַשְׂכֵּל is that which proceeds from *chokma* and *musar* when they are blended together.' Delitzsch, *Proverbs,* 55. Fox also highlights that 'the participle *maśkīl* is nearly synonymous with *ḥaḵam',* pointing to Psalms 14:2, Proverbs 10:5 and 15:24, Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 59.
[291] Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 45.

co-referential'.[292] These are integrated terms which inseparably describe the person of character whom Proverbs is seeking to form such that true wisdom only comes 'bundled with righteousness'.[293] Again, this suggests that, when talking about wisdom in Proverbs, we are dealing with a fundamentally practical, ethical quality: in Greek terminology, more like *φρόνησῐς* (practical wisdom) than *σοφία* (intellectual wisdom).

Verse 4. The most interesting translation decisions in this verse concern the words עָרְמָה, here rendered 'cunning' and מְזִמָּה, 'shrewdness'.[294] עָרְמָה is a rare word, used outside Proverbs only to depict the man who slays another by cunning (Exodus 21:14) and the deception of the Gibeonites in Joshua 9:4. The Gibeonite deception is a particularly interesting example since, whilst constructing an elaborate deceit, it results in their salvation from the hands of Israel and subsequently from surrounding nations. Even more strikingly, it comes from the same root as עָרוּם, the word used to describe the serpent's cunning in Genesis 3:1.

The word ends the first half of the verse and is heard in parallel with מְזִמָּה, which ends the second. This word, translated here as shrewdness, is normally used in connection with the schemes of the wicked,[295] and appropriated as a wisdom virtue by this verse in what Fox describes as an 'audacious move' suggesting that the wisdom of Proverbs is pragmatic, and not simply idealistic.[296] The pairing of these two equivocal terms suggests that they are deliberately used here, inclining away from the more pedestrian renderings of (for example) 'prudence' and 'discretion' adopted by the ESV. Instead, following Fox, I have used the more provocative 'cunning' and 'shrewdness'.[297]

Verse 5. The words used to describe Proverbs' outcomes are both unusual words. Firstly, the wise (ms) increase in לֶקַח. This is normally translated 'learning' but often has connotations of particularly eloquent and persuasive teaching (Deuteronomy 32:2, Job 11:4, Proverbs 7:21, 16:21, 16:23). This is paralleled by תַּחְבוּלוֹת, obtained by those with understanding, a word

[292] Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 45.
[293] Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son*, 76. The antithetical terms wicked/fool are related in a similar fashion throughout the collection. See also Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 53-56.
[294] It is often translated as prudence (e.g. ESV, NRSV) but, as Fox argues, this is not justified and the normal translation should stand (*Proverbs 1-9,* 61).
[295] E.g. Psalm 10:2, 21:12, 139:20, Proverbs 24:8, Jer. 11:15.
[296] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 61.
[297] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 61.

found almost exclusively in Proverbs and probably derived nautically from the steering of a boat and meaning 'guidance' or 'skilful counsel'.[298] Together, these terms suggest that Proverbs claims to offer compelling and useful advice with which the reader may successfully navigate the stormy waters of life.

The infinitives with ל preposition are interrupted here (as discussed above) and this verse begins with the imperfect form (in the qal, 3ms) of שׁמע. I have translated it as 'listen' (as opposed to 'hear') to capture the slightly more active sense of the verb, as well as taking the opportunity for alliteration (***l****et* the wise ***l****isten* and increase in ***l****earning*). The verb is repeated in v.8 at the opening of the father's address to the son, linking the two sections and highlighting the centrality of listening in Proverbs.

Verse 6. This verse opens with a repetition of לְהָבִין which also opens v.2b. The translation makes clear the repeated phrase to alert the reader to a possible structure within the prologue in which v.2a to v.6 form an inclusio bracketed by this term. There is also a repetition of מָשָׁל, this time in the ms form. Delitzsch believes that, in the remainder of the couplet, 'the mediate object of these proverbs, as stated in ver. 2b, is now expanded.'[299] The various terms could certainly be heard as an expansion on the 'words of understanding' in v.2b, as Waltke observes, they belong in the same 'semantic sphere' and are used interchangeably in Habakkuk 2:6 to refer to the same poem.[300] The דִּבְרֵי חֲכָמִים, words of the wise, perhaps indicate an awareness of 22:17 which uses this phrase in the superscription and is a possible marker of the book's unity.[301]

Of particular interest in v.6 are מְלִיצָה and חִידֹתָם. מְלִיצָה has an uncertain meaning, occurring elsewhere only twice in Habakkuk 2:6 and in Sirach 47:17, however, its placement in parallel with חִידֹתָם provides a clue to its interpretation since the surrounding parallelism is synonymous suggesting that this may be a semantically linked word.[302] A חִידָה is better attested as 'riddle' and illustrated clearly by Samson's riddle of the lion in Judges 14, a

[298] Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 2, 1716.
[299] Delitzsch, *Proverbs,* 57.
[300] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs 1-15,* 180.
[301] Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15,* 68.
[302] Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1, 590.

meaning which fits with its other occurrences.[303] Given a similar meaning is made implicit by the context, I have opted to translate מְלִיצָה with the more ambiguous term 'saying' which leaves the parallelism to draw this connection.[304]

Neither word is used again in Proverbs and the classic formula of a riddle, such as that used by Samson, is also not in evidence, causing some scholars to wonder whether there really are riddles in the text.[305] Schipper has recently advanced a theory, drawing on other ancient Near Eastern texts which suggest that the 'riddle' of the sapiential material may reside not in a proverb in isolation but, as the comparative texts attest, in understanding a proverb within its wider context. This idea aligns with the theory of inherent *musar* which affirms, with Schipper, that the principle of riddle found here 'serves as an interpretive key to the book of Proverbs as a whole'.[306]

Verse 7. Within this verse the only significant variation between translations is in the rendering of *musar* as either instruction (more normally) or discipline.[307] I continue to leave *musar* untranslated. This syntactically independent verse operates as a conclusion for the prologue, connected to the opening statement by the repetition of wisdom and *musar* (see section 4.2.2 above). It also functions as 'the quintessential expression of the basic spiritual grammar for understanding the book', at the heart of which is the statement that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.'[308] This is the first reference to the Lord in the collection and roots the prologue in the wider context of the theology and worshipping life of the people of Israel through intertextual allusion.[309] As Crenshaw notes:

> To be sure, the sages who edited and compiled these discourses never quite identify the old idea "fear of the Lord" with covenantal obligations, but one senses that these teachers would have claimed Ben Sira as an authentic heir to their specific tradition… Fear of the Lord consists

[303] In Numbers 12 it is a description of the Lord's speech as opposed to his clear speech with Moses, and it refers to the Queen of Sheba's tricky questions to Solomon in 1 Kings 10.
[304] So also, the ESV and NASB.
[305] See, for example, Fox's excursus 'Are there Enigmas in Proverbs?'. He concludes that riddles of a form can be found but belong to 'the act of interpretation not the moment of composition.' Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 65-67.
[306] Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15,* 69.
[307] The Septuagint expands the first line to read: 'The beginning [var: 'best'] of wisdom is the fear of God, and (it is) a good understanding for those who perform it. And piety toward God is the beginning of knowledge, but the wicked hold wisdom and instruction in contempt.' However, the Vulgate, Syriac and Textus Receptus follow the MT, universally accepted as the more faithful rendering. Fox, *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition,* 85.
[308] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: 1-15,* 180.
[309] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 71.

of the ancient covenantal obligations, and no genuine conflict exists between wisdom and sacred history.'[310]

Its use here demonstrates, therefore, the significance of the project that Proverbs believes it is outlining. The verse places חָכְמָה and מוּסָר in parallel with the fear of the Lord and suggests that what is at issue in Proverbs is not only right living, but an existence in right relation to the Lord and its corresponding covenantal obligations: this is the 'sphere within which wisdom is possible.'[311]

[310] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 79.
[311] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 69.

4.4 Inherent and advocated מוּסָר in the Prologue

What begins to emerge from the prologue is a pedagogy oriented towards the pursuit and attainment of wisdom, the formation of character, and the ability to teach others. It is rooted in an Israelite ethical framework (v.3b), and centres around the receptive engagement with the מְשָׁלִים in all their forms (vv.5-6). The prologue employs numerous literary devices including the clear but ambiguous structuring of the verses, the use of parallelism and repetition, assonance, and parataxis. Together, these create a tightly worked but indeterminate introduction which can be read in different ways, illustrating its form, the מִשְׁלֵי, whilst focusing attention on critical terms such as: חָכְמָה ומוּסָר; יִשְׁמַע; and יִרְאַת יְהוָה. There is a striking absence of metaphor as the prologue focuses on other rhetorical devices in this economic but intricate introduction.

Ethos is established in the first verse by the Solomonic superscription and (as argued in 4.2.1 above) by using מָשָׁל to refer to the content of Proverbs.

Pathos is generated in several ways. Firstly, there is the use of several arresting words when the ethical virtues (v.3b) are juxtaposed with the idea of cunning and shrewdness (v.4). This, for readers of the HB especially, would be a striking juxtaposition and both sets of characteristics are desirable but for very different reasons. This should have the effect of generating interest and attraction in the reader. Secondly, the motto of v.7 is phrased in such a way as to stir an emotional response. As Schipper puts it: 'The motto of the book of Proverbs is nothing less than a distillation of educative wisdom into a divine-human relationship.' This depiction of the gateway to knowledge gives it the highest available significance and should kindle desire in a hearer, especially those familiar with the concept from other parts of the HB.

As discussed in 4.2.3 the structure of the prologue can be viewed in several different ways, each subtly altering the overarching *logos* of the prologue. Yet inescapable is the repeated connection between the various forms of input (מוּסָר, proverbs, words of the wise, riddles, sayings) and the many desirable outcomes within the prologue (wisdom, understanding,

knowledge, learning, guidance, righteousness, justice, equity, cunning, shrewdness). The first, in the logic of the prologue, lead to the second via the action of active listening, made explicit in v.5 (and expanded over the following chapters see especially Proverbs 2:1-5). Precisely how these combine logically depends on the readers' approach to the structure until v.7 when, with refreshing clarity, the reader finds two unequivocal statements in which there can be no doubting the slightly unexpected *logos,* sharpened by the opposing perspectives which connect the fool with the rejection of wisdom and מוּסָר, and the attainment of knowledge with the fear of the Lord.

Verse 7 also contains the clearest intertextual allusion since the phrase 'fear of the Lord' occurs frequently in Psalms and as 'the beginning of wisdom' in Psalm 34:11. As discussed in 4.2.3 above, the virtues of v.3b are also central ethical terms within the HB and an example of Proverbs' integration with the wider spiritual life of Israel.

The advocated מוּסָר of vv.2-6 is centred around the exhortation in the middle of the prologue (v.5), 'let the wise listen'. This need not be understood as limiting this advice to the wise but is rather the central action required of the addressee which, as discussed above, is ambiguous but arguably extends to incorporate both the wise and the simple at either end of the learning journey. If even the wise should listen it stands to reason that the simple should certainly not do less when they come to the collection.

The pursuit of the ethical virtues is also implicitly commended in v.3b and, more controversially, the development of cunning in v.4. In v.7a there is a clear rhetorical imperative towards the fear of the Lord and, as it is heard in parallel with 7b (but fools despise wisdom and מוּסָר), it seems clear that the desire for and pursuit of these attributes is also strongly advocated by the prologue.

Chapter 5 Proverbs 2

5.1 Introduction

Proverbs 2 contains numerous devices of inherent מוּסָר and is a good example of Proverbs' use of its pedagogical strategies. As Fox comments in his article 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', this is a carefully designed rhetorical unit that, among other things, 'expounds a thoughtful and subtle idea of teaching and learning.'[312] This subtlety is exemplified by the fact that the proverbs contain no imperatives: this is pedagogy by persuasion not by command.[313]

It is widely acknowledged to be a single, complete instruction, though some find it to be a poor example of the instruction genre.[314] Nonetheless, it is unquestionably a discreet unit for the introductory 'My son…' is an example of the direct address used frequently across Proverbs 1-9 and is a clear marker of a section beginning, as is the subsequent 'My son…' section opening in 3:1. The thematic and narrative shape of the chapter support the conclusion that the intervening verses are designed to be read together, Arndt Meinhold even translates it as a single conditional sentence, an approach followed by some other commentators.[315] The limits of the rhetorical unit will therefore, according to this majority view, be defined as 2:1–2:22.[316]

[312] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 233.
[313] Longman, *Proverbs*, 117.
[314] For example, McKane wonders whether it bears more in common with the 'preamble' of an instruction (McKane, *Proverbs*, 278) and Whybray believes that the original instruction is now overlaid with 'much additional material' to leave a 'rather vague and repetitious discourse.' (Whybray, *Proverbs*, 22). In my view, both commentators fail to notice the distinctive rhetoric and structure of Proverbs 2.
[315] A. Meinhold, *Die Spruche*, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991, 324 and 43-47. See also Lucas, *Proverbs*, 59 and Longman, *Proverbs*, 118.
[316] Fox finds a similar pattern. 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 235.

5.2 Structural, literary and rhetorical features

5.2.1 Building urgency (vv.1-4)

The first four verses of Proverbs 2 employ parallelism that operates within each couplet on a synonymous level (each half presents a similar concept in a different way), but between couplets in synthetic progression (i.e. meaning is created as one idea combines with or builds upon another).

In v.1, the words of the teacher[317] are first 'taken' (לקח) and his commandments are then 'treasured up' (צפן) as something valuable that must be held onto.

> My son, if you take my words
>
> and treasure up my commandments within you. (Proverbs 2:1)[318]

Although the teacher is not directly identified, the following verses make sure that the reader understands the authoritative nature of their teaching, establishing the *ethos* of the speaker.

The action in this verse is at the initiative of the teacher. This perhaps indicates an understanding of the initial stage of the learning process. In this couplet 'words' are paralleled with 'commandments' and 'take' is paralleled with 'treasured up.' The use of the noun, מִצְוָה, 'command' immediately intensifies the words of the teacher, imparting them with an authority that normally is equated with divine authority since מִצְוָה cannot easily be divorced from the authority of God.[319] Although Fox claims that this is simply an 'authoritative commandment… issued by a superior in power or status, usually by God, a king, or a recognized leader…',[320] this diminishes the status of the word rather more than the evidence

[317] The text does not make it clear who is delivering the address. Ellen Davis wonders whether the teacher is left deliberately ambiguous here, perhaps to make these words applicable to the widest possible audience of potential teachers (*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs*, 35). Where this ambiguity is present, I will adopt this position although I will use the gendered 'son' given that some of the material of the lecture assumes a male pupil in the original Hebrew.

[318] I have translated לקח as 'take' in accordance with the argument in 4.2 (See Murphy, *Proverbs,* 4). Apart from this, the translation is based on that of the ESV.

[319] Longman, *Proverbs*, 119.

[320] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 108.

of its usage in the HB permits: the only time that 'command' is used of Moses' speech is when he is commanding the commandments of Yahweh (Josh. 22:5) and likewise the kings who 'command' are doing so only when they are putting the commandment of the Lord into action.[321] There is one exception to this (which is loaded with irony) when king Joash 'commands' the stoning of Zechariah as he prophesies against the people for breaking the commandments of God (2 Chron 24:21). The only other time that a teacher 'commands' his sons is found in Jeremiah 35:1-19 which relays the story of the Rechabites: the Rechabites were 'commanded' by their father and they obeyed. But the term is employed here specifically in order that God may use the example of the Rechabites to testify against Israel who have forsaken the commandments of God that he gave them. Apart from these references, the word is only ever used to refer to the direct commandments of the Lord.

Always then, in its HB usage outside of Proverbs, this word is intimately linked to the commandments of God. Thus, whether or not מִצְוָה should be read as an intentional allusion to the commandments of Yahweh, the echoes of divine command cannot be ignored: from a rhetorical perspective, they elevate the status of these commands in the mind of the reader and intensify the cluster.[322] As McKane says of the teacher:

> His commands (*miswot,* v.1) do not depend only on his professional competence as a teacher, …the vocabulary of wisdom which occurs in the protases (vv.1-4) has to be interpreted in the context of a primary claim for submission to Yahweh and dependence on a knowledge which hinges on submissiveness.[323]

This certainly makes sense rhetorically, for the exordium will be wanting to claim here the highest possible authority for the words of the teacher in a bid to establish the *ethos* of the instruction. The intensification of these verses is also present in the verbs employed. These commandments are not just 'taken', but are then 'treasured up.'

In v.2 'attentive to' (קשׁב) is paralleled with 'inclining' (נטה), ear is paralleled with heart and wisdom is paralleled with 'understanding.'

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[321] E.g. Solomon building the Temple (2 Chronicles 8:15) and Hezekiah re-establishing the Passover (2 Chronicles 35:10).

[322] Alter's classification of the various characteristics of parallelism (such as intensification) help with noticing this particular trait within these lines. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 20.

[323] McKane, *Proverbs*, 281.

making your ear attentive to wisdom

and inclining your heart to understanding (Proverbs 2:2 NRSV).

The parallelism between v.1 and v.2 links the objects of the two sayings so that the commands and words of v.1 are heard alongside the wisdom and understanding of v.2 intensifying their significance.[324] The quest also begins to gain in intensity: now the listener must listen attentively - the *hiphil* form of קשׁב, meaning to listen hard is used - 'making your ear attentive'.[325] Moreover, the heart (לֵב), the very centre of being in Hebrew thought, is now to be engaged in this activity. The search being encouraged here a serious one - more than simply listening is required - the teacher exhorts the son to engage with his whole being.[326]

In v.3 the subject of the search remains similar to v.2; understanding – the 'catch word'[327] of this section is repeated and בִּינָה (an understanding) is substituted for חָכְמָה (wisdom). At this point one might have expected the 'apodosis of the conditional statement, but it is delayed for rhetorical effect.'[328] Instead, the quest becomes more active and urgent. The search, which was contained internally in v.2, now pours forth vocally as the seeker calls out and raises their voice to find these virtues. Finally, in v.4, the final couplet, uses ellipsis to remove the objects of the search, leaving them as implicit, instead gold and hidden treasure act for them metaphorically. The search is now intensified and made even more active so that the quest for wisdom and understanding is now a quest for gold, silver and hidden treasure: the kind of quest that allows no thought of hardship, obstacle or setback to get in its way, but presses on towards the goal regardless, so fully does the object of the quest consume the individual.

These four introductory couplets work together poetically to lay out the pedagogic strategy of the author. Education is grounded in an authoritative source (*ethos*). It begins with the words of the teacher and with his commandments. But these commandments are not simply to be learnt by heart and recited daily, the search for wisdom is much more active and all-consuming than this. Internalising the instruction of the teacher is simply the first step.

[324] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 216.
[325] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 109.
[326] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 109.
[327] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 221.
[328] Longman, *Proverbs*, 115.

Instead, the educational process is an active one, described metaphorically as inclining the heart, calling out, and searching for hidden treasure.

The way in which the synthetic parallelism operates, means that these opening proverbs build urgency (*pathos*) – they encourage the son to begin the quest for wisdom proactively, determinedly, and wholeheartedly but they do so by degrees, mapping out the journey a wisdom seeker needs to undertake to engage fully in the quest.

5.2.2 Then you will understand! (vv.5 – 9)

Verse 5, the delayed apodosis of vv.1-4, marks a transition in which the synthetic progression continues but the 'seeking' of vv.1-4 becomes 'finding and understanding'. The lecture switches from exhortation to consequential encouragement, beginning with a promise:

> Then you will understand the fear of the Lord
>
> and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:5 NRSV).

Especially in the light of the prologue, this is a helpful statement for defining Proverbs' understanding of the pedagogical journey – it parallels closely Proverbs 1:7 which notes that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. In Proverbs 1:7 though, it is not clear whether the fear of the Lord comes before or after receiving the '…*musar* which fools despise' but here, in 2:5, the order is clear: the connective אָז, 'then', demonstrates a consequential link between the pursuit of wisdom - listening to the words and commandments of the teacher - and understanding the fear of the Lord.

This pattern has unmistakeable echoes of passages in Deuteronomy which are worth detailing at this point. Deuteronomy 6, the famous covenant chapter containing the *Shema Israel,* finds a number of resonances with Proverbs 2. Whilst there are no direct quotations from Deuteronomy 6 in Proverbs 2, the pattern is very similar.

In Deuteronomy 6, the teacher is to teach the son the commandment (מִצְוָה) (Deuteronomy 6:1). If this is heeded it leads to fear of the Lord (6:2) which in turn leads to remaining in the land (אֶרֶץ – 6:3, 6:23), to life (חַי - 6:24) and to righteousness (צֶדֶק - 6:25). Similarly, in Proverbs

2:1 the son is to listen to the commandment (מִצְוָה) of the teacher which, if pursued, will lead to the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 2:5), righteousness (צֶדֶק - 2:9), the paths of life (חַי – 2:19), and to remaining in the land (אֶרֶץ – 2:21). This resonance is a way of intensifying further the exhortation of the teacher, situating it within the wider covenantal framework of Israelite religion and culture.

In Proverbs 2:6 a causal clause begins to articulate more fully why the fear of the Lord will result in the wisdom which is being sought. The subject in v.6 is 'the Lord who gives (נתן) wisdom' (NRSV). This action of giving is assumed in the parallel line so that wisdom can be matched by the expanded knowledge *and* understanding which come from the mouth of the Lord. The ellipsis continues in vv.7-8 where Yahweh as subject is now assumed and so the focus can return to the object of his actions. In v.7a the action of giving is intensified as Yahweh 'stores up' (צפן)[329] תּוּשִׁיָּה, a quality which implies success,[330] that he will then distribute to the upright and in v.7b he acts as a shield to the blameless. These verses suggest the direct and personal involvement of Yahweh on behalf of the upright and blameless though not, as Fox puts it:

> '[as] a reward extraneous to the knowledge, but rather a consequence intrinsic to it. When God grants one wisdom, he gives him protection. This consists in the wise man's knowledge of what is right and his desire to do it, which will preserve him from the perils of sin.[331]

This involvement reaches a climax in v.8 where Yahweh is now 'guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones' (Proverbs 2:8 NRSV), the path metaphor building on the theme of journeying that runs throughout these verses.

Verses 6-8 therefore employ principles about the operation of Yahweh to explain *why* the first destination for the seeker of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. These verses also continue

[329] This is a repeated word (cf. v.2) in the instruction which hints at the reciprocal nature of the wisdom enterprise in which those who treasure the words and commands of wisdom with receive from the Lord what he has treasured up for the seeker after wisdom.

[330] This Hebrew term is challenging to translate but, in the wisdom literature, seems to approximate to something like success. Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 2, 1714. Several scholars want to give the term a little more definition, hence Fox, 'sound judgement' (*Proverbs 1-9,* 165) and Waltke also (*The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 225). I have chosen to use 'success', since, whilst perhaps a little bland, it preserves the ambiguity of the term.

[331] Fox, 'The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2', 239.

the syntagmatic parallelism of vv.1-4 as the different concepts are interwoven and build upon one another. In particular, the fear of the Lord is often paired with obedience to God's commands elsewhere in the HB (e.g. Deut 6 (see above), 10:12, 31:12, Pss 19:19, 111:10). Hence, to understand the fear of the Lord (v.5), is to understand what it looks like in practical terms to follow God's commands and to walk in the paths of sound wisdom, uprightness, blamelessness and justice (vv.7-8).

These verses use parallelism to structure the unexpected *logos* of cause and effect in these verses. It is a surprise in v.5 that the much-anticipated outcome of the search of vv.1-4 is not to find wisdom but to understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. However, the instruction uses this surprise to demonstrate the logical interconnection of these concepts. Yahweh gives wisdom, so to find the fear of the Lord becomes synonymous with finding wisdom but more detail is given than in the prologue.[332]

The couplet of v.9 is clearly a significant one in the instruction:

> Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity,
>
> every good path; (Proverbs 2:9 NRSV)

It is structured unlike any other couplet in the chapter. Most lines in this section are made up of two or three words and are of very similar length throughout. Here the shortest line in the instruction (two words, three syllables) is paralleled with the longest line in the instruction (six words, twelve syllables). Clearly, the reader is meant to notice this couplet which uses the same three terms as come in the middle of the prologue: righteousness, justice and equity.[333] Whilst not using parataxis exactly, just as in the prologue, these terms are awkwardly placed. Here they sit in an unusually weighted couplet, serving to thrust them into the consciousness of the hearer and suggesting that they are of central importance to the instruction.

They are more immediately consistent with the remainder of the chapter than is evident in the prologue since they are joined to the idea of wisdom and instruction by the path metaphor which runs throughout. The opening line of this couplet is an almost direct

[332] Longman, *Proverbs*, 120.

[333] Fox believes that the lines should be divided differently (per the MT, which divides after 'justice'). As Fox notes, this kind of poetry (enjambment), is rare in Hebrew poetry. Even if Fox has identified the correct division of the lines, the effect is the same since the unusual syntax draws attention to the proverb. (*Proverbs 1-9,* 115).

repetition of the first half of the first line of verse 5 which means that these verses are naturally heard in parallel: 'Then you will understand the Fear of the Lord' (v.5) and 'Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity' (v.9).

In summary therefore, the parallelism of this section, combined with a careful use of repetition and intertextual echoes, allows the fear of the Lord to be heard in parallel with righteousness, justice and equity: the fundamentally ethical and practical nature of wisdom is clear.

5.2.3 Wisdom will enter your heart (vv.10-11)

Verses 10 and 11 represent the culmination of the search for wisdom. Verse 10 is a natural parallel to v.6. Here wisdom and knowledge are repeated words across the couplets but they are the object in v.6 and the subject in v.10:

> For the Lord ladles out wisdom,
>
> from his mouth pour knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6) [334]
>
> For wisdom will flood into your heart,
>
> and knowledge will delight your soul. (Proverbs 2:10)[335]

The wisdom and knowledge of v.6 which the Lord gives now, in v.10, enter and fill the heart and soul of the son. In terms of the pedagogical journey of the son what is apparent here is that it begins with the formation of the right desires (for wisdom – vv.1-4), looks in the right place (to the Lord), and ends with delight (via the fear of the Lord and the mouth of the Lord). This reflects the wider context of Proverbs 1-9 which, whilst encouraging the wholehearted pursuit of wisdom, also asserts that Wisdom is the very opposite of an elusive character and

[334] In v.6 the slightly pedestrian verb נתן (give) of the first line has been replaced by the expression 'ladles out' and the verb 'pour' has been supplied in the absence of a verb in the Hebrew. This is to incorporate two tools of inherent מוּסָר (alliteration and metaphor) to compensate for the loss of terseness and word order.
[335] A similar approach has been taken in v.10.

wishes to be found. In Proverbs 2:3 the seeker calls out and raises their voice for wisdom, and in Proverbs 8:1 (for example), the cry is answered by personified Wisdom's own voice.

Verse 11 is a synonymous couplet which has parallels with v.8, made through the two actions of watching (שׁמר) and guarding (נצר). In v.8, the Lord watches and guards whilst, in v.11, it is prudence and understanding who watch and guard:

> Guarding the paths of justice
>
> and preserving the way of his faithful ones. (Proverbs 2:8 NRSV).
>
> Prudence will watch over you;
>
> and understanding will guard you. (Proverbs 2:11 NRSV)

This is indicative of the very Yahwistic nature of proverbial wisdom: true wisdom proceeds from Yahweh and, given the parallel here, can be argued to be the means by which Yahweh will watch over and guard the paths of the son: what is being described in v.8 is not direct divine intervention, but divinely given human characteristics to allow the possessor better to navigate through life.[336] The repetition here both links and develops the thought of the chapter and represents a turning point in the instruction as the search concludes successfully and the instruction begins to warn against the dangers of alternative paths.

5.2.4 Choose wisdom! (vv.12-19)

To this point the chapter has used parallelism and the structuring metaphor of a path to describe the pedagogical journey towards wisdom. From here a section, expanding on the assurances of vv.10-11 focuses on the specific deliverance offered by walking the way of wisdom. Alternative paths are vividly depicted: the crooked paths of darkness inhabited by men of perverted speech, and the paths of death found in the house of the forbidden woman. These verses employ contrasting themes across the chapter as the subjects of vv.1-11 are inverted throughout this section giving unity in contrast to the instruction and balancing positive encouragement with dire warning.

[336] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 114-115.

The first theme to be opposed is the idea of listening to the words and commandments of the teacher in v.1. In stark contrast, the deliverance of v.12 is from 'men of perverted speech' (Proverbs 2:12, ESV), and from the 'adulteress with her smooth speech' (Proverbs 2:16, ESV) which, implicitly, should not be listened to. תַּהְפֻּכָה (perverse), is a term that is used 9 times in Proverbs but only once elsewhere in the OT in Deut 32:20. Here it forms part of Moses' song, following the reading of the law and appointment of Joshua. Moses is prophesying the disobedience of the people which culminates in God's description of them in 32:20 as a תַּהְפֻּכָה generation and a faithless people. It seems likely that this term was used first in Deuteronomy and then picked up by Proverbs. However, whether that is the case or not, its occurrence in Deuteronomy is in a well-known passage and so, once the two texts co-exist, the word carries the overtones of covenant unfaithfulness, as established here in Deuteronomy. This places these disobedient people as opposites of the teacher in v.1. Once the intertextual allusions are allowed to resonate, the teacher speaks the commandments of Yahweh, whilst the 'men' of v.12 undermine the same.

The second theme to be inverted is the idea of a path or way. Rather than 'every good path' (v.12), 'the paths of justice' (v.8), 'the way of his faithful ones (v.8); the son is now delivered from 'the way of evil' (v.12), 'the ways of darkness' (v.13), 'those whose paths are crooked' (v.15) and the paths of the departed (v.18).

The final theme to be contrasted is the theme of faithfulness and righteousness: wisdom is granted to those whose walk is blameless (v.7), who walk the paths of justice (v.8) and whose way is faithful (v.8). Conversely, those of vv.12-15 are wicked, perverse, forsake the paths of uprightness, and are devious.

Verse 17 contains the only occurrence of the word בְּרִית (covenant) in Proverbs. Here the strange (זָר) woman forsakes (עזב) the companion of her youth and forgets (שׁכח) the covenant of her God, leading those who follow her to do the same. As above, this picks up one the language of covenant unfaithfulness, an oft repeated theme within Deuteronomy. To give just a few examples, in Deuteronomy chapter 4 the people are exhorted not to forget (שׁכח) the covenant (בְּרִית) of the Lord their God (v.23) who will not forget his covenant with them (v.31) and, in chapter 29, God's anger comes because the people have forsaken (עזב) the covenant

(בְּרִית) of the Lord, the God of their fathers (vv.25-28). Finally, in Deuteronomy 31, also in the song of Moses, the people stir the Lord to jealousy with strange (זָר) gods (v.16), forgetting (שׁכח) the Rock who gave them birth (v.18).

It is possible that the 'strange' woman in Proverbs 2 is partially allegorical, representing the foreign gods and goddesses against whom Deuteronomy issues such vociferous warnings. Proverbs has a clear concern with human adulterous relationships, as evidenced in chapters 6 and 7, but the slightly unusual terms that are used to describe the woman here make more sense if she is granted a role which incorporates a religious dimension.[337] Fox disagrees with this, devoting several pages to considering the various possible identities of this 'strange' woman and opting, in the end, for a straightforward reading of her identity as simply 'someone else's wife', thus disregarding some of the slightly unusual language used to describe her.[338] Strangely though, Fox fails to consider the option of the woman having an ambiguous identity. To admit the religious overtones of the description of the 'strange' woman is not to posit an exact correlation between her and any of the possible identities she might assume. Rather, it is to acknowledge the ambiguity of the warning and its semantic indeterminacy, which certainly includes adultery on the level of human relationships but could also contains covenantal resonances. This ambiguity is simple one way in which the rhetorical impact of this chapter is increased.

Together, the effect of these inverted statements is to emphasise the stark nature of the choice before the son (*pathos*). Nothing in the instruction states that there are only two options, yet it is rhetorically structured to give the appearance of a binary choice with only one rational option - the way of wisdom which will deliver you (v.16) from the paths of death populated by the people of death.

Fantasy theme analysis can be used helpfully here to describe the rhetorical landscape of Proverbs 2. The characters who inhabit the chapter are not real people but are the characters of fantasy types. On the one hand we have wicked men, of 'perverted speech', who are unwaveringly set on a trajectory which forsakes the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness (v.13). These men are not blindly groping for the right way. Rather (v.14) they

[337] Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs*, 39.
[338] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 134-141.

rejoice in evil and their delight is in the perverseness of evil, they are the personification of wrongly ordered desires, following the wrong path, down towards death. Fox describes this in a vivid soundbite that illustrates the point of such characterization: 'The wicked man is a zombie'.[339] The next character, the 'strange' woman, is characterised by seduction – she has smooth words that will seduce the son. This character is the personification of the seductiveness of evil. She is described in this fantasy type as a gatekeeper rather than as one on a journey. She directs those she seduces down her paths that lead to death and for those who take her paths there is no return (v.19).

These fantasy types stand in contrast to the teacher, and the characters found along the righteous paths (those who walk in integrity, the upright, the faithful ones). These also belong to a fantasy type for they are idealised characters and employ the *logos* of classification, in which arguments are made from the character traits of a specific 'class' of person (e.g. men of perverted speech). Together these characters help to form a fantasy scenario, emphasising the apparent polarity of the choice which confronts the son.

5.2.5 And inhabit the land (vv.20-22)

The instruction ends with a three-verse epilogue that summarises the advice of the lecture and its purpose and outcome. It uses the metaphor of the way or path as its summative metaphor (see below for a more detailed exploration of the metaphors in this chapter) and states clearly that the whole purpose of the instruction is for the son to walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. However, the epilogue also grounds the outcome of this way of life in a more tangible, physical reality than is promised earlier in the instruction - the idea of land (אֶרֶץ) is introduced here, a term that is deeply symbolic of the covenant blessing of God in response to covenant obedience.[340] In the final two verses the land is heard in parallel in both. Each couplet is synonymous, but the pair of verses are antithetical: the upright receive a permanent place in the land and the blameless remain in it (Proverbs 2:22 - cf. Deut 30:17-18), whilst the wicked are cut off from the land and rooted out of it (Proverbs

[339] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 118.
[340] McKane, *Proverbs*, 288.

2:23 - cf. Josh 23:15-16). As these verses are heard in parallel with the remainder of the chapter they are clearly in continuity with the rest of the instruction (for the opening proverb references ways and paths), but the focus on the physical blessing of land suggests that this instruction is also in continuity with wider concerns in the HB which result in the tangible blessing of אֶרֶץ, being 'entrenched in biblical tradition'.[341] There is thus a recognition that, for most readers, as Lyu put it: 'Walking in this path requires faith in the eventual vindication of that moral choice, and the confidence exuded in 2:20-22 encapsulates the *thesis* of the moral argument in Proverbs, namely that virtue is superior'.[342] This is part of the *topos* – a verbal formula – of this instruction, observed in Deuteronomy 6, and which we can see at key points throughout the HB, enshrining one of the key tenets of Israelite faith: that blessing follows obedience and faithfulness to Yahweh.[343]

5.2.6 Treasure hunting: the structuring metaphors of Proverbs 2

There are three main conceptual metaphors within Proverbs chapter 2 which are worth considering separately given their significance throughout this instruction and within the rest of the collection. They are 'wisdom is treasure' 'God is a helper', and 'life is a journey'. These metaphors help to structure and enliven this instruction.

The 'wisdom is treasure' metaphors occur in the early verses of the chapter. Firstly the teacher's words ('nuggets' of wisdom) are צפן, 'treasured up', a word often used of the hiding of something precious, including the commands of God.[344] The quest for wisdom is then likened to a quest for silver and hidden treasure. These metaphors introduce a concept which is universally accessible: all cultures understand the concept of a treasure quest. This is the first aspect of this metaphor that gives it rhetorical power: wisdom, and the commandments of the teacher are conceptualized as an item that is universally desired and sought after. Treasure is not something for the intellectual or the aesthete, it is something desirable to

[341] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 17.
[342] Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 81.
[343] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 123. For examples of this topos see also Psalm 37, Proverbs 10:30.
[344] E.g. Job 23:12, Ps. 119:11.

everyone and that quality is imparted to wisdom through the metaphor. Whilst Proverbs ultimately wants the hearer to desire wisdom *above* treasure, as Claudia Camp remarks, 'the collection recognises that the desire for treasure might be excelled by a desire for wisdom but never entirely superseded'.[345]

Treasure is not only desirable, it is also precious, and this is the second aspect of the metaphor that gives it rhetorical impact. Wisdom is not given the status of something mundane and easy to come by, rather it is described as something precious and valuable, that not many possess.

The final aspect of the metaphor that gives it rhetorical impact as the relationship of similarity is established, is its level of inaccessibility. Treasure (particularly hidden treasure) can be found, but the use of this language '…suggests that acquiring wisdom is more like an adventure, a quest, than a homework assignment.'[346] Equating wisdom with treasure is thus a rhetorical move calculated to set the blood racing and to engage the 'inner adventurer' of the hearer as the draw of embarking on the quest for wisdom is implanted in the mind building the *pathos* of the chapter.

The second metaphorical concept is that of the Lord as a helper. The Lord is pictured as helping in various guises: he acts as a storeman (v.7), storing up sound wisdom; as a guard (v.8), guarding the paths of justice; and as a watchman (v.8), watching over the ways of his faithful ones. The Lord is also pictured as a helper object - as a shield (v.7). In each instance the Lord's help is reserved for specific characters, for those who walk in integrity, the upright and 'his' (the Lord's) faithful ones. These figures are implicitly those who have sought and been given wisdom and knowledge (vv.5-6). These metaphors set up a relationship of similarity between the Lord and these various helper figures and objects within society. They are images that personalise the Lord as someone who is willing to help those who are seeking wisdom.[347] They have a rhetorical, if paradoxical, power because they suggest that the Lord himself will be personally, positively and actively involved in the lives of those who embark on the quest for wisdom. This metaphor balances the urgent exhortation to seek after wisdom, offering a picture of 'the acquisition of wisdom by means of human industry *and*

[345] Claudia Camp, 'Proverbs and the Problems of the Moral Self', *JSOT*, Vol 40.1 (2015), 42.
[346] Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs*, 35.
[347] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 226.

divine aid and generosity.'[348] Walter Brueggemann argues that the wisdom literature of the HB is devoid of such a view, claiming rather that: 'The wise man is one who knows "the buck stops here." There is no authority to which he can appeal.'[349] Yet Proverbs 2 suggests otherwise and is an example of Proverbs' approach to the question of the interplay between divine and human responsibility.

A similar 'helper' metaphor is then used in vv.10–12 but, this time, the helper is wisdom. As wisdom and knowledge is internalised (v.10) the seeker after wisdom is watched, guarded and delivered (vv.11-12), not by the Lord, but by wisdom - discretion and understanding - personified. This is a powerful rhetorical twist for the two conceptual metaphors are heard in parallel:

> The Lord is a helper (vv.7-8)
>
> Wisdom (discretion and understanding) is a helper (vv.10-12)

Whilst this is not the full personification of wisdom found in later chapters, already the connections being established here elevate wisdom to an almost godlike status and suggest its central role in the agency of the Lord. These parallel metaphors are suggestive of the idea that the way the Lord helps those who seek wisdom is that very wisdom itself which he grants to the wisdom seeker.

The final structuring metaphor in this chapter is the concept that *life is a journey* or, more specifically, *behaviour is a path*.[350] This is 'the metaphor of "way" that rules this lecture' and allows humanity to be categorised according to the path they are on.[351] Here, two types of people on journeys with opposite directions of travel and destinations are depicted, allowing the hearer to conceptualise and assess the path of wisdom against alternative paths.

The journey of wisdom begins in a stationary metaphor; that of treasuring up and receiving the wisdom (the words of the teacher) that is offered. However, as noted in the section on structure, the wisdom quest becomes steadily more active and here the metaphors of journeying begin. The idea of searching for treasure or seeking silver (v.4) is a blend of the treasure metaphor and the journeying metaphor. However, the true path metaphors begin

[348] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 16.
[349] Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 21.
[350] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 129.
[351] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 227.

in v.7 as the result of this quest. The journey of the wise is described variously (and using repetition to link the opposite journeys) as לְהֹלְכֵי תֹם, 'walking in integrity' (v.7), every good מַעְגַּל, 'path' (v.9), דֶּרֶךְ and אֹרַח, 'road' and 'way' (v.8), the אֹרַח, 'ways' of life (v.19), the דֶּרֶךְ of the good and אֹרַח of the righteous (v.20). Conversely the journey of the wicked is described as the דֶּרֶךְ of evil (v.12), the אֹרַח of darkness (v.13), crooked אֹרַח and devious מַעְגַּל (v.15), and, finally, a מַעְגַּל that leads the traveller downward among the departed and terminates in death from which none regain the אֹרַח of life (vv.18-19).

These metaphors carry rhetorical force because they paint clear pictures in the minds of the hearer about the paths available to them. Life is implicitly presented as binary since, whilst many paths are described, they can be consistently placed into two categories, allowing each to be visualised from different angles, depicting a gulf between them which could not be more vivid and stark. One (the way of wisdom) is pleasant and safe, God watches over and guards those who travel it, goodness, integrity and life characterise it. The alternative is dark, crooked, and heads into darkness and death and, furthermore, there is no returning from it. The choice is simplified and exaggerated for rhetorical effect: this is the *pathos* of the chapter, evoking the appeal of the way of wisdom and fear of the alternative, attempting to persuade the son that there is only one reasonable path to take and recalling the great choice of Deut 30:15: 'See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity'.[352] The repetition gives assonance to the second half of the chapter in which these terms ring out like footsteps through the verses.

In summary, these structuring metaphors work with the parallelism to create the intricate weave of this chapter. They also are one of the primary means by which rhetorical force is imparted in this instruction to the son of v.1, using fantasy types to build a fantasy scenario (see 5.2.4 above).

[352] Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs*, 36.

5.3 Inherent and advocated מוּסָר in Proverbs 2

In summary, it can be seen that there are a large number of devices of inherent מוּסָר at work in this chapter that together work to increase the pedagogical impact of this instruction, encouraging the hearer towards the path of wisdom and away from the ways of the wicked. The parallelism across the chapter creates a carefully layered piece that builds in intensity and contains a host of links, repetitions and connections that act to make it rhetorically coherent. The parallelism is also used to contrast ideas and approaches and, especially in the second half of the instruction, to create the impression of the binary choice between two paths that confronts the hearer. The central metaphors (treasure, helper, and path) work in harmony with the structure to make the points more vivid and accessible, as do the other literary devices observed here of repetition, ellipsis and tonality of the instruction. Additionally, the intertextual echoes and allusion serve to intensify and strengthen the message of the instruction by picking up on significant themes of the HB such as covenant faithfulness, life and land. Finally, the Fantasy Theme rhetorical analysis illuminates another way in which the chapter uses characterisation to bring its points to life through idealised characters and fantastical narrative. The impression left with the reader is a stark but obvious choice between the path of wisdom, guarded by Yahweh himself and leading to life, and the ways of the wicked which lead to death.

The advocated מוּסָר flows very simply from the inherent מוּסָר*:* make the right choice - treasure the commandments of the teacher – choose wisdom. As in the prologue, the nature of the wisdom being commended is clearly very practical, corresponding closely to the Greek concept of φρόνησῐς. As Delitzsch argues, the end result of the search for wisdom, as described in v.11, will be 'the capacity in the case of opposing rules to make the right choice, and in the matter of extremes to choose the right medium…'.[353] This capacity is the practical wisdom connoted by φρόνησῐς; an ethically infused wisdom, the pursuit of which is so strongly advocated by Proverbs 2.

[353] Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, 79.

Chapter 6 Proverbs 8

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 is a self-contained poem depicting the speech of Woman Wisdom and the most extensive use of the rhetorical strategy of personification within Proverbs.[354] The placement of this chapter next to the poem of the strange woman (Proverbs 7) is probably a deliberate decision which aims to intensify the antithesis between the two figures. In fact, read following chapters 5-7 which contain three descriptions of unwise relationships with inappropriate women, Wisdom's speech should break in upon the thoughts of the reader accompanied by feelings of great relief.

This speech has an exhortative, persuasive tone in contrast to Wisdom's speech in Proverbs 1:20-33 which is more of a rebuke.[355] The speech is introduced in verses 1-3 and then can be divided up for ease of analysis as follows:

vv.4-9 The call to the pursuit of Wisdom

vv.10-21 the potency and earthly benefits of Wisdom

vv.22-31 The divine relationship to Wisdom

vv.32-36 Concluding exhortations.

Whilst there is some disagreement over the best place to divide this chapter, the divisions are made primarily for ease of analysis and should not unduly affect the exegesis. [356]

The chapter has been the focus of a number of scholars and commentators, partly because of its developed personification of wisdom, but also because of the relationship presented between Yahweh and personified wisdom. Whilst I will make reference to some of the discussions about the nature of wisdom that have arisen, I will be looking primarily at the

[354] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: 1-15,* 392.
[355] Lucas, *Proverbs*, 77-78.
[356] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 84.

rhetorical and pedagogical techniques that are being employed, rather than at the wider theological implications of the speech. I believe that Kidner is right when he suggests that: 'The increasing boldness of the thought, culminating in 22-31, is not designed to preoccupy the reader with metaphysics but to stir him to decision: the true climax is the 'Now therefore…' passage of 32-36.'[357]

In the analysis that follows, the structural, literary and rhetorical features of the text are considered together before the inherent and advocated מוּסָר is summarised.

[357] Kidner, *The Proverbs*, 76.

6.2 Structural, literary and rhetorical features

6.2.1 Listen! Wisdom is speaking (vv.1-3)

The chapter opens with the narrator asking the reader for assent to a proposition:

> Listen! Isn't that Wisdom calling out?
>
> Understanding raising her voice? (Proverbs 8:1)[358]

The use of the third person feminine form of the verbs קרא and נתן show that wisdom and understanding are in parallel in this verse and meant be heard synonymously. Wisdom is therefore personified, made evident using the possessive determiner: '*her* voice', introducing a literary device which runs all the way through the chapter as Wisdom delivers a direct address to the reader. This picks up the first of Claudia Camp's observations, that 'personification calls attention to the unity of the subject'[359]: the personification of Wisdom allows many virtues to be rolled into a single composite figure. The opening is designed to capture attention. Michael Fox seeks to reflect the sense of this in his translation by adding the opening exhortation: 'Listen!'[360] This captures the tonality of the opening verse, hinting at the rhetorical force of this chapter.

The narrator then continues (vv.2-3), positioning Wisdom as a teacher in the public realm, aiming to make herself accessible. Leo Perdue finds that this depiction of Wisdom as a peripatetic teacher would have been an image probably familiar to the later readers of Proverbs since there was a tradition of such itinerant teachers in ancient Greece who would have used such '*protrepis'* (persuasion) as Wisdom offers here in order to secure the loyalty of students. These introductory three verses locate and describe this teacher, using synonymous parallelism to emphasise her desire to be found. Thus, as wisdom calls and understanding gives voice (v.1) she is making every effort to be heard: standing on the

[358] This translation represents a minor variation on the translation given by Michel Fox (*Proverbs 1-9,* 263.) He does better than several the standard translations at an arresting and attention-grabbing opening. The NRSV, for example, translates more limply: Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? (Proverbs 8:1 NRSV).
[359] Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 214.
[360] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 263 The verb 'listen' is not present in the Hebrew.

heights, and at the crossroads (v.2), at the city gates and at the entrance to the portals (v.3). She understands that she will have to work hard to make herself heard; as McKane says, 'she operates where the competition is fiercest' and, against all this, 'Wisdom has to compete, raising her voice and summoning an audience until she wins one by the sustained force of her eloquence.'[361] The locations in which she positions herself are also socially significant as Perdue points out:

> The gates of the city were not only the metaphorical entrance to the "human sphere" but also, in Israelite culture, the place of commerce, administration and justice.[362]

Immediately the rhetoric begins to intensify as the demand of Wisdom to gain a hearing is made both immanent, direct, and personal by locating her within the human sphere. She is then depicted as transcendent and authoritative by her physical position on the heights or the crossroads would have been places of visibility and passing traffic, a spot in which Wisdom could hardly be missed. The portrayal is also universal - Wisdom is portrayed in parallel in two different locations, implying that she is present in both. Thus this call echoes '…in all cities, inside and outside the city walls, in high places and low grounds, repeatedly and forever.'[363] The imagery is vivid, using the metaphorical placement of Wisdom to emphasise the urgent and important nature of her call and beginning the characterisation of Wisdom which continues through the chapter.

6.2.2 She is speaking to YOU (vv.4-9)

The opening of this speech is an extended direct address by Wisdom. The word order of v.4 is rhetorically significant for it opens with אֲלֵיכֶם, 'to you', an emphatic and personal form of address, before going on to use the generic אִישִׁים and אָדָם to show that the 'you' is everyone – this is a universal invitation to all who will listen.[364] However, perhaps anticipating a

[361] McKane, *Proverbs*, 345.
[362] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 86.
[363] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 267.
[364] Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 87.

subsection who will still assume this is not for them, in verse 5 the call is made more specific, but also more urgent through the use of the repeated imperative, הָבִינוּ, 'Understand!':

> Understand craftiness simpletons!
>
> Understand in your heart fools! (Proverbs 8:5)

Whilst Waltke thinks that this repetition is 'textually suspicious'[365] and Fox, following Delitzsch, that the appropriate translation should render the verbs with slightly different meanings,[366] I would argue that they do not give enough weight to the significance of vocalisation in this section of the instruction (see below). In other words, there is no acknowledgement that the repeated sound is part of the poetic emphasis of the proverb - hence my translation above emphasises the repetition of 'understand' and aims for a terse and catchy phrase.

In this verse, the universal invitation is focused on the simple and the fool, making clear that even those currently furthest from Wisdom's ways are not too late to follow her path. The synthetic parallelism of the two lines is enhanced by the repetition and the effect is to make more intense and urgent wisdom's exhortation. As Murphy puts it, 'this is a command: the tone of the speech remains imperious throughout; it is not the pleading tone of the parent/teacher.'[367]

In vv.6-9, using similar intensification through synonymous parallelism, Wisdom explains why she should be given a hearing. In v.6 we learn that her speech is 'forthright', literally 'in the sight of' (נֶגֶד), and uprightness comes from her lips. This word for 'uprightness', מֵישָׁרִים, is normally used in connection with speech to refer to the judgements of God (Pss 9:9, 58:2, 75:3, 96:10, 98:9, 99:4 and Isa. 45:19) and the later divine overtones of the chapter are anticipated at this point: Wisdom is worth listening to because of her authoritative judgement – she will speak what is (divinely) right and is therefore worth hearing.[368]

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[365] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15*, 387.
[366] Fox, *Proverbs* 1-9, 268. Fox translates the verse: 'Learn cunning, you who are callow, and you dolts – put some sense in your heart!' (p.263).
[367] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 50.
[368] Bálint Károly Zabán, *The Pillar Function of the Speeches of Wisdom: Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:1-36 and 9:1-6 in the Structural Framework of Proverbs 1-9*, Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012, 148.

The vocalisation of this word also creates assonance and repetition in v.6 and v.7, where the consonants of the word for listen (שׁמע) occur repeatedly through these verses and there is a repetition of 'lips' (שְׂפָתַי): מֵישָׁרִים שְׂפָתַי (v.6), and שְׂפָתַי רֶשַׁע (v.7).

This rhetoric of divine authority continues in v.7 as Wisdom reveals that:

> for my mouth will utter truth;
>
> wickedness is an abomination to my lips. (Proverbs 8:7, NRSV)

The word given emphasis in this sentence through its placement is truth, אֱמֶת, one of the characteristics of Yahweh in Exodus 34:6 – this is heard in parallel with, תּוֹעֵבָה, abomination, another trait strongly linked to divine disapproval of an act in the law (see, for example Lev 18:22, Deut 7:25-26, 18:9-12), and adds weight to the depiction of Wisdom's speech as vital and virtuous. In v.8 the righteous words of Wisdom's mouth are heard in parallel with the absence of anything twisted or crooked: here, the word order of the Hebrew is used to emphasise the righteous quality of her utterances since it is placed right at the start of the sentence. Verse 9 then closes the circle, emphasising again the straightness and rightness of the words of wisdom.

The parallelism of these verses is carefully worked, first emphasising the call to listen by placing it at the beginning of v.6:

> Listen, I speak noble things,
>
> From the opening of my lips comes uprightness. (Proverbs 8:6)

In this proverb 'speak' pairs with 'opening of my lips,' whilst 'uprightness' is synonymous with 'noble things'. This emphasises the verb 'listen' before the reasons for doing so are explicated through remainder of v.6, the antithetical parallelism of v.7 and v.8, the synonymous parallelism of v.9 and the synthetic parallelism of the first half of v.8 and second half of v.9:

> for my mouth will utter truth;
>
> wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
>
> All the words of my mouth are righteous;
>
> there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

They are all straight to one who understands

and right to those who find knowledge. (Proverbs 8:7-9)

This stylistic presentation cleverly augments the speech of wisdom, approaching it from different perspectives – positive/negative/theological/metaphorical. These different approaches build a composite image in the hearers' minds of the speech of wisdom and, by expressing this partially through negatives, build a picture of the alternatives alongside the choices recommended. Together, vv.6-9 form a rhetorically punchy unit elevating the speech of wisdom to a level of purity, truth and authority with strong divine associations in a manner designed to compel the listener to respond to the opening exhortation: 'listen', in v.6. They act as a rhetorical hook, encouraging the listener – directly addressed by Wisdom - to pay attention to what she will go on to say.

6.2.3 Nothing you desire can compare with her (vv.10-21)

The remainder of the speech (vv.10-36) is then an extended attempt to persuade the listener of the subsequent benefits of listening to this pure and authoritative speech. Verses 10-21 can be grouped as follows:

vv.10-11 – the value of possessing Wisdom

vv.12-14 – the nature of Wisdom

vv.15-16 - the active power of Wisdom

v.17 – getting Wisdom

vv.18-21 – the value of possessing Wisdom

In vv.10-11 Wisdom first extols the value of possessing her in an extended 'better than' comparison. She compares herself and her instruction preferentially to silver, gold, jewels and all one's desires to ensure that there is no mistaking her value. These objects are not used metaphorically here, neither are they in vv.18-19, instead, they are used as comparatives. The

proverbial pair uses synonymous parallelism to place three desirable material blessings in parallel, designating them as inferior to wisdom, so reinforcing the claim of the final line that all that can be desired is not to be compared with her. Wisdom is better than them all (as follows):

> Take *musar* not money,
>
> knowledge not nuggets of gold.
>
> For Wisdom is better than jewels,
>
> and nought you desire compares with her. (Proverbs 8:10-11)[369]

Lucas wonders whether the fact that wisdom refers to herself in the third person means that v.11 is a gloss.[370] This is unnecessary; equally likely (for example) is that this is a separate proverb, possibly of earlier origin than the passage in which it now appears. There is no reason why, in this case, it could not have been placed here to be heard in deliberate parallel with v.19. There is certainly no evidence to make this kind of speculation profitable. These proverbs, acting in parallel, build up the rhetorical *logos* of this chapter – that Wisdom is *better*. When the speech is read continuously, vv.10-11 are heard in parallel with vv.18-19 which contain another *better than* statement (another form in which the *logos* of proverbs can be contained) and also reference gold, silver and other material blessings. This ensures that the hearer is reminded that, whilst silver, gold and jewels should be passed by in favour of Wisdom who is *better than* all you may desire, Wisdom is also the possessor of enduring wealth and righteousness and whilst offering a fruit *better than* fine gold and choice silver (implicitly) is likely to provide these things as well. This is an example of Camp's second characteristic of personification: 'personification makes generalizations of human experience.'[371] Here, in the broadest of sweeping generalisations, Wisdom places herself as the object of greatest desire bar none, in an attempt to awaken that desire in the reader.[372]

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[369] This translation is a free rendering that retains the straightforward sense of these verses but gives an example of a terser, more memorable form.

[370] Lucas, *Proverbs*, 79. Waltke, similarly thinks that it is a gloss but bases this partly on it being a 'unique "better than" proverb in her [Wisdom's] speech', appearing to forget the 'better than' proverb of v.19. He also refers to the fact that wisdom speaks in the third person only in this verse but, since this can be used as a rhetorical device, this appears to be a weak reason for getting rid of the verse. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 388.

[371] Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 215.

[372] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 215.

In vv.12-14 Wisdom outlines something of her nature. Firstly, she 'dwells with prudence/cunning' and, secondly, knowledge and shrewdness. Two of these words are also used in the prologue (Proverbs 1:4) and are discussed in chapter 4. They are עָרְמָה (cunning), and מְזִמָּה (shrewdness), appropriated as wisdom virtues (in Fox's 'audacious move' – see 4.2.3), and highlighting once again the deeply practical nature of Wisdom as Proverbs understands it: knowledge (דַּעַת) is always applied and never merely academic.[373] A number of commentators argue that v.13 is a later gloss, with McKane (for example) seeing it as compelling evidence for the later equation of wisdom with the fear of the Lord and its subsequent insertion into earlier arrangements. This makes particular sense here as the proverb of v.13 is longer than any others in the instruction and is, arguably, a three lined proverb rather than a two lined proverb. It also breaks the poetic flow of the speech which is much smoother when v.12 and v.14 are read together.[374]

> The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.
>
> Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. (Proverbs 8:13, ESV)

Determining whether this is a late insertion or a deliberate rhetorical strategy or both is something that will probably never be resolved but it certainly can be argued to have rhetorical merit. As with the list of ethical virtues in the prologue (1:3), which is an example of parataxis, this verse could also deliberately interrupt the flow of the instruction, bringing it to the attention of the reader. There is also an example of paronomasia within this verse – גֵּאָה וּגְאוֹן – 'pride and arrogance' which also serves to draw attention to the proverb. These features imply that the proverb is placed deliberately in order to draw attention to itself. The rhetorical rationale for this would be to highlight for the reader the relation of Wisdom to God and to one of the big motifs of the collection (the fear of the Lord). It also has a performative effect, jarring the hearer as it is read, so that this list of vices grates harshly in antithesis to Wisdom's virtues extolled in v.12 and v.14 – a literary effect mirroring Proverbs' view of the underlying reality.

[373] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 61.
[374] McKane, *Proverbs*, 348.

Verse 14 then continues the list of positive attributes, tersely adding 'counsel' (עֵצָה), 'sound wisdom' (תּוּשִׁיָּה), 'understanding' (בִּינָה) and 'strength' (גְּבוּרָה) to the list of Wisdom's characteristics. עֵצָה is normally used in connection with human counsel,[375] whilst תּוּשִׁיָּה is a term used most commonly in Job and Proverbs (with one occurrence also in Isaiah and Micah) and is a quality of wisdom/discernment which is normally given by Yahweh or is one of his attributes.[376] גְּבוּרָה is normally used to refer to either the might of kings or the might of Yahweh.[377] It is a formidable list. In particular, the addition of גְּבוּרָה is unexpected, used only at this point in Proverbs and suggesting direct action in a way not normally attributed to Wisdom.[378] It seems to be included at this point to provide a context for the purposes Wisdom goes on to outline for herself in vv.15-16: through her kings reign, rulers decree justly and princes rule. Fox highlights the use of paronomasia (a characteristic tool of this chapter) in the phrases מְלָכִים יִמְלֹכוּ (by me kings rule) and שָׂרִים יָשֹׂרוּ (by me princes reign) which link together vv.15-16 without creating a 'distracting jingle'.[379]

At this point, in v.17, at the heart of wisdom's argument, the language shifts abruptly to become love language: 'I love those who love me, those who seek me diligently, find me.' Claudia Camp observes the way in which the motif of seeking and finding, within the context of a love relationship, finds echo in the Song of Solomon.[380] This is an appeal which seeks to awaken within the hearer human love, even sexual desire. It is also worth noting that the idea of reciprocal divine/human love, particularly prominent in Deuteronomy, could be in the background of this promise which echoes some of the covenant formula.[381] Either way, this is perhaps the clearest expression of the insistence Fox observes within Proverbs 1-9 of an 'emotional commitment' to - a desire or passion for – Wisdom.[382] It is not, however, a blind commitment that is demanded. Not only is this a reciprocal commitment, since Wisdom promises to love those who love her, but this proverb follows Wisdom's self-exaltation – the

[375] E.g. Deut 32:28, Judg 20:7, 2 Sam 15:31, Neh 4:15.
[376] Isa 28:9, Mic 6:9, Job 11:6, 12:6, Proverbs 2:7.
[377] E.g. 1 Kgs 15:23, 16:5, 22:46, Esth 10:2 (might of Kings) and Deut 3:24, 1 Chron 29:11, Job 12:13, Ps 20:7 (might of Yahweh).
[378] Longman, *Proverbs*, 202.
[379] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 274.
[380] Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 101.
[381] For example, Deut 7:9 and 10:12-15.
[382] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 275.

reasons *why* one might love her – before the section is closed by a return in vv.18-21 to the promises she offers to those who enter this love relationship with her.

In v.18 הוֹן עָתֵק is promised alongside riches, honour and righteousness; הוֹן meaning wealth and עָתֵק being a *hapax legomenon* within the HB, which Lyu thinks, is 'highly likely' to describe something old and enduring – perhaps 'ancient wealth' would be a good translation.[383] It is probably colloquial but seems to be intended to make it clear that the wealth offered by Wisdom is 'righteous wealth' as opposed to wealth gained through injustice. Verse 19 then parallels the 'better than' statements of v.11 as well as going further than the promise of v.18 by declaring that Wisdom's fruit is *better* than gold, even fine gold,[384] and her yield than choice silver and thus implying this 'ancient wealth' is not simply material prosperity.[385]

Verse 20 has Wisdom noting that she walks in the way of righteousness and the paths of justice, guaranteeing an inheritance to those who love her and filling their treasuries. The verse is a concluding flourish to vv.18-19 for it summarises the blessings enumerated in these verses with the reference to filling treasuries, but there are also hints of a return to the divine echoes of vv.4-9. Walking in the ways of righteousness and justice parallels the righteous and straight words of vv.8-9, whilst the guarantee of an inheritance (v.21) is another allusion to the divine activity of Yahweh who is the guarantee of Israel's inheritance (the land) throughout the HB.

Verses 18-21 therefore serve to appropriately close the section, coming back to the value of Wisdom (cf. vv.4-9) but also picking up on the language of divinity, bridging into vv.22–31 which explicitly discuss the relationship of wisdom with Yahweh, Israel's God. This is the climax of Wisdom's rhetorical self-presentation of her usefulness and desirability. She holds herself up before the listener as the tool par excellence: a fusion of divine attribute and human effort, employed by those in power who govern rightly.[386] She portrays herself as instrumental in the successes of the rulers of the world in an attempt to persuade the listeners

[383] Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 80.
[384] פַּז, is a 'unique substantive in Proverbs' demonstrating the surpassing value of Wisdom. Zabán, *The Pillar Function,* 158.
[385] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 405.
[386] Cf. 1 Kgs 3:28 – the gift of wisdom to Solomon to help him govern.

of her surpassing usefulness: claiming that 'wisdom is the basis for a stable and just society'.[387] This is no purely functional presentation however, Wisdom is aiming for more than just pragmatic appeal – she is looking for lovers of truth.

6.2.4 The first of his acts of old (vv.22-31)

Verse 22 is the subject of much debate. What does it mean to say that the Lord 'possessed' or 'created' (קנה) wisdom? And does the use of the term 'beginning' (רֵאשִׁית - as per Gen 1:1) imbue wisdom with an independent divinity? The term is expanded on by calling wisdom 'the first of his acts of old', before Wisdom herself, launches into a description of the creation, using it to highlight her pre-existence and then involvement in different stages of Yahweh's creative act. The echoes of the creation myth here are a significant rhetorical tool; as Levi-Strauss explains, myth 'gives man, very importantly, the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he *does* understand the universe.'[388] As these verses place Wisdom into the centre of one of the reader's primary myths by which to understand the world, they endow Wisdom with her own mythical significance. As has been discussed, some commentators see Wisdom speaking here as a goddess,[389] however, it is extremely unlikely that this portrayal of Wisdom constitutes a genuine argument for Proverbs' proposing wisdom as a separate being. Rather, this portrayal is simply an extension of the 'theological metaphor' of personification and should not be seen as anything other than a rhetorical device.[390] It is an example of what Camp describes as the literary unification of the '…general and the particular, the abstract and the concrete' in order to '…theologically unite the human and the divine', pointing readers towards both human wisdom and its concrete expression and also towards the divine source of that wisdom.'[391]

[387] Lucas, *Proverbs*, 80.
[388] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978, 17.
[389] See section 3.2.4 for further discussion of this issue.
[390] Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, 50; Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 90.
[391] Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, 222.

Nonetheless, these verses are some of the most significant in Proverbs for helping to define the nature of wisdom and are, as Brown puts it: 'the culmination of her self-presentation, in which she establishes her preeminent place within the cosmic sweep of creation's genesis.'[392]

It is my view that these verses also encourage us (in line with my observations regarding the prologue – see chapter 4) towards understanding wisdom as *φρόνησῐς* - practical wisdom -rather than *σοφία* – intellectual wisdom or, at the very least, incorporating both aspects. This self-presentation indicates that wisdom is not some kind of abstract force or quality that can exist independently of its object, rather it is fundamentally applied and can only exist in relation to a specific object, activity or decision.

Wisdom appeared, as this passage makes clear, simultaneously with the very beginning of the divine activity of creation. She was brought forth before any of the other of Yahweh's creative acts and was there with him as he embarked on his work of creation. The precise capacity in which Wisdom is present hinges on the much-discussed term in v.30, אָמוֹן, which describes Wisdom's relationship to the Lord. The translation decision is significant for, as noted above, these verses are the most extensive and theological self-presentation of wisdom in the collection and this specific word seems important in determining how Proverbs thinks wisdom relates to the divine being and the created order.

Without wishing to rehearse the arguments extensively there are three main options (with several sub-divisions within each):

1. Wisdom as artisan/craftsman.

   This hinges on comparison with Jeremiah 52:15 where הָאָמוֹן are taken as the craftsman and on Songs 7:1 where אָמָּן is understood as an artisan. Neither match is exact, and both require some emendation of the MT in Proverbs or an acceptance that this *hapax legomenon* is an alternative rendering of the same word.[393] As Waltke also notes, because of the limited examples, the arguments for meaning tend towards circularity.[394] It may also derive from the Akkadian loan word *ummanu* meaning

[392] William P. Brown, 'Proverbs 8:22-31', *Interpretation*, Vol. 63, issue 3, (2009), 286-288, 286.
[393] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 286.
[394] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 417.

craftsman.[395] An extension of this argument is that *God* is the craftsman and Wisdom is beside 'God, the craftsman'. This, whilst less theologically problematic, relies on equally problematic grammar.[396] This translation is adopted by (among others) *HALOT,* Murphy, and many major bible translations.[397]

2. Wisdom as a child/nursling.

   This option involves emending the MT to read אָמוֹן,[398] or, per Fox, parsing the original as an infinitive absolute serving as an adverbial complement and translating as 'growing up before'.[399] Clearly, neither option presents an uncomplicated solution and both Weeks and Waltke outlines some significant linguistic issues in accepting this translation.[400]

3. Constancy/Faithfulness.

   The final option is that presented in the arguments by Weeks and Waltke seeing it as derivative from the root אמן which implies constancy and fidelity. Whilst this interpretation was popular with ancient commentators it also requires this word to take a very unusual form that many others find to be linguistically improbable.[401]

It is abundantly clear from this review that there is no obvious frontrunner on a purely linguistic basis for this *hapax legomenon* and that some emendation is needed to arrive at a translation which relies on linguistic probability and contextual clues. Fox rejects the translation 'master craftsman' or 'tool' because he does not see Wisdom assigned an active role in the creation account. Instead, she is depicted in vv.30-31 as *playing* which he feels fits better with a picture in which Lady Wisdom, as God created the world, is 'nearby, growing up like a child in his care (v 30b) and giving him delight (v 30ba) by playing before him (v30bb)'.[402]

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[395]Lucas, *Proverbs,* 83.
[396] Stuart Weeks, 'The Context and Meaning of Proverbs 8:30a' *JBL*; (2006); 125, 3, 433-442, 434.
[397] Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1, 64, Murphy, *Proverbs,* 47, NRSV, ESV, RSV.
[398] Lucas, *Proverbs,* 83.
[399] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* 287.
[400] For details see Weeks, 'The Context and Meaning of Proverbs 8:30a', 435-436 and Waltke , *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 419-420.
[401] Weeks, 'The Context and Meaning of Proverbs 8:30a', 439-440 and Waltke , *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 420-422 present the clearest cases for the defence of this position. Some of the problems are highlighted by Lucas, *Proverbs,* 84.
[402] Michael V. Fox, "'Amon Again.", *JBL* 115, vol. 1, (1996), 699-702, 702. Fox's translation opens some interesting possibilities in relation to the creation of the world by including an element of play (שׂחק) in Wisdom's interaction with God.

Yet, as Brown unintentionally demonstrates, this doesn't get away from assigning Wisdom a seemingly inappropriate role in creation. In fact, Brown's comment on this translation suggests that it might lead even further down this path: 'Wisdom is no mere instrument of God's creative abilities; she is more than an attribute, divine or otherwise (cf. 3:19). Wisdom is fully alive, interdependent, and interactive with God and the world. All the world was made for her, and her delight affirms it all.'[403] Waltke, on the other hand, chooses the translation 'constantly', which certainly avoids the theological pitfalls of other translations, but seems chosen partly on the basis of a prior commitment to avoiding the attribution of inappropriate agency to Wisdom.[404] Weeks puts forward, I think, a stronger argument for this position, arguing that v.30a is not the apodosis of vv.27-29 but the opening of a new section in vv.30-31, highlighting the grammatic and vocal cues that tie these verses together. This results in the pleasing translation of v.30:

> And I have remained at his side faithfully, and I remain delightedly, day after day.[405]

What all these commentators fail to mention is that the whole speech is operating in the realm of metaphor. The translation of the NRSV attempts to make this clear by translating: '*like* a master craftsman' (italics mine), turning a metaphor into a simile for the avoidance of doubt. In other words, this is a metaphorical description of metaphorical Wisdom's role in creation. In this case, the translation 'master craftsman', for example, becomes less theologically problematic: wisdom does not *literally* craft as she does not literally play, this is poetry. Whilst, as Waltke notes, it would be unique to employ masculine imagery to a feminine individual in Hebrew poetry,[406] this speech is also unique, and thus should be expected to stretch the conventions of the Hebrew language. The repeated reference to delight, emphasising the playfulness of wisdom, might be a hint of such elasticity with conventions here.

It is tempting to leave the word untranslated to allow for some ambiguity, however, the meanings are so disparate that, for the sake of the poetry a decision must be made.

[403] Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 166.
[404] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 421.
[405] Weeks, 'The Context and Meaning of Proverbs 8:30a', 440-442.
[406] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 418.

The translation, 'artisan' which seems to present as strong a case linguistically as the other primary options,[407] but also to be preferable based on contextual appropriateness. Why is Wisdom the first act of creation? (v.22) Surely, this makes sense if she is needed for the remainder of the process? In vv.24-25 she is 'brought forth' before the basic elements of creation: the oceans and the mountains. This suggests an image of wisdom as a necessary tool in the hands of Yahweh (remembering that this is poetry and thus wisdom is, in reality, an attribute not a separate entity). This seems to be approaching the sense with which Wisdom is described here as she is used by Yahweh to create the deeps, to bring forth water, to shape the mountains and the hills. She is conceptualised as the tool *par excellence* employed by Yahweh in his creation, a necessary divine attribute: he is the sculptor; she is the tool. Wisdom is, in other words, the best way to describe the nature of divine activity as it is worked out in his creation. As Daniel Estes puts it, 'wisdom emerges [here] as the divinely ordained order that permeates God's world.[408] This also makes sense with regards to her earlier self-description in vv.15-16: *By me* kings and princes rule: here she is also a personified tool, an 'artisan', in the hands of the *real* artisan.

Opting therefore for the translation, 'artisan', I will now turn to the remainder of the cluster where there are a number of echoes and allusions to other parts of the HB.[409] The most significant overlap is with the description of God's work in creation in Job 38-39.[410] For example, in Job 38:10 God prescribes limits (חֹק) for the sea whilst, in Proverbs, Wisdom informs us that she was there when God assigned to the sea its limit (Proverbs 8:29). In Job 38:4-5 God describes how he laid the foundation of the earth and determined its measurements whilst in Proverbs 8:29 Wisdom claims she was there when God marked out the foundations of the earth. Within this creation account are also several variations on the verb used to describe Wisdom 'rejoicing' in Proverbs 8:30:

> Then I was beside him, like a master craftsman; and I was daily his delight,

[407] ESV, NRSV, ASV. Van Leeuwen, *The Book of Proverbs,* 94; Kidner, *The Proverbs,* 81, Zaban, *The Pillar Function,* 127.
[408] Estes, *Hear, My Son*, 24.
[409] For example a number of terms echo Genesis 1: רֵאשִׁית , beginning (verse 22 cf. Gen 1:1), תְּהוֹם, deep (verse 24, 27, 28 cf. Gen 1:2), אֶרֶץ, earth, (verse 26 cf. repeated occurrences in Gen 1), שָׁמַיִם, heavens (verse 27 cf. Gen 1:8). See Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 90.
[410] Zaban, *The Pillar Function,* 164-166.

rejoicing before him always (ESV)

The verb for 'rejoice' (שׂחק), here in the piel, is found on several occasions in the creation account in Job (qal form). The wild donkey 'laughs at' (שׂחק) the tumult of the city (Job 39:7) whilst the ridiculous ostrich 'laughs' (שׂחק) at the horse and rider when she runs (Job 39:18) and the war horse 'laughs' (שׂחק) at fear as he approaches the battle (Job 39:22). The same effervescent, overflowing playfulness attributed to wisdom in Proverbs 8 is seen to be present in the creation in this account in Job and perhaps helps explain why Proverbs 8:30 can also describe Wisdom as the Lord's delight for this playfulness is, in the end, part of the character of the Lord himself. The term for 'his delight' used here is שַׁעֲשֻׁעִים, it is Strong's 8191 and occurs at 8 other points to describe the Lord's delight in his people (Isa 5:7, Jer 31:20) and the psalmist's delight in the law of the Lord (Ps 119). This is therefore a word with a narrow referential within the wider canon and places Wisdom alongside the covenant people of God and the word of the Lord as one of his delightful and significant possessions.

These verses pick up on a fascinating aspect of the character of Wisdom as she is depicted by Proverbs 8. Included in the images of vv.30-31 is the idea of playful involvement in the creative process. Wisdom is playful and Yahweh himself delights in that playful creativity. This involvement is not marginal however for Wisdom is there 'יוֹם יוֹם', every day, demonstrating that she is describing one of the central facets of Yahweh's act of creation. This aspect of Wisdom has resonances beyond this chapter for it provides a hermeneutical key when encountering the remainder of the proverbs: there should be an expectation of encountering this characteristic playfulness in the creative wordplay, daring metaphors and humorous imagery of the collection. As William Brown puts it: 'To live in Wisdom's world is to experience the joy of discovery, the delight of discernment, and the thrill of edifying play.'[411]

6.2.5 Listen to מוּסָר and be wise! (vv.32-36)

These final verses are the concluding exhortation which reinforce the aim of the entire speech – to pay attention. It continues in the form of direct address, but is now addressed to sons

[411] Brown, 'Proverbs 8:22-31', 288.

(בָּנִים), instead of to the more generic אִישִׁים of v.4 as Wisdom switches persona to being the owner of a house addressing her sons.[412] Over the course of the speech the listener has made the 'journey' from a passer-by to a son as wisdom takes up the position of the teacher. This relationship of intimacy then frames the concluding exhortation as it is delivered by Wisdom: listen to me, in order to live.

Listening was encouraged in v.6, but the exhortation is now repeated three times in vv.32-34, forming an *inclusio* around the body of wisdom's speech: 'now sons listen to me' (שׁמע), 'listen to instruction' (מוּסָר שׁמע), 'blessed is the one who listens to me' (שׁמע). The primary aim of the speech is to encourage the listener to continue listening to wisdom (חָכְמָה) and instruction (מוּסָר), not as an occasional occupation but as a constant commitment. The image is of someone watching daily at the gate of wisdom, paralleled and enforced by the image of waiting beside the doors of wisdom. A role reversal has been enacted in the speech as the passer-by who listened to wisdom crying from the gates of the town now waits at wisdom's door. The kind of seeking and listening called for in the speech is devotional in its intensity and ongoing in its commitment. The nature of wisdom in Proverbs is seen here, again, not as a body of knowledge to be learnt or an abstract concept, rather wisdom is pictured here as a counsellor to be consulted daily as one encounters an action or a decision. There is a very high density of paronomasia, alliteration and repetition in these verses which helps to reinforce the key message to 'listen': שׁמע, אַשְׁרֵי, שׁמר (v.32), שׁמע (v.33), אַשְׁרֵי, שׁמע, שׁקד, שׁמר (v.34).

These verses also contain strong echoes of the *Shema Israel* in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In the *Shema,* the people are encouraged to teach the words of God to their children. Here, Wisdom herself is doing the teaching, enacting the instruction given in Deuteronomy: as the people are called to listen (שׁמע) in Deuteronomy 6:4, so the sons are called to listen (שׁמע). As the people are called to write the commands on the doorposts (מְזוּזָה) in 6:5, so Wisdom encourages the one who hears to wait daily at the מְזוּזָה. However, at the heart of the chiasm

[412] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 423.

which runs through these three verses is not the commandments of the Lord but the imperative:

שִׁמְעוּ מוּסָר וַחֲכָמוּ Listen to *musar* and be wise! (Proverbs 8:33)

This statement, surrounded by covenantal language, recalls both the prologue of Proverbs 1:1-5 and encapsulates the central pedagogical idea of the collection, here advocated in the strongest possible terms as this chapter ends.

Verses 32-36 are also peppered with promises for those who take this advice and conclude with a warning for those who do not. Both the promises and the warnings echo similar statements elsewhere in the collection, as well as picking up on ideas present in the wider HB. First, for those who listen, there is the repeated promise of blessing, אַשְׁרֵי, in v.32 and v.34, which is a strong statement, echoing (for example) Proverbs 3:13 and 16:20, and, in the wider HB, Job 5:17 (where it is connected with the מוּסָר of God), Deut 33:29 (where Moses is pronouncing his final blessing on the people of Israel) and multiple occurrences in the Psalms: to refer to those who take refuge in Yahweh (Ps 2:12); whose sin is forgiven (Ps 32:1); who trust in Yahweh (Ps 40:5); and as the opening word of the Psalms (Ps 1:1). It is also the resonant note of the closing words of Proverbs (Proverbs 31:28).[413] As Waltke notes: 'Sages reserve the laudatory exclamation *blessed… …*for people who experience life optimally, as the Creator intended.[414] Then, secondly, for those who 'find' (מצא) wisdom there is a promise of 'life' (חַי) and 'favour' (רָצוֹן) from Yahweh (v.35). Murphy comments that this verse is important both for its repetition of the theme of *life* that Wisdom brings to her followers, but also because the verb *find* 'retains a certain aura' and indicates not mere 'happenchance' but the final attainment of a hard won goal.[415] Thus, a pattern is created in the mind of the hearer whereby responding rightly to Wisdom will set off a chain reaction resulting in life, favour and blessing.

[413] William P. Brown, 'Rebuke, Complaint, Lament, and Praise: Reading Proverbs and Psalms Together' in Dell, *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, 75.
[414] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 256.
[415] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 54.

The final verse (v.36) of the chapter sounds a closing note of warning and is in antithesis to v.35 but also to the general approach of the chapter which has been more persuasive and exhortatory than alarmist. This verse does not 'pull any punches' though:

> The one who dismisses me does violence to his soul!
>
> All who hate me love death. (Proverbs 8:36)

The word I have translated here 'dismisses' (חטא) is normally translated as 'sin' within the rest of the HB. Several commentators and translations opt for the translation 'misses' or 'fails to find (e.g. NRSV, ESV, NIV). However, as Fox notes, 'this verse is decrying a more pernicious offence than just "missing" wisdom.'[416] It is talking about a sin of commission rather than omission. The more active 'dismisses' captures this sense, illustrating the muddle-headedness of the one who fails to pay due heed to Wisdom. The verb 'love' אהב is also used in v.17 to indicate the reciprocal love between Wisdom and her devotees. Here those who hate her love death, a rhetorically punchy finish to the section, implicitly equating Wisdom with life.

These final promises and warnings follow on from, but do not echo, the rest of the speech up to this point. Instead this section is a summative exhortation, moving away from the imagery of physical wealth into Proverbs' more commonly favoured realm of life, death and favour from God. This links the section into the more familiar themes of the book and places it in continuity with other sections of Proverbs 1-9.

The imagery of violence against oneself is less common, occurring at only one other point in Proverbs: one who sends a fool as a messenger is described as one who drinks violence (26:6). It sounds a strong closing note of warning against ignoring the exhortations of the speech which, to this point, has focused entirely on the benefits of wisdom rather than the harm which will ensue to those who ignore wisdom's voice.

[416] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 291.

6.3 Inherent and advocated מוּסָר in Proverbs 8

The *pathos* of the speech begins with an appeal to the ego by making the listener feel like this speech is addressed directly to them. Already the aim of the speech is clear as it begins to try and cultivate within the hearer a desire to listen to wisdom through the devices of personification and direct address.

The following verses (vv.6-9) appeal to the desire for truth and virtue. The speaker recognises that, in a world of many voices it is desirable to have a voice whom you can trust to authoritatively communicate what is right. This is what Wisdom claims to be able to do as she begins to build up a picture of herself as pre-eminently useful. At this point *ethos* is also brought into play as the language of the speech begins to associate Wisdom with Yahweh. This elevates Wisdom to share in divine attributes. The speech then engages the more straightforward desire for wealth in vv.10-11. The context suggests that 'all you may desire' refers particularly to material desires and Wisdom engages these desires, before describing herself as better than all of them. This is *pathos* at its most basic, stirring up unsophisticated human desires in a bid to then transfer them to the object of the speech.

In v.12 and v.14 Wisdom then lists her cohabitant, prudence, and her attributes: knowledge, discretion, sound wisdom, insight and strength. It is a formidable list which attempts to make the benefits of Wisdom more tangible and to ratchet up Wisdom's attractiveness. The use of personification is especially effective here in picturing Wisdom as the possessor of these various character traits – I *find* knowledge, I *have* counsel etc. – and, implicitly, as superior to them all. She goes on to develop her *ethos* by association in vv.15-16, asserting that kings and princes govern through her, setting herself up as greater than the rulers of humanity and hence worth listening to carefully. The list is then abruptly broken with the repeated root אהב in v.17: I love those who love me. The repeated root brings the phrase to the hearer's attention suggesting that this is a climax or turning point as Wisdom transforms herself into a lover, seeking to woo her beloved. The semantic flow of the speech is also broken. Wisdom has spent 8 verses extolling her virtues and she continues to do this in verses vv.18-19, but she interrupts the flow to remark on the kind of acolytes she is seeking, namely those who love her and seek her. These will be the ones who find her, standing

alongside the kings, princes, and rulers of the previous verses. This verse uses the figures of vv.15-18 not simply to appeal to *ethos* but also to the aspirations of the listener for whom wisdom becomes suddenly accessible and who can place his or herself in the same exalted position as one who uses Wisdom. The appeal to straightforward desires is then repeated, concluding with v.19 which parallels a number of terms in v.10 (silver, choice gold) using progressive parallelism to claim that choosing wisdom over choice gold or silver will lead to a fruit better than both.

Verses 20-21 act as a summary of the speech so far: Wisdom walks the ways of righteousness and paths of justice, bringing an inheritance to those who love her and filling their treasuries. The speech then continues in its elevation of wisdom alongside Yahweh. Verses 22-31 then form a rhetorically punchy conclusion to Wisdom's description of herself before her concluding exhortations. The section is rich with allusion and metaphor which heighten the language and repeatedly associate the acts and character of the Lord with Wisdom through repeated phrases and poetic language. This is a bold appeal to *ethos*, charged with poetry and *pathos* which is aiming to reinforce the surpassing value of Wisdom in the hearer's mind. Then, in the final scene of the section, wisdom describes her delight and Yahweh's delight in her and, finally, brings humanity into the picture: Wisdom talks of her delight in the children of man suggesting to the hearer a union between the creator and wisdom, this peerless figure, of which they too can be part.

As this point is reached, Wisdom delivers her final exhortation in vv.32-36. As noted above, Wisdom, switches her mode of address to a more personal form – 'O sons' – and the rhetorical effect is to draw the listener further into the idea of the union hinted at in v.31. From this position Wisdom repeats the exhortation to listen to her, given in vv.4-6. The threefold repetition of the exhortation to hear and the inclusion of the terms מוּסָר and חָכְמָה, so central to Proverbs, leave the hearer in no doubt as to the purpose and direction of the advocated מוּסָר of the speech and, after outlining metaphorically what this will look like and the level of commitment she is asking for, she concludes with a final appeal. She promises life and the favour of YAHWEH alongside dark warnings of death and injury.

The inherent מוּסָר of the speech is an instruction in the value and matchless worth of wisdom, it is a self-referential מוּסָר that seeks to instruct and persuade the hearer through

carefully worked rhetoric towards the advocated מוּסָר: the pursuit of instruction and wisdom.

It does this by elevating the value of wisdom to become worthy of the kind of pursuit that Wisdom is calling for, engaging the *ethos* of divine association and a number of tools designed to generate *pathos* and to orient the desires of the hearer towards wisdom. The *logos* is contained in a single and simple extended form of premise, followed by cause and effect: Wisdom is of unsurpassed value and righteousness, Wisdom is *better* (PREMISE) - listen to her, learn from her and love her (CAUSE) – and you will find her (EFFECT).

Chapter 7 Proverbs 13:1-24

7.1 Introduction

Outside Proverbs 1-9 there is much less agreement on the existence and nature of structural units. Deciding on the precise boundaries of a section for analysis is not the most important thing; the approach of this thesis is to recognise the value of reading proverbs with reference to the wider context and, whilst other interesting units and combinations could therefore also provide fruitful analysis, the units chosen are all sections with some sense of internal cohesion. Here in chapter 13, to take an example, a useful reflection on speech could also be found be looking back into chapter 12 and considering 12:13-13:6 together.

Several commentators believe that chapters 10-15 were originally a separate collection, with its own subdivisions and particular (Yahwistic) focus.[417] Proverbs 13 would fall into this sub-collection although, unusually for these chapters, there are few references to Yahweh. There is reasonable agreement among those commentators who see some intentional arrangement and structure in chapter 13. Leo Perdue analyses it as a unit with its own thematic cohesion and finds the topics of speech and wealth to be clearly prominent, alongside the ongoing contrast between the wicked fool and the righteous wise.[418] John Goldingay sees Proverbs 13 as one of six sub-divisions in chapters 10-15,[419] and Whybray believes that it forms 'a single instruction, though of a fairly loose kind.'[420] Waltke also finds a complete unit here, subdividing as follows: introduction (13:1); speech and ethics (13:2-6); wealth and ethics (13:7-11); fulfilment vs. frustration (13:12-19); the blessed future of a wise son (13:20-25).[421] Lucas observes similar subdivisions: Speech (13:1-6); Wealth and Poverty (13:7-11); the Benefits of Wisdom (13:12-19), Encouragement to be Good (13:20-25),[422] whilst

[417] See for example Scoralick, *Einzelspruch und Sammlung* or John Goldingay, 'The Arrangement of Sayings in Proverbs 10-15', *JSOT* 61 (1994) 75-83, 82.
[418] Perdue, *Proverbs*, 170.
[419] Goldingay, 'The Arrangement of Sayings', 82.
[420] Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 99.
[421] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 550.
[422] Lucas, *Proverbs*, 105-108.

Knut Heim identifies the same clusters but does not label them, nor does he believe they form a complete, larger section. [423]

Drawing on the observations of these commentators I have divided the text as follows: introduction (13:1); speech (13:2-6); wealth (13:7-11); fulfilled desire (13:12-19); and future outcomes (13:20-23); conclusion (13:24). I have excluded the final verse of the chapter in this analysis since, whilst 13:25 picks up several preceding themes of the chapter, 13:24 forms a natural *inclusio* with 13:1 and seems an appropriate point to close the section.

[423] Heim*, Like Grapes of Gold*, 160–170.

7.2 Structural, literary and rhetorical features

7.2.1 Introduction (v.1)

> A wise son; the *musar* of his father. (Proverbs 13:1a)

The opening verse of this couplet has resonances with refrains throughout Proverbs 1-9 (see particularly Proverbs 1:8 and 4:1) which direct the son to heed the commandments, wisdom and instruction of the father. Very often these verses mark the beginning of instructions (e.g. 1:8, 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 6:20, 7:1) and are used to establish *ethos* through the character of the wise and authoritative teacher figures of Proverbs.[424] The mode of address of 13:1 is different to those in Proverbs 1-9. In 1:8 and 4:1, for example, an exhortation is issued to a son to 'hear your father's instruction'. In 13:1 though, the proverb is indirect, associating a wise son with the מוּסָר of the father, but not addressing the son directly. However, given the prevalence of this formula within Proverbs 1-9 it is hard to imagine that this is not being used here as some sort of structural marker indicating the beginning of a group of proverbs that are meant to be read together.

The proverb places in parallel a wise son (בֵּן חָכְמָה) with a scoffer (לֵץ), and instruction (מוּסָר*)* with rebuke (גְּעָרָה). It is not made clear whether the scoffer is a son. Perhaps implicit within the omission of this clarification is the way the haughty scoffer distances themselves, even from the parental bond.[425] The couplet is completed by the term מוּסַר אָב 'instruction of his father'. This half of the couplet then reads literally (as I have translated above): 'a wise son, the *musar* of his father' and the Hebrew calls for the reader to supply some form of relationship between the two halves of the sentence. The relationship is normally taken to be supplied by the parallel term in the second line:

> but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke. (Proverbs 13:1b)

[424] These proverbs come in the section of the collection entitled 'Proverbs of Solomon' and therefore also appeal to ethos under this attribution.
[425] See also Heim, *Poetic Imagination*, 331.

If the antithesis of the opening line includes 'not listening', the implication supplied by the parallelism is that the relationship in the first line is that a wise son *hears* his father's instruction. This is particularly true since the variant repetitions of this phrase always include some active relationship on the part of the son, often hearing (1:8, 4:1, 5:1). Therefore, whilst keeping this half of the couplet very concise, this opening line acts like a shorthand reminder of an obvious and well-worn phrase. Nonetheless, Fox thinks that the proverb should be rendered as above in order that it *literally equates* the *musar* of the father with the wisdom of the son. He suspects that this is intentional, reminding a father of his responsibility to instruct and reinforcing the inextricability of his reputation with the behaviour of the son. There is almost certainly a deliberate ambiguity within the proverb which allows it to act on the reader whether they are in the position of the parent (teaching) or the child (learning).[426] Building on Fox's observation, this demonstrates another example of Proverbs' pedagogical strategy, allowing this opening verse to address a range of readers, as well as recalling other exhortations within the collection such that it is heard in parallel with them.

7.2.2 Speech (vv.2–6)

The proverb of 13:2 is the first of a group of five which relate external consequences to the internal state of a person and, more specifically, to the actualisation of the internal through speech, as this proverb makes clear:

> From the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good,
>
> but the appetite of the treacherous is for violence. (Proverbs 13:2)[427]

This proverb highlights the power of words to shape a person's destiny. The parallelism of the proverb leaves the character of the man in the first half of the couplet indeterminate, but the second half of this antithetical couplet specifically addresses the treacherous implying therefore that the man is a good or righteous one.[428] Central to the proverb is the metaphor:

[426] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 560. See also Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, 270.

[427] This translation is per the ESV except for נֶפֶשׁ, translated as 'desire' by the ESV and 'appetite' here to reflect the semantic field of the first line. See comment from Fox on this word in the main text.

[428] So much so that the NRSV translates this line as: 'From the fruit of their words good persons eat good things', supplying an adjective 'good' to 'persons', not present in the Hebrew.

'fruit of the mouth' which seems to refer to the words of the righteous.[429] This 'fruit of the mouth' is paralleled with the 'נֶפֶשׁ,' of the treacherous, which could also be translated as 'gullet' or throat, linking more closely to the organs of speech.[430] I have translated as 'appetite',[431] showing how this proverb forges an implicit link between internal appetite and speech, bearing 'fruit' in accord with the character of the speaker. For the righteous man, the vocalisation of their internal state bears a harvest of good things to eat: a holistic, virtuous cycle is being described in which the outpouring of good desires in speech ends with an inflow of good food.[432] This helps to structure the chapter (the metaphor is returned to in 13:25) and to link it to the wider themes of the Proverbs collection. Perhaps more significantly though, it provides a helpful visualisation of the connection between internal desires, speech and consequence. Conversely, the treacherous have an appetite for violence, and the context leads us to imagine that this will be expressed in the same way: their character will bubble up in vocalised desire and its corresponding violent consequences.

The proverb of 13:3 is concerned more generally about the destructive potential of words. Read in isolation it equates opening wide the lips (the verb used, פשׂק, possibly has connotations of sexual promiscuity and thus equates to inappropriately free and careless talk[433]) with ruin or destruction and guarding the mouth with guarding the נֶפֶשׁ.[434] The parallelism is clear, however, when it is read with the proverb before, it takes on a new level of subtlety. It reinforces the link between inner desire and speech. Whilst in the previous couplet the נֶפֶשׁ of the treacherous was for violence, in this couplet the נֶפֶשׁ is protected by guarding the mouth, whilst the open (or unguarded) mouth brings ruin and destruction (cf. the good that comes from the fruit of the mouth in the previous proverb).[435] The metaphor of 'guarding', שׁמר, is used generally of the task of a watchman and is frequently used of the Lord

[429] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 561.
[430] Cf. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 561, Clifford, *Proverbs*, 136.
[431] The NRSV and ESV translate as 'desire'.
[432] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 95: 'Language… initiates a process that will come back to its origin'. This metaphorical food is also found in Wisdom's feast (Proverbs 9:1-6), see Brown, 'The Didactic Power of Metaphor', 138.
[433] Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, 271.
[434] The use of 'mouth' as that which 'produces fruit' in 13:2 and is 'guarded' in 13:3 connects the proverbs and reinforces the idea that this organ is one that connects character to consequence and is powerful to shape life for both good and ill. Cf. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 552.
[435] As Murphy observes, נֶפֶשׁ, is the catch word for vv.2-4. *Proverbs,* 95.

(e.g. Ex. 34:7, Deut 32:8, Ps. 12:7, 31:23), adding a Yahwistic overtone to the activity. The metaphor is used here to add colour to the idea of being aware, alert and disciplined about what comes from the mouth. The contrasting image is of opening wide the lips and, again, this is used metaphorically to paint the picture of a mouth from which pours forth speech without care or thought. The guarding of the lips corresponds to a guarding or preservation of life (נֶפֶשׁ) whilst open lips lead to ruin. The metaphor of guarding is also used in v.6 of righteousness, which '…guards him whose way is blameless.' The proximity of these proverbs and the repeated metaphor associates the idea of careful speech with blamelessness.

In v.4 the focus is on inner desire alone, and the nature of the desire shifts from a good/ treacherous dichotomy to a lazy/diligent one:

> The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing,
>
> while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied. (Proverbs 13:4)

The concern is still with the נֶפֶשׁ: the inner person and, here, the diligent are richly supplied, recalling the one who eats what is good from the fruit of his mouth. Conversely, the sluggard craves and gets nothing, implying there is an absence of anything good coming their way. Again, the link between character, desire and outcome is emphasised but this time action not speech is implicit in the character descriptions 'sluggard' and 'diligent'. This seemingly interchangeable combination of different 'parts' of the being (soul, character, speech, action) is suggestive of the way in which Proverbs refuses to draw hard lines between these things (see comment in 8.2.2 below for further discussion of this point). Whilst not an intertextual allusion per se, Katharine Dell mentions this verse in her chapter considering Ruth (an epitome of a diligent worker) in dialogue with Proverbs. She argues that Proverbs 13:4a, 'represents the direct antithesis of Ruth's behaviour.'[436] Ruth illustrates instead the 'ideal character' Proverbs is describing in 13:4b, showing that this can be derived, at least in part, from the heroines and heroes who populate other parts of the HB. This is one aspect of the *logos* of this section - an argument from classification (the sluggard and the diligent) is made, informed by the wider cultural images of these characters.

[436] Dell, 'Didactic Intertextuality', 109.

In v.5 there is a shift in the other direction to focus on speech. Here, falsehood is the focus and a hatred of falsehood is linked with righteousness implying that falsehood is a trait of the wicked.[437] Read in context it seems plausible that falsehood is one example of unguarded speech and the ruin that subsequently ensues. It also links right speech with righteousness and wickedness, adding weight to the importance of such speech. Righteousness and wickedness remain in view in v.6, but they are now, unusually, personified agents.[438] Righteousness (צְדָקָה.) guards those whose way is blameless (תֹּם), recalling, perhaps, those who guard their mouths in v.3. Conversely, wickedness overthrows the sinner which, again, recalls v.3 where the one who opens wide his mouth is visited by ruin. 'Righteousness' and 'blameless' are significant words which both appear several times throughout Proverbs but also at significant other points in the HB. 'Blameless' is used of King David and of Job (the primary 'type' of one who is blameless) (E.g. 1 Kgs 9:4, Job 1:1, 8, 2:3, Pss. 7:9, 25:21, 101:2). Righteousness, on the other hand, is rarely attributed to an individual. It is used of a category of person 'the righteous one', as here in 13:5, but is also a characteristic of Yahweh, the preeminent righteous one, perhaps reminding the reader here that God also hates falsehood.[439]

Read together, Proverbs 13:2-6 forge associations around the theme of speech through parallelism, proximity, repetition and echoes of other texts. There is also an association with Proverbs 13:1 for the characteristics contrasted here are also related to speech – the wise son does not speak but (implicitly) listens to the מוּסָר of the father; conversely the scoffer is a character, defined by arrogant and careless speech, who does not listen to rebuke.[440] The *logos* of these associations is clear: character flows out through speech and has significant consequences for good or ill – words will shape your destiny.

[437] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 562; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 556.
[438] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 96.
[439] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 556.
[440] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 552.

7.2.3 Wealth (vv.7–11)

Verses 7-11 form a short cluster and weave ideas about wealth into the themes of the preceding cluster whilst looking forward to the next. In v.7 the terms מִתְעַשֵּׁר and מִתרוֹשֵׁשׁ, literally, 'one who makes themselves rich' and 'one who makes themselves poor' are translated uniformly as referring to the pretence of wealth and poverty, given the qualification of the second half of each line. The pleasing assonance between the two terms and the ambiguous meaning suggests that a particular riddle or paradox is being presented here. This conclusion is strengthened by the presence of the opening particle, יֵשׁ. As Agustinius Gianto argues, this particle is used in Proverbs to introduce 'a reflection on some opposing situation or paradox.'[441] Gianto argues that it can be translated as 'there is this…' as a way of introducing a paradoxical observation for reflection.[442] This results in the following translation:

> There is this: one who purports prosperity, yet has nothing
>
> And one with pretence of poverty, who has great wealth. (Proverbs 13:7)

The proverb is 'wonderfully ambiguous.'[443] 'Don't take a man at his own valuation' is how Kidner paraphrases this proverb; money is only one ingredient – neither necessary or sufficient for true wealth.[444] Murphy thinks that the idea of *appearances* is more significant and that this proverb is addressing ostentatious and vulgar behaviour, versus being appropriately humble yet munificent, when occasion demands.[445] Taking into account the opening particle and the obvious word-play, it seems likely that this proverb is inviting the reader to reflect on these paradoxical observations perhaps issuing a veiled warning against ostentation, hinting that wealth is not simply measured in material terms, and reminding us

[441] Augustinius Gianto, 'On יֵשׁ of Reflection in the Book of Proverbs' in *When the Morning Stars Sang: Essays in Honour of Choon Leong on the occasion of His Sixty Fifth Birthday,* edited by Scott C. Jones and Christine Roy Yoder, eBook: De Grutyer, 2017, 157.
[442] Gianto, 'On יֵשׁ of Reflection', 159.
[443] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 557.
[444] Kidner, *The Proverbs*, 101.
[445] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 96; Perdue concurs that the lack of ostentatious character is in view here. Perdue, *Proverbs*, 171.

that appearances can be deceptive (this is the *logos* of signs – ostentatious behaviour is a sign, not of wealth, but of true poverty).

Either way, it is a good partner to the equally ambiguous proverb of v.8, which Gianto believes is included in the יֵשׁ of reflection that opens v.7:

> The ransom of a man's soul is his wealth,
>
> but a poor man does not hear any warning. (Proverbs 13:8)

This proverb appears to equate the ransom (כֹּפֶר) of a man's life to his wealth. This word probably refers to the redemption price that someone must pay for their life if they find they have committed a serious offence.[446] In this case it could either be making the point that someone's wealth makes them more of a target for fraud and theft, or that a person's value is related to their wealth. This half of the couplet is paralleled to the line 'but a poor man does not hear any warning' (לֹא־ שָׁמַע גְּעָרָה).

Again, this verse is full of ambiguity, suggesting that Gianto is right to argue for a paradox here which invites reflection. The most obvious point for reflection is that the wealthy are more at risk of being a target for thieves than the poor. But other reflections are perhaps encouraged. The word גְּעָרָה, translated here as 'warning' is most often used of rebuke and is unlikely to mean threat (e.g. NIV, ESV, NRSV). [447] To use 'warning' preserves the ambiguity but it is also worth observing that the line is a repetition of the phrase in Proverbs 13:1 where a scoffer 'לֹא־ שָׁמַע גְּעָרָה'. If this repetition is intentional then the poor man in Proverbs 13:8 is placed alongside to the scoffer of 13:1. This would be at odds with Proverbs' generally nuanced approach to poverty and wealth, yet it is possible in the context of this rendering since the first line arguably suggests that wealth confers value to its possessor. The reference back to the opening proverb could imply that wealth is the possession of the wise son and not the scoffer, who now, as Heim proposes, becomes synonymous with the poor man who has paid no attention to rebuke.[448] Whilst this interpretation is not considered by most

[446] Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1*,* 495.
[447] Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1*,* 200.
[448] Heim, *Poetic Imagination*, 330–332.

commentators who either emend the text or create a rather convoluted explanation,[449] it seems unnecessary to exclude a reflection on the connection between wealth and the way of wisdom: as with any paradox, multiple reflections should be encouraged.

The theme of righteousness and wickedness is returned to in v.9 (linking back to the preceding cluster). Light is used in a simple parallel metaphor – the 'light of the righteous shines' (rejoices) whilst the 'lamp of the wicked is snuffed out'.[450] In this proverb the life (נֶפֶשׁ) of the righteous and wicked is represented by a light and lamp respectively. The light of the righteous is said to 'shine' or, more literally, 'rejoice', an unusual metaphor to be used of light in the HB. The metaphor poetically communicates the idea of a deep and overflowing rejoicing – a strong, dancing flame is perhaps pictured – which enables the dramatic contrast of a lamp being snuffed out. The metaphor seems to be evoking 'life force'[451] and contrasts powerfully the direction of travel of the two characters being sketched out so far. One goes towards rejoicing, the other to oblivion.

Verse 10 can be translated as follows:

> Nothing comes by pride but strife,
>
> yet wisdom for all who take advice. (Proverbs 13:10)[452]

This proverb has echoes of 13:1 for those who listen to מוּסָר are of similar character to those who 'take advice'. Here they have found wisdom, a similar journey to that observed in Proverbs 2.

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[449] For example, Waltke suggests that the wealthy person may respond to a threat to life if he has the capacity to ransom it whilst a poor man could not be motivated this way (Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 558), whilst Fox concludes that the proverb makes no sense (Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 531). Mark Sneed disagrees directly with Heim, suggesting that the argument Heim uses is circular – 'circular' is not the right term however - Heim has argued for the significance of the wider context and then is interpreting on this basis. Sneed proposes no especially compelling alternative explanation. Mark Sneed, 'Twice- Told Proverbs as Inner-Biblical Exegesis', in Dell, *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, 96.

[450] Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary,* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011, 250.

[451] Lucas, *Proverbs*, 106.

[452] A number of commentators emend the MT vocalisation "רַק" (normally, "but") to 'prefer rêq in the sense of "empty[head]," (Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 547). See, for example: Alter, *The Wisdom Books*, 250, McKane, *Proverbs,* 454, Fox, *Proverbs 10-31,* 565. Waltke sees no need to correct the MT however, so also Delitzsch who thinks the natural sense of the line means רַק belongs not to בְּזָדוֹן but to יִתֵּן (Delitzsch, *Proverbs,* 276). This means the literal rendering would be: 'from pride but comes strife' which makes better sense in the context of the couplet hence the translation above. See also Genesis 26:29 for an example of another use with this meaning.

Verse 11 acts as a transitional verse, developing further the theme of wealth and closing the cluster of vv.7-11 whilst looking forward to the following section on desire:

> Wealth found from nowhere will dwindle,
> but those who gather little by little will increase it.[453] (Proverbs 13:11)

In this proverb, wealth that is acquired from הֶבֶל ('from nowhere') diminishes, whilst a controlled and careful acquisition (literally, 'he who gathers by hand') leads to an increase in wealth: 'Easy come, easy go', paraphrases Whybray.[454] The key issue addressed by this proverb is a controlled desire for wealth and its acquisition. Sandwiched as it is at between a cluster on the benefit and value of wealth and one on the satisfaction of desire, it is perhaps placed here to temper the pursuit of wealth. True and lasting wealth follows wisdom and is gained through measured, careful acquisition.

Taken together, the proverbs of vv.7-11 interact with one another to present a complex and ambiguous view of wealth which deserves the reflection indicated by the, יֵשׁ of reflection in v.7.

7.2.4 Fulfilled Desire (vv.12-19)

Verse 12 forms an *inclusio* with v.19 in a cluster of proverbs:

> A drawn-out hope makes the heart heavy,
> but desire fulfilled is a tree of life. (Proverbs 13:12) [455]
> Desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul,
> but to refuse evil is abomination to fools. (Proverbs 13:19)[456]

[453] 'little by little' is used here to translate עַל- יָד, literally 'by hand'. This translation is used by many major translations (NRSV, NIV, ESV, RSV) to capture the proverb's sense and is a nice use of repetition.
[454] Whybray, *Proverbs*, 78.
[455] 'Drawn out' translates מׇשׁךְ, 'to stretch, draw out to full length' (Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1*,* 645-646). 'Heavy' is normally translated 'sick' but a 'sick heart' and a 'heavy heart' are synonymous concepts in English, the second is more alliterative.
[456] This is based on the ESV translation with the second line slightly condensed for economy.

Verse 12 and v.19 are linked by two very similar lines which mention the positive effects of fulfilled desire as a 'tree of life' and 'sweet to the soul' respectively. They are each paralleled by quite different phrases. In v.12 the parallel line mentions a 'drawn-out' hope which makes for a 'heavy' heart. There is a clear implication here that fulfilled desire is better than frustrated desire, made particularly vivid by the metaphor of the 'tree of life' (עֵץ חַיִּים). This is a phrase that recurs several times throughout Proverbs and is used to describe wisdom (3:18), the fruit of the righteous (11:30), and a gentle tongue (15:4), as well as a fulfilled desire as here. The other reference to a tree of life is in the creation story (Genesis 2-3). The use of the term in Proverbs almost certainly has intentional allusions to this mythological tree (symbolising knowledge and eternal life). Taken in isolation this proverb is a powerfully expressed but simple psychological observation that fulfilled desires enhance life whilst frustrated desire is bad for you.[457] Yet, this seems to stand in contradiction to the preceding proverb which asserts that wealth should be gathered a bit at a time, by hand, surely an example of 'drawn out' hope? Perhaps it is placed immediately afterwards to create tension with the preceding proverb through an apparent contradiction.[458] It is also important to consider this proverb in parallel with its variant repetition in v.19. Here, there is a similar first line on fulfilled desire, but the second half of v.19 states that for fools to turn away from evil is an abomination. Perhaps the meaning of v.19 is illuminated when it is read in parallel with v.12 and, together a contrast is drawn between righteous, good desires (v.12b, v.19a) and wicked, frustrated ones (v.19, v.12a).

In v.13 despising (בוז) the word (דָּבָר) brings ruin (חבל - in the niphal) whilst fearing (יָרֵא) the commandment (מִצְוָה) will bring reward/peace (שׁלם). The parallelism here uses very stark contrast in which the terms each have a matching opposite and the pathway to ruin or peace diverge on an attitude towards the 'word' or 'commandment'. This is strong covenantal language such that most commentators see this as a deliberate reference to the law, for example, Kidner states simply: 'Word and Commandment are a reminder that revealed religion is presupposed in Proverbs.'[459] As well as looking back to v.1 and v.10, perhaps acting

[457] Whybray, *Proverbs*, 78.
[458] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 567.
[459] Kidner, *The Proverbs*, 103. See also Delitzsch, *Proverbs,* 278, Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* 565.

as the culmination of the thought of these verses, this proverb has parallels with v.18 in which poverty and disgrace come to those who ignore מוּסָר, whilst those who heed reproof are honoured.

Then, in v.14:

> The *torah* of the wise is a fountain of life
>
> to turn away from the snares of death. (Proverbs 13:14)[460]

This proverb employs synthetic parallelism in which the effect of the teaching of the wise (a fountain of life) is to turn away from the snares of death. This is arguably implicit and so there is an inbuilt redundancy to the synthesis of the proverb which serves to enforce the same point from both a positive and negative angle. The proverb forms a variant set with 14:27:

> The fear of the Lord is a spring of life
>
> to turn away from the snares of death (Proverbs 14:27)

The use of this variant repetition prompts the supposition that, conceivably, 14:27 is the earlier and more well-known proverb from which the 'fear of the Lord' has been omitted (given the proximal reference to 'fearing the commandment' in 13:13), in order to allow the teaching (תּוֹרָה) of the wise, the commandment, and the fear of the Lord to be deliberately associated by this proverbial pair (13:13-14).[461] This becomes more plausible when the echoes of Genesis are also admitted. The proximity of this metaphor of the 'fountain of life' to the idea of the 'tree of life' (v.12) creates an association in this cluster between fulfilled desire, the תּוֹרָה of the wise, and (per the Genesis 2 and 3 echoes) strong themes of life, death, desire and obedience.

In v.15 good sense is allied with favour whilst ruin is the result of faithlessness and in v.16 the prudent act with knowledge whilst a fool scatters folly. The parallel images of this proverb are intensified if, as Heim translates, the first line should read: 'the shrewd man *takes cover* through knowledge.'[462] In this case, knowledge is like a shield and folly like a wayward bow and arrow. Read in the context of the wider cluster, these two proverbs may exemplify the

[460] This translation follows the NRSV and ESV, abbreviating slightly for concision.
[461] Heim, *Poetic Imagination*, 353–358.
[462] Heim, *Poetic Imagination*, 320.

different to teaching and to מוּסָר. The wayward and faithless fool (the scoffer of v.1) wanders through life, indiscriminately scattering folly, whilst the prudent (the wise son) shelter behind knowledge and gain favour because of their good sense.

The proverb of v.17 doesn't seem to relate to the rest of this section in any obvious way. This may illustrate the looser arrangement of the proverbs in chapters 10-22:16 and be a proverb which has been placed haphazardly. It may also evidence a lack of imagination on the part of this reader.

In v.18, consequences (poverty and disgrace) are explicitly linked with attitudes to מוּסָר and to rebuke, summarising a key concept running through the chapter which roots life outcomes within a willingness to accept מוּסָר and advice.[463] The use of the term מוּסָר in v.18 connects the proverb to the opening and closing proverbs of the section in v.1 and v.24, as well as to the rest of the collection.

7.2.5 Future Outcomes (vv.20-23)

Verse 20 can be read in parallel with the opening verse and with vv.13-14 which highlight the importance of listening to instruction and the life-giving nature of the words of the wise:

> Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,
>
> but the companion of fools suffers harm. (Proverbs 13:20 NRSV)

In this antithetical proverb, walking with the wise is opposed to companionship with fools. The consequence of walking with the wise is wisdom, but that of foolish associations is not, as the parallelism might lead the reader to expect, to become foolish. Rather, this is assumed by the context and the proverb advances its point, making clear that the subsequent consequence of foolishness is harm.

Verses 21-22 focus further on the consequences of the two paths of the righteous/wise and the wicked/fool and are linked by the repeated word טוֹב (good).[464] The sinners of v.21

[463] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 98.
[464] Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold*, 169.

are pursued by personified disaster whilst the righteous are rewarded with *good*. The *good* man of v.22 then leaves an inheritance to his children's children whilst the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous. The complex picture of wealth and poverty, established in vv.7-11, is returned to here, and the repetition of the יֵשׁ of reflection in v.23 confirms that this is a point for the contemplation of this paradoxical relationship:

> Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor,
>
> but there is this: it is snatched away for lack of justice. (Proverbs 13:23)[465]

Together, these two sections encourage the reader to reflect both on the, often paradoxical and unfair ordering of the world, alongside the promises for those who heed מוּסָר and the warnings for those who ignore it.

7.2.6 Spare the rod and spoil the child (v.24)

The instruction reaches its conclusion in vv.24 -25. Verse 24 states that:

> Whoever spares the rod hates his son
>
> but he who loves him diligently seeks his *musar*. (Proverbs 13:24)

The reference to מוּסָר and the father-son setting of this proverb links it back to the opening proverb of this chapter. In 13:24 the responsibility of the father is clearly highlighted: to firmly discipline the son. When the proverb is read in light of the stark contrasts presented in the preceding verses the logic of the imperative is inescapable.[466] Those who fail to listen to rebuke (v.1) find variously: violence (v.2), ruin (v.3), shame (v.5), disaster (v.12), death (v.13), and perpetual impoverishment (v.22). In this context, the admonition to diligent and strong מוּסָר is a natural conclusion to the chapter. The proverb in common parlance ('spare the rod and spoil the child'), whilst a linguistically pleasing rendition of the first line, misses some of

[465] The verb נִסְפֶּה is translated 'snatched away'; 'esp. to be carried off, i.e. to be snatched out of a fleeing crowd.' (Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1, 764).

[466] Most commentators, whilst acknowledging the importance of 'tough love' (Van Leeuven, *Proverbs,* 135 cited in Lucas, *Proverbs,* 109 and Murphy, *Proverbs,* 99), fail to notice the precipitous weight given to this exhortation by the context.

the rhetorical force - ‘spare the rod and *hate* your child’ - imparted by the Hebrew text. The proverb suggests that the one who hates their child is not the one who inflicts violent punishment but rather the one who fails to do so, aptly concluding a hard-hitting, punchy piece of rhetoric.

7.3 Inherent and advocated מוּסָר in Proverbs 13:1-24

These proverbs work together through the consistent and evocative association of desirable outcomes with the path of wisdom/righteousness and of undesirable outcomes with the path of foolishness/wickedness. The associations are forged in the poetic and literary artistry of the text, picked out in the exegesis above, which include many of the devices of inherent מוּסָר such as parallelism, metaphor, intertextual allusion, and repetition.

The strength of these verses lies in their ability to generate *pathos* and to encourage reflection on life's paradoxes. The emotional appeal is generated here, above all, by metaphors which stimulate the imagination, conjuring a mental image that helps to make less abstract and more vivid the recommendation of the proverb. For example, there is an image of a light 'rejoicing' or being 'snuffed out' (v.9), a 'sick heart' (v.12), sweetness to the soul (v.19), a 'tree of life' (v.12) and a 'fountain of life' (v.14), personified sin (v.6) and disaster (v.21) overthrowing and pursuing the sinner. These metaphors aim to generate *pathos*, associating good and pleasant emotions and experiences, rooting them in a correct attitude to with the path of wisdom and negative ones with the path of folly. The exegesis above highlights the way in which the poetic structure of the proverbs uses these metaphors and other inherent מוּסָר to associate a person's approach to learning, instruction and speech with more and less desirable outcomes. The desires of the reader/hearer are engaged in relation to social standing, security, prosperity, the stomach, and the heart's desire as these accumulated consequences are woven together. The rhetoric is exaggerated for effect and should perhaps not be read in entirely sombre tones.

As with much of Proverbs, the primary piece of advocated מוּסָר is to listen to instruction and choose the path of wisdom and righteousness. The chapter opens with a reference to the מוּסָר of the father and brands those who pay no heed to rebuke as fools. A slight variation on this proverb is repeated in 13:18 and, as the section closes in 13:24, there is a claim that the father who loves his son is diligent to provide מוּסָר for him. However, the advice does not end here, מוּסָר in this section is not simply passive listening but takes the form of externally

imposed discipline, counsel and reproof that should be actively welcomed (vv.1, 10, 13, 14, 18, 20, 24) and also is encapsulated in the self-discipline encouraged with regards to things like speech and appetite (vv.2, 3, 4, 11, 16). Whilst the opening proverb makes clear that the path of wisdom begins by simply *listening* to the מוּסָר of the father, the reader is then given a much more active role in other proverbs: guarding the mouth in v.3; hating falsehood in v.5; revering the commandment in v.13; diligence in v.4 and turning away from evil in v.19. All suggest that an active agency, a level of firm internal control and discipline, is required in order to walk the path of wisdom. For example, the idea that the wise should, habitually, be extremely careful in what they say is found particularly in v.3.[467] Here, there is a clear idea that 'guarded' speech is essential to the righteous and wise life. Another habit encouraged by this section comes in v.11 and relates to wealth: 'Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.' The word translated hastily is מֵהֶבֶל , literally 'from nothing'. Proverbs is counselling against an attitude that tries to 'get rich quick' - instead, the proverb advises a controlled habit of slow, careful accumulation. Thus, in addition to listening to external teaching and responding appropriately to discipline, rebuke and command, the advocated מוּסָר of these proverbs is also to develop habits of self-control that will build on the habit of careful listening and lead, eventually, to wisdom.

[467] This habit is arguably also implicit in verse 5: 'The righteous hates falsehood…' and verse 17: 'A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing.'

Chapter 8 Proverbs 15:5-33

8.1 Introduction

The first thing to notice about Proverbs 15 is that 15:5 and 15:32 share a significant amount of terminology, through the repetition of מוּסָר and תּוֹכַחַת (reproof). Both proverbs also polarise between someone who listens to reproof, and someone who ignores מוּסָר, with corresponding judgements on these two types. This apparent repetition will be explored in more detail below, however, at this point they serve as apparently natural boundary markers for a unit within the text. This analysis will therefore begin at 15:5 and will continue to 15:32, including also 15:33 since this proverb has, at initial glance, something of the nature of a conclusion or summary, referencing both the fear of the Lord, wisdom and also מוּסָר, hence sharing much in common with both the preceding verses, but also with the prologue (1:1-7) and other section beginnings and endings.[468] Another indicator of unity can be found in the thematic shape to these verses and the repeated words which could be evidence of intentional grouping; the section begins and ends with a focus on instruction and reproof (v.5, v.32) such that these concepts provide the framework for a discourse on the way of wisdom and מוּסָר versus the way of folly. The middle half of these verses is concerned primarily with description – what do the lives of the wicked/fool and righteous/wise look like respectively, and what are some of the immediate consequences to these alternative ways of living? The chapter also has a high number of divine references, including several divine as well as temporal consequences (e.g. vv.8, 9, 25, 29, 31).[469]

There is little agreement on the existence of structure among other commentators. Heim subdivides the section into five clusters of vv.5-12, vv.13-18, vv.19-23, vv.24-27 and vv.28-33 and does not analyse it as a whole.[470] Bruce Waltke, who also divides the text into sections,

[468] It marks the end of Van Leeuwen's first "subcollection" of Solomonic proverbs. Raymond Van Leeuwen, *The book of Proverbs*, The New Interpreter's Bible, volume 5, Abingdon Press, 1997, 152.
[469] This leads Whybray to talk about its 'theological tone' (*The Composition of the Book of Proverbs,* 106). Also, Murphy, *Proverbs,* 111.
[470] Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold*, 193-203.

begins with vv.5-19, then identifies vv.20-23 and vv.25-29, seeing v.24 as a 'Janus' verse that links the two sections.[471] However, Waltke's first volume on Proverbs ends at 15:29 demonstrating that he does not see any continuity between v.29 and vv.30-33, seeing 15:30-33 as an introduction to the following section.[472] R. N. Whybray agrees that: '...in their present arrangement vv.5-33 probably form a single instruction of chiastic form, vv.31-33 corresponding to vv.5ff.'[473] Whybray sees a number of repeated themes, words and patterns and notices the prominence of many of the key themes identified above.[474] In contrast to Waltke, Heim and Whybray, Michael Fox analyses the entirety of chapter 15 by individual verse, drawing almost no connection between the individual proverbs.[475] A similar approach is taken by others such as Tremper Longman[476] and Roland Murphy. Murphy, in fact, goes out of his way to undermine the idea of any cohesive structure in this section, calling it instead a collection of sayings with repeated catchwords.[477]

In response to these commentators, and indeed to those who observe different divisions, I believe there is enough evidence of some structure to make the analysis of these proverbs together rather than separately a worthwhile exercise. The precise grouping and division is not, as I have argued earlier, of the greatest importance, rather the act of reading and understanding a proverb within its context to seek to understand the rhetorical interplay of a group of proverbs is what has most significance. Whilst the division of Proverbs 15:5-33 cannot be identified by an easily defined structure, the repetition and thematic cohesion forms a broadly chiastic shape, accentuating various aspects of these themes and painting a compelling picture of the rewards of paying heed to instruction and the dangers of failing to do so.

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[471]Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15, 615–639.

[472] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, 5. Nonetheless, if Waltke is correct in identifying the beginning of a new collection, there is no reason why Proverbs 15:30-33 could not be a 'Janus' section (to use Waltke's terminology) that looks both ways, introducing a new collection, but also providing the closing bracket for the preceding cluster of proverbs. This would explain the way in which chapter 15 appears to flow on into chapter 16, with several repeated words and phrases between the chapters but no obvious structural cohesion.

[473] Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 106.

[474] Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 103–106.

[475] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 588.

[476] Longman, *Proverbs*, 312.

[477] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 111.

8.2 Structural, literary and rhetorical features

8.2.1 The key point (v.5, v.10, vv.30-33)

As observed above, one of the most striking features of this cluster of proverbs is the similarity between v.5 and v.32 which form an *inclusio*:

> A fool despises his father's *musar*,
>
> but he who receives reproof is prudent. (Proverbs 15:5)[478]
>
> He who disdains *musar* rejects his own soul,
>
> but he who listens to reproof gains his very self. (Proverbs 15:32)[479]

The repetition of מוּסָר and תּוֹכַחַת in v.5 and v.32 are structural markers and these verses demonstrate the development of thought across these variant repetitions. In v.5 a father's מוּסָר is despised by a fool whilst, in v.32, the one who disdains מוּסָר rejects his own soul (נֶפֶשׁ), the relative proximity of the verses means that the foolishness of the one who ignores instruction (v.5) can be assumed and the thought developed by expressing the effective consequence of ignoring מוּסָר: to reject one's own soul (v.32). Conversely, the one who receives (שׁמר) reproof is prudent (v.5) whilst the one who listens (שׁמע) to reproof gains their very self (לֵב) (v.32). לֵב is a significant Hebrew word referencing the centre of the personality and variously translated as heart, mind, understanding, intelligence. I have translated it here as 'your very self' in an attempt to capture the trajectory of the proverb's parallelism, drawing on the translation of Ellen Davis.[480] This develops the line of thought begun in v.5, dramatically articulating in v.32 the significance of rebuke to one's life in 'perhaps [Proverbs'] most striking statement on the value of correction',[481] and demonstrating an intensification across the

[478] Verse 5a is as the ESV (except that *musar* is left untranslated). 5b aims to be more concise and uses 'receives' instead of 'heeds' to include alliteration.
[479] My translation here is explained in the main body of the text.
[480] Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 99.
[481] Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 99.

chapter. This intensification is achieved also by the cluster of which v.32 is part, beginning with v.30:

> The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
>
> and good news refreshes the bones. (Proverbs 15:30, ESV)

This proverb precedes the assertion of the significance of instruction and reproof with a principle, that, just as what is seen can affect the inner person (לֵב) (15:30a), so what is heard can bring health at the deepest level, literally, 'fatten' your bones (15:30b). From here v.31 associates listening to reproof with life and with a home among the wise. Then v.33, which closes the cluster and the wider instruction reads as follows:

> The fear of the Lord: the *musar* of wisdom:
>
> before honour comes humility. (Proverbs 15:33)[482]

The ambiguity of 15:33a is particularly pronounced here as the terms are juxtaposed in an unusual manner. If the second line is used as the primary context for the first line and they are taken to have some kind of synthetic relationship then the fear of the Lord would correspond to honour and humility to the '*musar* of wisdom'. It condenses into a single line the key words in the motto of 1:7 and provides what could be thought of as another development of thought in which the fear of the Lord is seen to be itself a form of מוּסָר and perhaps links this concept with humility and, ultimately, with honour.

There is also considerable overlap between v.5 and v.32 with v.10 which references מוּסָר and תּוֹכַחַת:

> Dreadful *musar* for the wayward wanderer,
>
> he who hates reproof will die.[483]

In this verse מוּסָר רָע is given to those who forsake the way. The term רַע is a common one, occurring again three times in this chapter alone. On these occasions it is uniformly translated as evil/wicked, but this doesn't seem to be quite the right translation for this unusual construction. Some translators opt for 'severe discipline' (E.g. NRSV, ESV, NIV) but, whilst this

[482] My translation here is explained in the main body of the text.
[483] My translation here is explained in the main body of the text.

may capture the sense, it loses some of the rhetorical impact gained by translating it more literally. The KJV translation of the word here as 'grievous' is a helpful one. Thus it would read: 'there is *grievous musar* for him who forsakes the way.'[484] This captures the sense (in a way that '*evil musar*' would not) but also the shock value of the Hebrew term used. Just as in chapter 13, מוּסָר is linked to the use of the rod, here the מוּסָר envisaged is deeply unpleasant such that it can be described as רַע. I have used 'dreadful' to capture this sense. The use of this extreme form of מוּסָר is justified by the alternative of the parallel line: 'hate reproof and die'. Fox thinks that רַע is used to deliberately 'exaggerate', which makes perfect sense in the context of the second half of the couplet where the alternative to submitting to מוּסָר and reproof is death.[485]

Verse 5, v.10 and v.32 work together to give a thematic shape and direction to Proverbs 15:5-32, to ensure that the readers feel compelled to listen to מוּסָר and תּוֹכַחַת. There is a bold intensification across the chapter, via severe *musar* and the danger of death (v.10) to the rejection of one's very self (vv.30-32). The *pathos* of the whole chapter comes from the vivid imagery and interwoven metaphors, but also through the strong rhetorical statements of these structural proverbs which use hyperbolic, rhetorical language which stir the emotions of the audience.

[484] The KJV emends the sense however to 'Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way'. Longman applies similar logic when opting for the stark translation: 'Discipline is evil…' (*Proverbs*, 315). Longman says: 'My translation takes ra in its moral sense and as a predicate'. This is not justified by the Hebrew however and has been resisted in my own translation.
[485] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 592.

8.2.2 Character vignettes (vv.6-30)

8.2.2.1 So much more than money

Verses 6-30 provide a sketch of the composite characters of the 'righteous wise' and the 'wicked fool', who populate the paths of מוּסָר and its rejection respectively. They do so under three recurring areas of interest within Proverbs which I will use to structure my discussion. They are: wealth, speech, and 'the path'. I begin with wealth (v.6, vv.15-17, v.27).

Verse 6 outlines the relationship of the righteous and the wicked to wealth:

> In the residence of the righteous are many riches,
>
> but in the income of the iniquitous is trouble. (Proverbs 15:6)[486]

The exact nature of the riches/treasure referenced is not made clear. The word used, חֹסֶן, is a word that has a broad semantic range and can include produce, precious things, or treasures.[487] In the context of this chapter it is best understood as untroubled material prosperity. This is the first half of the picture Proverbs often uses for rhetorical effect which proposes a direct link between wisdom and wealth, folly, and destitution; an example of the kind of line which leads people to label Proverbs simplistic. However, in the second half of this couplet there is no denial that the wicked will also receive an income, rather the benefit of this wealth is called into question: hidden within it is trouble. The indeterminate phrase leaves the reader to reflect upon how this might be the case. This suggests a more nuanced approach to the relationship between wealth and wisdom than was found in the straightforward rhetoric of chapter 13 (for example), and indicates that the benefit of wealth to the righteous is of a particular nature whilst, for the wicked, wealth is the cause of trouble. Heard in parallel with v.27 (see below) the reason for this trouble is the unjust means by which the wealth of the wicked is acquired.

This nuanced approach to wealth is made more apparent in the proverbs of vv.15-17 where material wealth is explicitly decoupled from the idea of this being a primary goal. Verse 15

[486] This proverb presents a nice opportunity for alliteration which follows the Hebrew closely.
[487] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, 619.

suggests that, though life for the poor may be hard, a continual feast is had by those who are cheerful (implicitly including the poor among those who can access it). In vv.16-17 the one who has little and eats herbs for dinner is seen as better off because they also have love and the fear of the Lord, whilst the one who has great treasure and a feast fares worse since these blessings are offset by the presence of hatred and trouble.

There is certainly no simplistic link between wisdom and righteousness on the one hand and material wealth on the other in 15:5-33. Indeed, material wealth appears to be subordinated beneath other more intangible but more desirable and certain emotional and psychological benefits. These include: a glad heart (v.13), a cheerful heart (v.15), a glad father (v.20), plans that succeed (v.22), joy (v.23), a heart that rejoices (v.30), refreshed bones (v.30), a place among the wise (v.31), intelligence (v.32) and honour (v.33). The link between a number of these positive traits and wisdom and righteousness is not always made explicit either, however. Take, for example, v.15:

> All the days of the afflicted are evil,
>
> but a cheerful heart has a continual feast. (Proverbs 15:15 ESV)

Whilst there is nothing to explicitly connect the cheerful heart with wisdom or the afflicted one with folly here, the context of the surrounding proverbs is that good things come with wisdom/righteousness and bad things with folly. Here, implicit reasoning demonstrates a formidable list of non-material blessings associated with wisdom and righteousness, suggesting perhaps that the treasure in the house of the righteous (v.6) is a metaphor for the blessings which accompany wisdom and righteousness (as per the 'continual feast' of v.15).

Finally, adding to the ambiguous picture of wealth in this cluster, v.25 and v.27 are a warning to the wealthy. The proud, whose house is torn down by the Lord (v.25), can be inferred, through their parallel with the widow, to correspond to the powerful and wealthy of society whilst v.27 directly addresses those greedy for unjust gain, suggesting that the end result is trouble for them and their household. Trouble, עכר - the same Hebrew root as v.6, was also seen to befall the income of the wicked. Heard in parallel, this verse provides clarity about the unjust nature of that income.

The proverbs of vv.15-17 are a striking cluster including vivid metaphors: the cheerful heart enjoying a continual feast (v.15), the loveless feast with the fattened ox, and the dinner of

vegetables which includes love (v.17). These images, using familiar settings in striking ways, portray the inadequacy of wealth. Verses 16-17 are 'better than' proverbs, another important rhetorical form within the collection and an important component of the *logos* of these verses. They use this form to make ironic and exaggerated comparisons and to go against the grain of conventional thought, acknowledging the 'paradoxes of real life'.[488] They attribute a relative value to the objects under discussion and emphasise here the greater significance of both love and the fear of the Lord over the accumulation of 'great wealth.'[489] Michael Fox offers a comprehensive 'structural' analysis of the 'better than' sayings, showing how these 'quintessential' proverbs create 'matrices of value' that model how to order and prioritise the complex choices of life.[490] It can be clearly seen that the rhetorical thrust of this chapter's use of wealth is very different to that of Proverbs 13. Here the intangible blessings of wisdom are the focus of the chapter and wealth is used as a universally desirable benchmark above which all these other things are elevated.

8.2.2.2 Speaking from the heart

In v.7 the topic of speech is introduced. The importance of speech has already been highlighted in the opening proverb which cites the response to reproof and מוּסָר (both primarily speech acts) as the distinguishing characteristic between the foolish and the prudent.[491] This proverb continues a theme of the next twenty verses which, read together, draw connections between right speech, rebuke and מוּסָר, wisdom and foolishness, righteousness, and wickedness, and one's relationship to Yahweh. Employing one of the conceptual metaphors of Proverbs that 'discourse is fruit,'[492] the cluster extends this and uses

[488] Lucas, *Proverbs*, 119.
[489] There is a reference to the fear of the Lord in v.16, another link to the key themes of the collection. This verse also has echoes of Ecclesiastes 4:6 ('Better is a handful, with quietness, than two handfuls with labour and striving after wind.' (ASV)), another verse subordinating material wealth beneath things of greater significance. Markus Saur, 'Qohelet as a Reader of Proverbs' in Dell, *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, 134.
[490] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 597-598.
[491] It should also be noted that the first 4 verses of the chapter contain a speech cluster and could profitably be included in the analysis. The division, in this case, was chosen based on the inclusion created by 15:5 and 15:32 but the analysis could equally validly combine some or all of 5:5-33 with 5:1-4. This is an example of the principle I outline in section 3.2 above: 'it is likely that combining the proverbs differently on different occasions will yield fruitful and new clusters, insights and emphases.'
[492] Brown, 'The Didactic Power of Metaphor', 141.

it to present a remarkably integrated view of the righteous wise and wicked fool which show the interconnection between their inner state, thoughts, speech, actions, and the resulting consequences and relationship to Yahweh. This integrated view of the self is typical of HB thought, evidenced, as Gordon McConville argues, by the difficulty translators find in rendering the various Hebrew words for the human being, demonstrating that the OT language is always an approximation as it seeks to portray the self in the 'complexity of their wholeness.'[493] It can be seen in this section through the use of parallelism. Firstly, v.7 uses parallelism to draw a connection between speech and the inner being:

> The lips of the wise scatter knowledge
>
> not so the heart of fools. (Proverbs 15:7)[494]

Here, the lips are heard in parallel with the heart and, implicit in the parallelism, is the idea that the heart *could* scatter knowledge, demonstrating the view in this proverb that the lips (speech) are in continuity with the heart. This is mirrored but reversed later on in v.28 where:

> The heart of the righteous wrestles with its response,
>
> but from the mouth of the wicked flows forth evil. (Proverbs 15:28)[495]

The antithetical nature of the v.7 and v.28 are immediately apparent as they are heard in (albeit distant) parallel, and, through that parallelism, they link righteousness to wisdom and wickedness to foolishness, further consolidating the idea of the 'righteous wise' and the 'wicked fool'.

The idea of the careful answer (v.28) is also brought out by the proverb of v.23:

> What joy is the apt answer!
>
> The word in season – so satisfying! (Proverbs 15:23)[496]

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[493] Gordon McConville, *Being Human in God's World*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016, 59.

[494] The precise translation here is uncertain since the phrase 'לֹא־כֵן' is obscure. Perdue translates as 'the minds of fools are warped' (Perdue, *Proverbs*, 233) based on a probable literal translation of 'not straight'. However, Fox uses persuasive comparative Hebrew phrases to show that 'not so' is a more likely translation which has been adopted here (Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 591).

[495] I have adapted standard translations (e.g. ESV 'The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things') in favour of assonance, alliteration and metaphor.

[496] The phrase 'so satisfying' translates the phrase מַה־טּוֹב, 'so good'. Since good and satisfying are weak synonyms in English the substitution seems justified for the sake of alliteration.

This proverb, says Brown, 'identifies the perlocutionary force of edifying discourse: a well-timed utterance elicits joy and acclamation.'[497] This is another affirmation of the integrated nature of the human being. It also resonates with the advocation of counsel and advice in v.22. The antithetical idea of the mouth of the wicked pouring out evil (v.28) links to the metaphorical map of speech in which wise speech is like good fruit whilst (as here) foolish speech is a stream of evil. Similarly, in v.14: 'the face of the fool feeds (רעה) on folly'[498] showing, from the opposite perspective, the pattern of human life as Proverbs understands it: a person's inner sustenance characterises the fruit they produce.

Verse 8 connects character (unrepentant and pious) with action (sacrifice) and speech (prayers) and from there with the Lord:

> The sacrifice of unrepentant sinners is sacrilege to the Lord,
>
> but the prayers of the pious are his delight. (Proverbs 15:8)[499]

This sentiment is 'a commonplace with the prophets'[500] and has, for example, resonances with the unacceptable sacrifices of errant Israel in Isaiah 1 or the righteous prayers of the prophet Daniel. This, again, highlights how Proverbs views the human being as a continuous whole in whom *thought* aligns with *speech* aligns with *action* aligns with *character* (from which combination flows consequence). These themes are then repeated in different ways throughout the remainder of the cluster, building a picture of the relationship between thought, speech, act, and character. What this integration serves to do rhetorically is to support the main exhortation of this cluster of verses: to heed the מוּסָר of the father and to listen to rebuke, depicting this as the means by which to unlock the chain reaction of positive consequences described throughout Proverbs 15:5-33.

[497] Brown, 'The Didactic Power of Metaphor', 138.
[498] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, 625.
[499] Again, standard translations have been adapted slightly to incorporate a little more poetry.
[500] Murphy, *Proverbs*, 112.

8.2.2.3 The path to life

Verses 8-11 can be translated as follows:

> The sacrifice of unrepentant sinners is sacrilege to the Lord,
>
> but the prayers of the pious are his delight.
>
> Sacrilege to the Lord is the way of the wicked,
>
> but the pursuer of righteousness is loved by him. [501]
>
> Dreadful *musar* for the wayward wanderer;
>
> hate reproof and die.
>
> Sheol and Abaddon gape open before the Lord,
>
> How much more human hearts! (Proverbs 15:8-11)[502]

Here, v.9 introduces another theme, woven through these proverbs, which is the metaphor of the way or path that comes in the centre of a cluster (vv.8-11) and contains a number of sound effects - alliteration, assonance and repetition:

> רְשָׁעִים ,יְשָׁרִים (v.8), רָשָׁע (v.9), מוּסָר רָע (v.10)
>
> תּוֹעֲבַת (v.8), תּוֹעֲבַת (v.9), תּוֹכַחַת (v.10)
>
> יְהוָה (v.8), יְהוָה (v.9)

Verses 8 and 9 are almost variant repetitions of one another but shift from a focus on worship (v.8) to that of direction of travel or path (v.9). This focus on the path is then continued in v.10 (discussed above) in which the one who forsakes the way (אֹרַח) will receive 'dreadful' מוּסָר. These verses are indicative of the *ethos* of Proverbs 15:5-32 which is found, above all, in the regular references to the Lord. It is the Lord who acts on behalf of the widow and against the proud (v.25), who is the gatekeeper of Sheol (v.11), to whom the way of the

[501] I have followed standard translations (ESV, NRSV) for v.9, whilst changing the word order to reflect the chiastic structure of the original text and using 'sacrilege' instead of 'abomination' to demonstrate the repetition with v.8.

[502] Verse 11 uses 'gape open' instead of 'lie open' (NRSV) for metaphorical impact. Apart from that it followed this translation.

wicked is an abomination (v.9) and who hears the prayer of the righteous (v.8). These proverbs are infused with divine *ethos*, enhanced by some of the intertextual overtones.

The path metaphor is also used in v.19 when the way of the sluggard is compared to hedge of thorns and the path of the upright to a level highway and in v.21 where the man of understanding walks straight ahead. But the final reference is in v.24 where the path becomes the path of life (אֹרַח חַיִּים) which leads upward for the prudent who turns from *Sheol* beneath.[503] This helps to explain the earlier inclusion of a proverb referencing *Sheol* (v.11) in proximity to the early occurrence of the path metaphor (vv.9-10). The dark observation of v.11 is simply placed beside v.10 in parataxis so that, as these proverbs are read together, links are forged between the different themes they address and the metaphors they use. The use of the 'path' as one of the conceptual metaphors for Proverbs 15:5-33 allows vivid images ('far-fetched' is Perdue's less generous judgement on this picture[504]) to be created (such as the hedge of thorns v.19) and also to pull together the disparate ideas of the chapter together: The different paths are populated by the opposing characters of the proverbs, head in different directions, and arrive at different destinations.

Similarly, to Proverbs 2 (see 5.2.6), the characters of this section are idealised and create a fantasy type. The relationship to wealth of the wicked fool and righteous wise is added to the composite picture of these figures which evolves throughout Proverbs. The wicked fool may be materially wealthy, but his or her wealth is gained by unjust means and only ends in trouble; conversely, the righteous wise has wealth which possibly includes, but certainly transcends, material wealth; incorporating also joy, life and love. These characters journey on paths in opposite directions, up towards life and down towards *Sheol,* in a constantly re-enacted story of wisdom and foolishness.

[503] This an orientational metaphor– life is 'up', and death is 'down'. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14.
[504] Perdue, *Proverbs*, 428.

8.3 Inherent and advocated מוּסָר in Proverbs 15:5-31

A large number of the devices of inherent מוּסָר have been observed in these verses. It is a rhetorically sophisticated group of proverbs employing various literary devices and containing clear examples of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. Of particular note is the sophisticated logic which emerges as the proverbs interact around the conceptual metaphors, and the nuanced view of wealth that emerges, in which wealth is not seen as a straightforward sign of blessing and is subordinated beneath other more valuable benefits, and used instead to generate *pathos*: 'better than…'. The judicious use of final destinies also generates *pathos*: *Sheol* beneath (v.11) is calculated to create fear, for example, whilst the idea of life and light should engender longing (vv.30-31).

The advocated מוּסָר is, by now, familiar with strong resonances of the prologue: to listen to מוּסָר and to reproof, to pursue wisdom and righteousness, and to fear the Lord. However, there is a further vein of advice regarding speech which, through its holistic integration of the human being, adds depth to this advice: speech reflects your character and affects the whole of life. Proverbs advocates considered but apt speech, which goes hand in hand with the advice to listen, supporting the main exhortation of this cluster of verses; to heed the מוּסָר of the father and to listen to rebuke.

There is also implicit but clear advocated מוּסָר regarding wealth which encourages the hearer to pursue the things which are 'better than' wealth (vv.16-17) and commends an attitude to money whereby it is kept firmly in perspective. Other proverbs commend more regular habits, for example, cheerfulness (v.15), patience in relationship (v.18), and hard work (v.19). These pieces of advocated מוּסָר are normally implicit but operate as examples or types to follow: the kind of characters students should emulate as they tread the paths of wisdom.

Chapter 9 Proverbs 22:17-23:11

9.1 A familiar opening from an unfamiliar source (22:17-21)

Beyond Proverbs 22:16 there are several other discrete sections of Proverbs, some of which appear to derive from non-Israelite sources. I have chosen to analyse Proverbs 22:17-23:11 which has famously been found to contain some overlap with material from the Egyptian *Teaching of Amenemope,* an instruction intended for training officials for service in the Egyptian government.[505] As argued afresh by Nili Shupak, the direction of any influence is highly likely to have been on Proverbs from Amenemope and this will be assumed in what follows.[506] The existence of the source enables a comparison to be made between the two texts and to demonstrate the differences in style, structure and rhetorical approach between the Egyptian and Israelite instructions. As I consider the inherent and advocated *musar* of these sayings, I will therefore also examine how these verses utilise and reshape material from the *Teaching of Amenemope*.[507]

[505] Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery,* 34. John A. Emerton, "The Teaching of Amenemope and Proverbs XXII 17–XXIV 22: Further Reflections on a Long-Standing Problem," *Vetus Testamentum* 51, (2001), 431– 65, 434.

[506] Shupak has summarised and added to the strong case for this position in 'The Instruction of Amenemope and Proverbs 22:17– 24:22 from the Perspective of Contemporary Research' in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients : Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Ronald L. Troxel et al. (eds), Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005, 203-220. Shupak engages with Whybray's theory that there is no dependence between the texts. Whybray, building on tentative suggestions from Ruffle (John Ruffle, 'The Teaching of Amenemope and its Connection with the Book of Proverbs', *Tyndale Bulletin* 28, 1977, 37), asserts that, contrary to the growing consensus of the time, the common themes of Proverbs and Amenemope are simply part of the ANE *milieu* and do not have a relationship of dependence. He argues that the section shows only limited parallels with Amenemope, ignoring swathes of the Egyptian work, whilst having more in connection with other sections of Proverbs (Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 132-135). Emerton was a key respondent to Whybray who focused on the meaning of שִׁלְשׁוֹם, rebuffing Whybray's arguments and arguing for its translation as 'thirty' (Emerton, "The Teaching of Amenemope and Proverbs XXII 17– XXIV 22", 435-438). Shupak builds on Emerton's work (and the many others who support this reading) by approaching the problem from the other direction and demonstrating evidence of distinctively Egyptian words and phrases in these verses. Taken together, these arguments are strong evidence for assuming a dependence of this part of Proverbs on Amenemope and support the slight emendation of the MT to read 'thirty'.
showing comprehensively that the evidence points the other way.

[507] An overview of the relationship between the two texts can be found in Michael Fox's article: 'From Amenemope to Proverbs: Editorial Art in Proverbs 22,17–23,11', *ZAW* 126(1) (2014):76–91. I draw particularly on the work of Fox in this chapter, whose work on the relationship between the two texts is extensive.

These verses comprise part of the 'thirty sayings'[508] which run from Proverbs 22:17-24:22 and open with a proverb that resonates within other parts of the collection:

> Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise
>
> And apply your heart towards my knowledge. (Proverbs 22:17, ESV)

The address is slightly more generic than the father-son setting of Proverbs 1-9 with the addressee left indeterminate and the teacher professing to simply be among the wise, but it is still a student/teacher setting and the familiar pursuit of wisdom and knowledge is the first thing to be advocated. However, this is also a saying which has parallels in Amenemope:

> *Chapter 1, lines 1-2*
>
> Give your ears and hear what is said
>
> Give your mind over to their interpretation.[509]

Immediately the similarities are apparent, and, in this example, there is very little substantive difference between the two sayings.

Building on this sentiment, in Proverbs 22:18 is one of the clearest indications that the Proverbs are intended to be committed to memory:

> For it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,
>
> If all of them are ready on your lips.

This overlaps with Amenemope also:

> *Chapter 1, lines 3 and 6*
>
> It is profitable to put them in your heart…

[508] As noted above, the decision for the direction of dependence included a consideration of the argument for the translation of שִׁלְשׁוֹם as 'thirty'. *BHS* notes the *ketiv* as שְׁלִישִׁים, meaning 'three days ago' and the *qere* as שְׁלִשִׁים, plural of 'third man [in a chariot]' (*BHS*, 1399). Neither of these are translated as thirty and Whybray argues that there is no need to accept the emendation of the MT to שְׁלִשִׁים instead following the *ketiv* and translating as 'earlier', (Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs,* 134). However, Emerton does not believe this translation is justified, nor that it really makes sense and convincingly argues that the very slight emendation to the consonants of the *qere* (a vav becomes a yod) are the most probable given the other evidence (further supplied by Shupak as outlined above) of a dependence upon Amenemope (Emerton, "The Teaching of Amenemope and Proverbs XXII 17– XXIV 22, 442).

[509] William Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, 3rd Edition, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2003, 225

…They will be a mooring post on your tongue.[510]

This advice is certainly implicit elsewhere within Proverbs,[511] but this shows the first creative reinterpretation of Amenemope by Proverbs. Amenemope appears to be indicating that the presence of its words within the heart will save the bearer from ill-judged speech. Proverbs, on the other hand, assumes that what is held in the heart will be pleasant as it comes forth on the lips (cf. Proverbs 13:2 where fruit comes from the lips). Thus, Proverbs can be seen here to subtly reshape the Amenemope saying to match its own convictions.[512]

Proverbs 22:17-18 is then followed by some reasons for listening with an interjection to describe what will follow in vv.19-21:

So that your trust may be in the LORD,

I have made them known to you today- yes, to you.

Have I not written for you thirty sayings

of admonition and knowledge?

To show you what is right and true,

so that you may give a true answer to those who sent you? (Proverbs 22:19-21 NRSV)

This short summary is a description of the content ('thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge') framed by two purpose statements explaining why one might listen to this counsel, one human reason for doing so (v.21), one divine (v.19).

Verse 19 has no direct parallel with Amenemope (as might be expected for a Yahwistic proverb) but Fox thinks it is not necessarily a late edition, nor that it is out of place within the religious framework of Amenemope whilst others understand it to demonstrate the gulf between Israelite and other ancient Near Eastern wisdom.[513] Fox is surely right that there is some overlap with the wider framework of divine accountability within Amenemope and that this insertion is not entirely out of place within the Egyptian instruction. Nonetheless, there is certainly no comparable concept of a personal deity in whom one would trust in

[510] Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 226. Fox does not note the overlap with line 3 but, in my opinion, it is unmistakeable, and these verses simply condense the opening 6 lines of Amenemope into 4. Fox, 'From Amenemope to Proverbs', 80.
[511] See for example Proverbs 3:1 'My son, my teaching must not be forgotten!'
[512] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, 219.
[513] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 223, McKane, *Proverbs*, 376.

Amenemope, whilst the word order of the Hebrew in v.19 emphasises the Lord as the direct object of the hearer's trust in Proverbs 22:19. This is another good example of the way in which the editor has adapted material from Amenemope to his own view of the world and his conventions of order and arrangement.

Prove 22:20 parallels the reference to 'thirty chapters' in Amenemope (chapter 30, line 1) which 'please', 'instruct' (chapter 30 line 2), and 'teach the ignorant' (chapter 30, line 4). Proverbs states more succinctly the same principle and the same division into thirty parts, outlining the vehicle of the wisdom which is being communicated here, as per Amenemope, but bringing it from the conclusion of the Egyptian instruction into the exordium of the thirty sayings in Proverbs.

Following on from this, Proverbs 22:21 uses word play – alliteration, assonance, and repetition:

לְהוֹדִיעֲךָ קֹשְׁטְ אִמְרֵי אֱמֶת

לְהָשִׁיב אֲמָרִים אֱמֶת לְשֹׁלְחֶיךָ

Here the *lamed* occurs several times at the beginning of words, with the *he* and/or *sin* following it, and the phrase 'אמר אֱמֶת' is repeated in both lines. This word-play draws attention to the verse which is given here as a second purpose statement for these sayings: that they are intended to communicate truth and to equip the learner to relay that truth in turn to those who sent them.

Fox draws a parallel with the prologue of Amenemope, translating it as follows:

> *Prologue, lines 5 and 6*
>
> To return an [oral] response to the one who says it
>
> To bring back a [written] message to the one who sends it.

This clearly has overlap with Proverbs 22:21 but, as Fox notes, the subject is not a proverbial one – Proverbs displays little interest in reporting accurately to the sender and this concept

is an Egyptian one.[514] Thus, Proverbs adapts it to its own favoured 'faithful messenger' motif,[515] and the content (truth) of the communication to the sender is the focus rather than the act of transmitting a message. Proverbs also uses this saying, pulled in from the prologue and adapted. Throughout the compilers of Proverbs are shown to freely reorder and alter the sayings of Amenemope to their own purposes. In summary, these opening five verses illustrate well the relationship of this section to the Amenemope source, illustrating the creative fashion in which the parallels with Amenemope are adapted to the Proverbial framework.

This introduction is followed by the thirty sayings, some hold the introduction to be the first saying whilst others find thirty sayings without the introduction. However, as Fox notes, whilst there is some debate around the precise divisions, even before the connection with Amenemope was established and the translation 'thirty' arrived at, commentators tended to distinguish around 30 sayings in the proverbs through 24:22 adding force to this being the correct translation.[516] Of these sayings, the proverbs to 23:11 are generally considered to be related to Amenemope and to comprise the first ten sayings. Whilst they are enumerated differently (since Fox numbers the introduction as the first saying), these divisions seem widely agreed upon.[517]

[514] Fox also points towards Ptahhotep and Anii (for example) which display similar concerns. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 712.
[515] Evident (for example) in Proverbs 13:18 where '…a faithful messenger brings healing.' (ESV). See also Proverbs 25:13, 26:6.
[516] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31,* 711.
[517] E.g. Lucas, *Proverbs,* 37, Fox, *Proverbs 10-31,* 705, McKane, *Proverbs,* 377-385, Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, 229-244.

9.2 Amenemope in conversation with Proverbs 22:22-23:11

9.2.1 Structure and theme

In the table below I have grouped the nine sayings of 22:22-23:11 into six separate themes. (there are three sayings which relate to the exploitation of the poor and two relating to rulers). These themes are familiar, and the table below also gives examples of where else these themes occur in Proverbs.

Subject	**Proverbs 22:17 – 23:11**	**Examples from the remainder of Proverbs**
Against the exploitation of the poor	22:22-23, 22:28 & 23:10-11	14:31, 17:5, 18:23, 19:17, 21:13, 22:2, 28:3, 28:16
Wise associations, avoiding those of an uncontrolled temper.	22:24-25	14:16-17, 15:18, 19:19
Avoiding pledges	22:26-27	6:1, 11:5, 17:18, 20:16
Relating to rulers	22:29, 23:1-3	17:7, 19:6, 24:21, 25:15, 29:26, 16:14, 20:2, 22:11
Pursuit of wealth	23:4-5	10:4, 10:22, 11:4, 11:16, 15:16, 18:11, 22:16
Wise associations: avoiding the stingy, and the foolish.	23:6-9	1:10-19, 13:20, 14:7, 23:19-21, 24:1-2

The sayings are fairly wide ranging compared to some of the more structured sections of Proverbs, however, following the exordium (Proverbs 21:17-21), the sayings seem to be structured around the theme of exploitation of the poor which 'bookends' these verses (22:22-23 & 23:10-11) and also occurs at the midpoint in (Proverbs 22:28). Other themes concern wealth, self-control, and relationships within the community.

The theme of exploitation occurs as follows:

> Do not pilfer from the poor because they are poor.
> Do not crush the afflicted at the gate.
> For the Lord fights their fight for them.
> He will pilfer the lives of those who pilfer from them. (Proverbs 22:22-23)
>
> Do not move an ancient boundary
> set up by your ancestors. (Proverbs 22:28)
>
> Do not move an ancient boundary,
> the fields of the fatherless, do not enter.
> For their Redeemer is mighty,
> he will fight their fight - against you! (Proverbs 23:10-11)[518]

The careful use of parallelism can be seen here as the beginning and ending phrase are linked to each other through the repeated root ריב which means 'to contend' (translated 'fight' above for a more alliterative rendition). This suggests that the 'Redeemer' of 23:11 is the Lord. They are also linked to the proverb at the centre of the cluster by the repetition of the warning against moving an ancient boundary.

Parallels to all these verses can be found within Amenemope, the use of which offers significant insight into the compositional approach of Proverbs. The specific sections of

[518] My translation, erring in favour of memorability, particularly attempts to show the repetitions in these verses as they occur in the Hebrew, demonstrating the way in which they structure the section through shared vocabulary. גזל is 'to rob' in the qal (Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 1*,* 186) and translated here 'pilfer' (v.23), ריב means 'strive' or 'dispute' with the equivalent noun meaning 'strife' (Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,* vol. 2, 1224). Most versions veer away from this repetition (for example, the NRSV translates רִיבָם רִיב as 'pleads their cause' rather than 'strive their strife'), yet it seems to me important for the poetic form of the proverbs and I have translated as 'fight their fight'.

Amenemope which parallel these verses are in chapters two and six which both concern attitudes to the poor and the vulnerable.

Chapter 2 opens by warning: 'Beware of stealing from a miserable (lowly) man.' It parallels this warning with several other examples of negative behaviour which exploits the vulnerable.[519] As incentive to avoid this, an extended description of the way in which the forces of nature themselves will rise up to right the wrong is given (lines 11-16). It concludes by warning that the 'Moon' will declare to the world the crime of the evildoer. The Moon, in Egyptian religion, is Thoth, god of scribes and administration of justice, who will make public the crime and hold the evildoer to account.[520] This description parallels Proverbs 22:22-23 which deals with similar themes but, rather than extended descriptions and examples, limits the same content to four economical and punchy lines. This sets the concept of automatic retribution within an Israelite framework by appealing to a personal deity (instead of to a natural order of justice) who will defend those unable to defend themselves.

Chapter 6 of Amenemope is the joint longest chapter of Amenemope (36 lines) alongside chapter 9. Its theme is boundary markers (the concern of Proverbs 22:28 and 23:10-11). It is a carefully structured chapter which opens with an eight line exhortation against displacing the marker on the boundary of a field, highlighting the underlying greed of this behaviour and focusing particularly on the boundary of a widow, which is representative of a defenceless neighbour. This exhortation concludes with a warning that the one who does this will be 'caught' by the might of the Moon – in other words, that he will not get away with it - before the consequences of this judgement are outlined in the following 8 lines. There is then another reference to boundary markers and a concluding summary before an alternative path is outlined in the final 16 lines, concluding with two 'better than' statements.[521]

Proverbs, again, is much more succinct. The editor has certainly taken one of the central themes of Amenemope and made it central through placement of the proverbs, but condensing the advice and description of Amenemope into 6 lines about boundaries (22:28 and 23:10-11).

Perhaps most interestingly is the fact that, on both issues, Proverbs lacks the straightforward and logical structure of Amenemope. Rather than placing these sayings

[519] Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 226.
[520] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 714.
[521] Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 228-229.

together as a condensed summary of Amenemope's thought, they are scattered through these first 11 sayings and the reader must do significant work to pull out their centrality and significance. Proverbs seems to be applying its own editorial strategy to the sayings from Amenemope as it seeks to synthesise and condense a wider reality into its own patterns of arrangement and form.

Between these structuring verses are other themes from Amenemope which are either significant topics within the Egyptian instruction, or antecedents of this primary topic. First, in Proverbs 22:24-25 is a warning against associating with the hot-tempered man, the subject of Amenemope chapter 9 (the other long chapter within Amenemope). Here, a rather evocative description (e.g. 'He is like a wolf cub in the farmyard.' Chapter 9, line 26) is flattened into four lines in Proverbs 22:24-25, suggesting it is being included partly to acknowledge its significance in Amenemope.[522] It is mirrored by the even more cursory advice against associating with fools in Proverbs 23:9 which has no parallel in Amenemope.

The remaining verses are all concerned with relationship to wealth and to the wealthy and powerful and all have parallels within Amenemope. In Proverbs 23:1-8 there are three sayings which address: dining with a ruler, whose food is deceptive and delicacies should not be craved (23:1-3, paralleled by Amenemope chapter 23, lines 1-5); the pursuit of riches and the evasive nature of wealth (23:4-5, paralleled by Amenemope chapter 7, lines 1-16); and which warn against dining with a stingy host who is always thinking about cost (23:6-8, paralleled by Amenemope chapter 11, lines 1-13).[523] Proverbs 22:26-27 concerns debt and pledges and has no parallel in Amenemope but is related to the wider theme of a right relationship to wealth.

In summary, in Proverbs 22:17-23:11, the structuring proverbs (following the exordium) concern the oppression of the poor and the intermediate ones (barring 22:24-25 and 23:9) one's relationship to wealth and to the wealthy. This parallels the concerns of Proverbs 22:16 which reads:

> Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth,
> or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty. (ESV)

This leads me to suggest that, arguably, the whole of the section influenced by Amenemope is introduced by Proverbs 22:16 which directly precedes it. Feasibly, a sage has recognised in

[522] Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 232.
[523] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 759-760.

Amenemope a development of 22:16 and so has used this teaching to expand on a proverbial theme, effectively creating a new section within Proverbs. This would help to explain why this section moves from drawing on the most significant themes of Amenemope to pulling in sayings from rather 'niche' topics (chapter 23, which concerns eating with a ruler and parallels Proverbs 23:1-3, is given only 8 lines for example[524]) whilst ignoring some more important topics within Amenemope. Taking 22:16 into account, it appears that this Egyptian wisdom might have been imported to develop the thought of this saying, a possibility supported by the fact that it is used so freely and adapted to its new Israelite context. The structure of these verses within Proverbs demonstrates a central focus around the oppression of the poor, a key theme of Amenemope, and includes several other minor themes which either relate tangentially (such as the pursuit and deceit of wealth (Proverbs 22:29-23:8) and caution in the management of one's own financial affairs (Proverbs 22:26-27)) or 22:24 which concerns a 'wrathful man', and is perhaps included given its significance in Amenemope. It is less clear why the proverb of v.9 is brought in for it does not serve the main theme, nor does it appear in Amenemope and the only (possibly) related proverb within the section is Proverbs 22:24 which warns against friendship with a wrathful man. Whilst this deserves further study it will remain unanswered in this thesis since it does not undermine the argument that the main themes of the Amenemope section of Proverbs are encapsulated and introduced by Proverbs 22:16. This verse summarises the advocated מוּסָר of these verses: to relate righteously to rich and poor alike, neither oppressing the needy nor cosying up to the wealthy.

This analysis of structure has brought out several devices of inherent מוּסָר, showing how parallelism and word play is used to rearrange the Amenemope sayings into a form more typical of Proverbs. The following section will consider the way in which these sayings (as used by Proverbs) employ other forms of inherent מוּסָר to promote their message, in comparison to the devices found in Amenemope.

[524] Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 240.

9.2.2 Other devices of inherent מוּסָר

9.2.2.1 Metaphor

As has been seen, one of the key devices of inherent מוּסָר in Proverbs is the use of rich and vivid metaphor. These verses, whilst employing fewer metaphors than some sections of the collection, employ some memorable images. Most striking is the metaphor of wealth in 23:5, which:

> Will surely sprout wings
>
> And fly off to the sky like an eagle.

This is an image which comes from Amenemope chapter 7, lines 15-16. Here, riches obtained by theft will either disappear into the ground (lines 11-14) or:

> they will make themselves wings like geese,
>
> And fly up to the sky.

Whilst the riches referenced here are obtained by theft, the wider context of the Amenemope chapter is against an inappropriate desire for wealth – the chapter opens with the line:

> Do not set your heart upon seeking riches.[525]

This is paralleled in Proverbs 23:4 which says

> Do not toil to acquire wealth, be discerning enough to resist. (ESV)

Here then, Proverbs seems to have condensed a chapter of Amenemope into a couple of lines and, whilst it has included one striking metaphor from Amenemope, even more striking, are the metaphors which have been left out - much of the metaphorical richness of the source text has been excluded. For example, the remainder of chapter 7 of Amenemope (from which this image is taken) is replete with other very evocative images which are ignored by Proverbs, such as lines 21 and 22:

> The boat of the covetous is abandoned <in> the mud,

[525] Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 230.

While the skiff of the truly temperate man sails on.[526]

The same was found of the use of chapter 2 (concern for the poor) and chapter 6 (boundaries) of Amenemope where much of the imagery is removed in favour of precision and economy. Even more so, the description of the hot-headed man in chapter 9 of Amenemope runs to 36 lines, condensed into the following statement in Proverbs:

Fall not into friendship with a man of fury,

keep well away from one who is wrathful. (Proverbs 22:24)[527]

This relentless flattening of the text suggests that the focus of the editor was on concise communication of content, structured appropriately, even though this comes at the expense of some of the more evocative images from Amenemope.

In summary, metaphor, though not insignificant to this section does not seem to be a key vehicle of inherent מוּסָר at this point of the collection. Conversely, the use of metaphor is common and powerful within Amenemope, suggesting an important tactic of its own persuasive strategy.

9.2.2.2 Narrative

An area in which the editor seems to have allowed himself more freedom is the use of brief narrative vignettes. The metaphor of riches in Proverbs 23:5 is given in narrative form (sprouting wings and flying away), in 23:1-3 is the picture of 'dining with a ruler' whilst in 23:6-8 is a story of dinner with a stingy host. Proverbs 22:22-23 and 23:10-11 which concern relations to the poor, are also given as brief narratives in which a powerful figure steps in, to right injustices perpetrated against the vulnerable.

Narrative, perhaps even more than the use of metaphor, is faithful to the style of Amenemope and the thirty chapters each contain a brief narrative around a theme. Proverbs preserves this style (though at the expense of some of Amenemope's rich language) in Proverbs 22:17–23:11 and the narrative style continues throughout the thirty sayings,

[526] Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 230.
[527] Based on the ESV translation (Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man) with minor amendments in favour of poetic form.

including one very extended description of drunkenness (Proverbs 23:29-35) which reads much like a chapter of Amenemope though there is no parallel in what survives of that text.

9.2.2.3 Intertextual references

The parallels with Amenemope do not introduce purely 'foreign' concepts into either Proverbs or the wider HB. This can be seen by noticing some of the echoes of other texts from the wider book of Proverbs (see the table above) and the HB within this section. For example, there are two injunctions not to move a neighbour's landmark in Deuteronomy 19:14 and 27:18, suggesting that this theme of Amenemope would have found resonance with Hebrew ethics. It is also referenced in Proverbs 15:25 where the Lord 'maintains the widow's boundaries' (ESV). Concern for the poor, 'עָנִי' (Proverbs 22:22), is also a very common theme, both within the Proverbs, but also within the wider HB. In particular, the Psalms contain over 40 references to the poor (although this is often self-referential) and exhibit a strong conviction that the Lord is on the side of the poor and oppressed.

Some of the secondary ideas also occur elsewhere: a warning against 'striking hands' in pledge (Proverbs 22:26) occurs in Proverbs 6:1 and 17:18 and the relentless pursuit of riches (23:4) is warned against in Proverbs 28:20, whilst a 'hot headed' man (22:24) stirs up strife in Proverbs 15:18, 19:19 and 29:22. This suggests that this section of Proverbs, whilst drawing on Amenemope, is also anchored in its own wider context.[528]

9.2.2.4 *Ethos*, *Pathos* and *Logos*

These sayings generate *ethos* through regular invocation of divine authority to lend weight to their assertions. The Lord is referenced four times throughout the sayings as the defender of the poor (Proverbs 23:11 and implicitly in 22:11), the provider of a future hope (23:18), and

[528] As Stuart Weeks notes (commenting on 1-9 but equally relevant here): to read these verses 'solely in the light of the foreign instructions, rather than the Jewish context in which it was composed… would be like reading the Aeneid solely on the basis of the Greek epic tradition while ignoring its context in Roman literature and thought. (*Instruction and Imagery,* 37).

as the one to trust and to fear (22:16). There is also a reference to 'the wise' in 22:17 to whom the sayings are attributed. *Pathos* is created primarily through the narrative vignettes which encourage the hearer to locate themselves within the situation, allowing them to experience the unfolding of the story and carrying them along emotionally. The *logos* of the sayings is mainly found in the internal logic of the sayings which make recommendations, normally followed by a reason, for example, Proverbs 21:22-23 follow the exhortation not to rob the poor with the reason that, by so doing, one is confronting the Lord himself: the *logos* of classification is used to make an argument against oppressive behaviour from the nature of the Lord as defender of the poor. This rhetorical strategy is like the one used by Amenemope but whilst, in Proverbs, this is delivered in a compact fashion, ordered according to Proverbs' conventions, in Amenemope it is supported by the use of more extended metaphors.

9.3 Summary of the comparative findings

In this chapter I am arguing that material from Amenemope has been selectively re-appropriated, condensed and reordered by Proverbs, possibly into an expansion of Proverbs 22:16.[529] In so doing, it aims to respect the source text but has an approach to structure and rhetoric more akin to the rest of Proverbs than the Egyptian instruction. This means that the composition does not use an essentially random selection of passages, but rather chooses and arranges material to serve deliberate rhetorical aims. This, in turn, adds weight to the idea of a 'Proverbial approach' to composition which obeys certain conventions of form, arrangement and utilises the devices of inherent מוּסָר which have been identified in all the passages considered.

In his commentary Fox suggests that the editor of Proverbs 22:17-23:11 composed in five 'sweeps' through the Amenemope scroll, pulling out sayings of interest as he went. However, he gives no reason as to *why* the editor would have chosen these particular texts, whilst acknowledging that the use of Amenemope is fairly free and creative.[530] This is typical of discussions about the relationship between the two texts and is a weakness that needs addressing for, as it stands, it hypothesises a haphazard method of composition which, whilst clearly plausible, seems less likely than a method to which clear intent can be plausibly attributed. The comparison of the two texts with particular reference to the inherent מוּסָר of the section draws out an alternative hypothesis: might it be that the editor was using his own conventions of arrangement to expand on Proverbs 22:16, drawing on the teaching of Amenemope yet fully integrating it into the Hebrew collection of Proverbs? [531] This theory presents a possible reason why particular sections of Amenemope were chosen and adapted in Proverbs and seems to present a more satisfactory rationale than the otherwise apparently random selection of material which confronts the reader who compares the two texts. If it is

[529] Stuart Weeks makes a case for this approach being far more probable than an adherence to a style or genre which is, in any event, very varied. He is arguing with relation to Proverbs 1-9, but the principle is the same. *Instruction and Imagery,* 37.
[530] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 756.
[531] This would explain why some scholars such as Whybray (who disagrees with the influence of Amenemope) and A. Niccaci (discussed in Emerton's helpful consideration of the relationship between the two texts) see an independent and cohesive section of the collection in 22:17-23:11. Emerton, 'The Teaching of Amenemope and Proverbs xxii 17-xxiv 22', 445.

correct, it allows the distinctively proverbial nature of these verses to be seen as continuous in approach and arrangement with the remainder of the collection whilst acknowledging the clear debt they owe to the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope.[532] It is also, significantly for this thesis, one of the clearest illustrations of the distinctive editorial approach of Proverbs. None of the other possible sources of earlier material which went into compiling Proverbs in its final form are available, thus it is a unique opportunity to observe the way in which existing material has been compiled into the collection.

[532] Arguing for this relationship between the two texts is not the primary aim of this thesis but doing more work on this theory would, it seems, be a worthwhile future project.

Chapter 10 Virtue Education in conversation with Proverbs

10.1 Summary of Proverbial pedagogy

Following the exegesis of the previous five chapters, I will now summarise my observations of the pedagogical methods and principles at work within the collection before considering them alongside the educational theories of Classical Greece, in particular of Aristotle, and the subsequent tradition of Virtue Education which is rooted in Aristotelian pedagogy.

Passages were selected from across the collection and, in each case, the proverbs were analysed using the framework of inherent and advocated מוּסָר. The discussion of Proverbs 22:17-23:11 also included a comparative analysis with the Instruction of Amenemope. This exegetical method has proved to be a fruitful approach to the text and has unearthed a cohesive rhetorical strategy in each section considered, demonstrating the pedagogical consistency and depth of Proverbs and shedding fresh light on its approach to arrangement, literary and poetic features and overall rhetoric.

In the prologue (Proverbs 1:1-7) the מְשָׁלִים (proverbs) were introduced, the vehicles of Proverbs' מוּסָר, indicative of authority and rooted in comparison. The purpose of these proverbs was given as the knowledge of wisdom and מוּסָר, alongside a range of other ethical and pragmatic virtues, accomplished through riddles, words of wisdom, satire, and words of understanding. The prologue itself suggests that the pedagogical power of proverbs is found in their literary complexity and artistry, an artistry it models in its own use of parallelism, overall structure, and other devices of inherent מוּסָר. A careful reading, alongside the sophisticated approach of the prologue, implies that the collection is designed primarily for teachers – for the wise 'father' seeking to educate his 'son' – an educational resource to be taught, not one to be simply picked up and read unaided by the young or foolish son. The recommendation of the prologue, as with so much of Proverbs, is to listen to מוּסָר and to seek wisdom. Here it is expanded by including, alongside wisdom: ethical virtues, pragmatic success, and the need for fear of the Lord. This demonstrates the scope of the project on

which Proverbs is embarking and the orientation of the collection towards a fundamentally applied understanding of wisdom.

Proverbs 2 advocates a similar choice: choose wisdom, choose life. The instruction commends this advice to the reader using the metaphors of journeying, of treasure and of God as helper. A picture is carefully constructed, through the parallelism, and persuasive language, in which a stark choice between two paths is placed before the reader. On the path of wisdom is life, righteousness, land, the help of Yahweh and understanding. On the path of folly is darkness and death. The inherent מוּסָר is used to build urgency, to act with *pathos* on the emotions of the hearer and leave only one logical path to choose.

The same decision lies at the heart of Proverbs 8. The student must decide if they will respond to wisdom's call. However, the rhetoric of this chapter, whilst having some overlap with Proverbs 2 (the use of treasure for example), is structured around the personification of Wisdom, her personal call, and her climactic claim: nothing you desire can compare with me. Wisdom assumes an almost divine status in this chapter - the most ancient and significant creative act of Yahweh - creating a powerful appeal from *ethos* and giving her an elevated role from which to seek to persuade the hearer that she is *better*.

Proverbs 13:1-25, whilst still focused on encouraging the student to choose the path of wisdom, includes a broader range of advice, calling, through the literary and poetic artistry of the text, for careful and appropriate speech, a right response to rebuke and for habits of self-control. This advice is commended to the reader through rhetoric which appeals to the most basic of human desires and in which wisdom is seen to include the promise wealth, the fulfilment of desire, and good character. Whilst the structure is less transparent than those of Proverbs 1-9, significant synthesis and rhetorical impact was gained by reading these proverbs in relationship with one another.

Proverbs 15:5-33, whilst similarly using structure, metaphor, and other literary devices, persuades using a more nuanced view of the benefits of wisdom. There is a very nuanced understanding of wealth which is subordinated to 'better' things and the student is encouraged towards the life, joy and love associated with wisdom using a sophisticated *logos* and affective *pathos*.

Proverbs 22:17-23:11 contains more directly applicable advice, encouraging the student into right relationships with wealth and the wealthy and away from the oppression of the poor. The message is, as with the other passages considered, conveyed partly through the structure of the section, combined with some of the literary devices of inherent מוּסָר, particularly narrative vignettes. The exegesis of these verses provided a unique and fascinating study of the way Proverbs has appropriated Egyptian material, notably from the Instruction of Amememope, into its own literary and rhetorical conventions.

I have used Classical Rhetoric and Fantasy Theme Analysis as frameworks to better observe the rhetorical strategies of Proverbs. These have helped to classify some of what Proverbs is doing, demonstrating how the sayings engage the emotions (*pathos*), appeal to authority (*ethos*) whilst containing an inner (often implicit) logic (*logos*). The Fantasy Types have also been observed ('the wise' and 'the fool' for example), re-enacting their typical behaviour in various scenes throughout the collection. In all the passages considered, the structure and parallelism of the verses has worked rhetorically by setting up synthetic and antithetical comparisons, both within and between proverbs. A 'polyphonic'[533] text has been created in which a range of voices and perspectives, as they are placed alongside each other, create the 'wisdom forming' tensions identified by Christine Yoder and Peter Hatton.[534] This polyphonic text has been seen to be a critical component of Proverbs' pedagogical approach, alongside a judicious use of the various literary and poetic devices of inherent מוּסָר. These have included metaphor, personification, intertextual allusion, repetition, assonance, alliteration, paronomasia, and narrative (among others) which have all been observed at different points, but always serving Proverbs pedagogical approach of linking ideas together for the purpose of comparison and synthesis as the collection seeks to instil wisdom forming habits. Through this pedagogy the overarching aim of Proverbs, to direct the student towards wisdom and מוּסָר, is to shape the desires of those who hear the proverbs and to encourage habits and patterns of thought which will result in wise action and good character. By this approach Proverbs demonstrates a view of humanity in which people are fundamentally integrated

[533] Achim Müller, *Proverbien 1-9,* 295.
[534] See section 3.2.1 for discussion. Yoder, 'Forming "Fearers of Yahweh"', 169 and Hatton, *Contradiction in the Book of Proverbs*,13-15.

beings such that its focus is not simply the impartation of knowledge but also the shaping of desire and, ultimately, the formation of character. As Brown puts it:

> …character formation captures much of the rhetorical aim of the wisdom corpus. For the biblical sages, the world — both natural and international — was their classroom. The will, specifically its desire and formation, was their goal.[535]

[535] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 5.

10.2 Origins of Virtue Education

10.2.1 Introduction to Virtue Education

I have shown how character formation is central to Proverbs' pedagogy. Whilst the specific expression of this focus may be unique to Proverbs, the idea of educating for character and wisdom is not. It places Proverbs in a stream of educational theory called Virtue (or Character) Education. Virtue Education is a loose term that describes the area of educational thought (be it philosophical or applied) that has a central concern for educating for virtue and character and, indeed, for wisdom. It is closely related to Virtue Ethics and is also part of the wider field of educational theory.

This idea of educating for character is not new, tracing its roots back to Aristotle, but it has fluctuated in popularity, gaining traction again in recent years. One example will suffice to show this. The School of Education in Birmingham University, now includes the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (set up in 2012). Their aim is 'to promote, build and strengthen character virtues in the contexts of the family, school, community, university, professions, voluntary organisations and the wider workplace.'[536] The centre is home to over twenty academics, many of whom have impressive reputations in the field. The following discussion will provide a brief overview of this field, seeking to show how Proverbs fits into this area of thought, and puts a name to some of what Proverbs is doing. This comparative exercise will hope to add to the argument that Proverbs is a work of significant pedagogical calibre and should be taken seriously as a pedagogical text.

10.2.2 From Socrates to Aristotle

Virtue Education, as for Virtue Ethics, is rooted in the thought of the Ancient Greek philosophers, beginning with Socrates, the father of Western philosophy. Michael Fox has

[536] http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/355/about.

written at length on the 'Socratic quality of [Proverbs'] epistemology and ethics.'[537] He takes each of the three great Socratic principles:

1. Virtue is knowledge.
2. No one does wrong willingly.
3. All virtues are one.

Fox then shows where he finds these in Proverbs. His observation of the similarity of Proverbs' conflation of wisdom and righteousness (e.g. Proverbs 1:2-3, 1:7, 2:1-10) with the idea that 'virtue is knowledge' is compelling, as is his claim that Proverbs' approach to the all-encompassing nature of wisdom has resonances with the idea that 'all virtues are one'. However, his support for finding the idea that 'no one does wrong willingly' within Proverbs is much less compelling and I would argue that, in actual fact, Proverbs has a clear belief in the opposite principle, i.e. that humanity will often and knowingly choose to walk down the wrong path.[538] As Ansberry suggests, Proverbs is actually programmatically attempting to persuade its listeners of the folly of this choice and the wisdom and desirability of the right path. Whilst it may be justifiable, therefore, to claim some overlap with Socratic principles within Proverbs, it seems to be claiming too much to argue that the collection has a Socratic quality.[539]

Socrates' successor, Plato, similarly, had a strong emphasis on education and believed in the development of virtue. Whilst it was the curriculum of education that dominates his writing about education, he also states his view that one of the primary objects of education was to '…teach us to love what is good.' (Plato, *The Republic*, [tr. Lee] 165). Of critical importance for Plato was the idea that people should become naturally disposed to virtue through the association of the virtuous and the pleasant. In his work, *The Laws*, his curriculum for education begins in the early years with dance and song that gives the child a subconscious association of both pleasure with what is good and pain with what is bad. For Plato this is the basis of a character with the right instincts who, once informed by reason, will make right and just decisions. His prescribed training begins with playful forms of music and song (e.g. puppet shows), yet its ultimate goal is the '...constraining and directing of youth towards that right

[537] Fox, Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs, 76.
[538] Fox, Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs, 81-84.
[539] Ansberry, What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?, 159-160.

reason, which the law affirms, and which the experience of the eldest and best has agreed to be truly right.' In order to do this the form and content of the songs in these early years must reinforce the central idea that '...the life which the Gods deemed to be happiest is also the best...' (Plato, *The Laws*, [tr. Benjamin Jowett] 2890–2905). This idea resonates more strongly with the approach of Proverbs, however there is still a belief in the Socratic idea that no-one will willingly do wrong which puts Plato, as Rupert Shortt points out, a long way from the view of a human being maintained within the HB.[540] Aristotle (Plato's student), on the other hand, provides a much more appropriate conversation partner for Proverbs. Shortt notes that:

> According to Aristotle (whose perspective connects with important strands of Scripture), the mind is not a separate entity mysteriously harnessed to the body, but the particular manner in which a given animal interfaces with the general environment.[541]

This fully embodied perspective shares much more in common with the Hebrew understanding of being and therefore suggests that there will be more points of pedagogical connection. It is thus the teaching of Aristotle, in whom the tradition of *Virtue Education* is properly rooted, that will now be considered.[542]

10.2.3 Aristotle's pedagogical ideas

In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* he describes the ultimate goal for humanity as the 'universal good', something he defines as *Eudaimonia* which he defines as an attitude of the soul in accordance with complete excellence or virtue. (Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics,* 1098a15) These excellences or virtues, such as courage and moderation, he defines as the intermediate on a scale between two extremes of disposition (for example rashness and excessive fearing are the extremes of the scale on which courage is intermediate). Completing these virtues are the intellectual virtues, of which φρόνησῐς (practical wisdom) and σοφία (intellectual wisdom) are foremost. Aristotle links virtue particularly closely with φρόνησῐς, explaining that whilst

[540] Rupert Shortt, *God is No Thing: Coherent Christianity*, London: Hurst and Company, 2016, 38.
[541] Shortt, *God is No Thing*, 36.
[542] Ansberry also thinks that Aristotle provides a much better conversation partner for Proverbs than Socrates. 'What Does Jerusalem have to Do with Athens?', 158.

they are not synonymous, one cannot exist in a person without the other (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book II, 1103a5).[543] As Ansberry puts it:

> For Aristotle, character and intellect are mutually dependent upon one another... …a person cannot have a single virtue of character if its operation is not regulated by practical wisdom… …a person cannot have practical wisdom if they lack the virtues of character that give virtuous activity direction.[544]

For Aristotle then, *φρόνησῐς* and *σοφία* are vital and to be sought, prized and cherished. Attaining these virtues, and their related dispositions towards the virtues of character, is the goal of education. It is these terms and these ideals that act for two of the key opening virtues in the prologue of Proverbs, חָכְמָה and בִּינָה. and מוּסָר. *σοφία* is used by the Septuagint to translate and בִּינָה is normally *φρόνησῐς*,[545] Whilst it is not clear that חָכְמָה means 'intellectual accomplishment' (as in Aristotle), it stands a little separate and above the other wisdom words, as does *σοφία*, but it also incorporates many of the practical and applied dimensions of discernment and perception that would normally by incorporated under Greek *φρόνησῐς.* It is therefore perhaps best to understand the Hebrew concept of חָכְמָה as incorporating something of both *σοφία* and *φρόνησῐς* as they are understood by Aristotle.

Aristotle believes that there are three components to the attainment of virtue: nature, habit, and reason (Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 1332a-b). Whilst nature is the fixed state in which one is born the others are the concern of education, *παιδεία*. מוּסָר, (as discussed in 2.3.3) is uniformly translated as *παιδεία* and, whilst this does not do justice to the underlying concept in full (it is hard to imagine *παιδεία* being described as an end in itself as מוּסָר is in the prologue) it shows, broadly, how the key pedagogical concepts of Proverbs map onto Aristotelian thought.

φρόνησῐς and *σοφία* are examples of the intellectual virtues and, Aristotle believes, must be cultivated primarily through the application of reason. Before this can be done, however, the

[543] This observation is also noted by Lyu (*Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 55) when he notes the central role of phronesis throughout virtue ethics.
[544] Ansberry, 'What Does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?', 159.
[545] It should be remembered that the Septuagint understanding of these words may not have been exactly those of Aristotle, but this is not, for the purposes of this argument, relevant. *φρόνησῐς* is not only used to translate בִּינָה but for a range of other terms related to wisdom, perception and understanding, suggesting it is broader than *σοφία*.

foundations must be laid and the virtues of character (such as justice and courage) developed through habit:

> It is through acting as we do in our dealings with human beings that some of us become just and others unjust, and through acting as we do in frightening situations, and through becoming habituated to fearing or being confident, that some of us become courageous and some of us cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and good-tempered, others self-indulgent and irascible, by behaving in one way or the other in the appropriate circumstances. Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103b1)

This habituation, most importantly, cultivates an ongoing and settled habit or disposition; as a person becomes used to excellence, they grow to love what is excellent, develop a habit of excellence and become disposed towards excellence. This, in turn, will allow them to receive teaching and add to their character, in time, φρόνησῐς and σοφία. To do that, from a young age, '…the soul of the student must first have been cultivated by means of habits for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth which is to nourish the seed.' (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1179b.2).

The details of exactly what Aristotle thought this programme might look like are not obvious in his surviving works. He wrote a treatise: *On Education,* (παιδεία), but only fragments survive and in the rest of his works the specifics of this pedagogy are not developed. He makes some comment in the *Ethics* about the way habituation is best achieved: through good laws, oriented towards 'upbringing and patterns of behaviour', naming the family as the best context for these laws and this habituation (in the absence of a communal will to litigate at this level) (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1179b.2). However, the most extended passage involving the specifics of habituation, is found in his discussion of music in section 8 of the *Politics*. Here Aristotle contemplates the educational value of music and finds it to be of great value in educating the dispositions.

> And since it is the case that music is one of the things that give pleasure, and that virtue has to do with feeling delight and love and hatred rightly, there is obviously nothing that it is more needful to learn and become habituated to than to judge correctly and to delight in virtuous

> characters and noble actions; but rhythms and melodies contain representations of anger and mildness, and also of courage and temperance and all their opposites and the other moral qualities, that most closely correspond to the true natures of these qualities (and this is clear from the facts of what occurs—when we listen to such representations we change in our soul); and habituation in feeling pain and delight at representations of reality is close to feeling them towards actual reality. (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1340a5 [Rackham]])

Here, Aristotle, though quite close to Plato's idea of associating the virtues with the pleasure of music, sees music as something pedagogically more sophisticated that cultivates a habit of right feeling through rhythm and melody.

This is an interesting 'worked example' of habituation, for it shows that Aristotle had an expansive picture of what form this pedagogical principle might take. In this example, to develop a disposition towards courage, does not require that the learner put themselves into a terrifying situation and overcome it courageously. Instead they can use an art form to simulate, and so to develop, the virtue of courage. If Aristotle allows that music has pedagogical merit, it is not hard to imagine him also commending the use of poetry, song, and story as methods of habituation, indeed, in the *Poetics* Aristotle introduces poetry by comparing it to music and dancing as regards its power to imitate (and therefore shape) character, emotion and action. (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447a)

Aristotle, it seems, has a commitment to the arts as forms of expression with power to move the emotions and to imitate reality. It does not seem wildly speculative therefore to assume that, when Aristotle talks of habituation, he envisages not simply the repetition of the acts themselves, but also immersion in their imitations showing that he has a commitment to the power of form in education. This also resonates with what has been observed in Proverbs in the exegesis above. This is, in fact, the underlying premise of the conceptual framework of inherent מוּסָר: the proverbs that have been studied employ a whole array of literary and poetic devices towards rhetorical ends, seeking to form, regulate – habituate – the dispositions of the reader. Ansberry articulates a similar point (though limiting it, perhaps unnecessarily, to the literary tool of repetition) when he notes that:

> The repetitions within Proverbs indicate that moral virtue is acquired through practice and imitation. Through imitation, the agent acquires a virtuous disposition by performing actions similar to those with virtue.[546]

He also directs the reader to Proverbs 13:20 which demonstrates Proverbs' belief in the power of imitation and repetition for good and ill:

> Walk with the wise and be wise, befriend a fool and fall.

Habituation is, however, only one part of education. A disposition towards the intellectual virtues, including wisdom itself, are cultivated, finally, through reason which Aristotle discusses primarily under the heading of dialectic. However, of most interest to this thesis is Aristotle's theory of rhetoric. He argues that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic: the means by which a person is persuaded of the reasonableness of one thing over another. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1354a). This view is in contrast to both Socrates and Plato (who see rhetoric and dialectic as occupying opposing ends of a spectrum) and arises from his belief that rhetoric is not devoid of logic but is persuasion coupled with logic.[547] His full ideas about rhetoric are found primarily in his treatise *Rhetoric* in which he explains what rhetoric is, what it is normally used for, how it works and what it aims towards and argues from.

Aristotle believes that 'rhetoric is useful because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites' (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a), by which he means that Rhetoric is rooted in comparison and that through that comparison what is best will become clear. Each of the components of Aristotelian rhetoric (*logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*) is directed at persuading the listener that the outcome of one course of action is more desirable than another, acknowledging that effective persuasion (through good rhetoric) is achieved when a person is moved at both an emotional *and* rational level.

Aristotle then summarises the desirable outcomes of task of rhetoric and habituation as the end towards which all people are striving – for him this is *eudaimonia* – which he expands here as follows:

> Let us then define happiness as well-being combined with virtue, or independence of life, or the life that is most agreeable combined with security, or abundance of possessions and slaves, combined with power to protect and make use of them; for nearly all men admit that one or more of these things constitutes happiness. If, then, such is the nature of happiness, its component parts must

[546] Ansberry, What has Jerusalem to do with Athens? 166.
[547] Sally Raphael, 'Rhetoric, Dialectic and Syllogistic Argument: Aristotle's Position in "Rhetoric" I-II', in *Phronesis*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1974): 153-167, 162.

> necessarily be: noble birth, numerous friends, good friends, wealth, good children, numerous children, a good old age; further, bodily excellences, such as health, beauty, strength, stature, fitness for athletic contests, a good reputation, honour, good luck, virtue. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* 1360b5)

These component parts of *Eudaimonia* are the premises from which, Aristotle believes, a rhetorician should argue and, whilst Proverbs would outline a different set of premises – life (8:35), land (2:21), length of days (3:2), to name a few - a similar cluster of blessings can be posited which Proverbs uses in its persuasive arsenal.

Aristotle also considers the importance of the *form* of rhetoric for its persuasive power, beginning by highlighting the importance and usage of metaphor: 'It is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity…'. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1405a). He comments on the power of heightened language and has an interesting section on the form of diction in which rhetorical prose is delivered, noting that it should be '…rhythmical, but not metrical, otherwise it will be a poem. Nor must this rhythm be rigorously carried out but only up to a certain point.' (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1408b)

Similarly, interesting is Aristotle's section on antithesis where, after quoting some examples, such as 'For some of them perished miserably, others saved themselves disgracefully,' he explains that:

> All these passages are examples of antithesis. This kind of style is pleasing, because contraries are easily understood and even more so when placed side by side, and also because antithesis resembles a syllogism; for refutation is a bringing together of contraries. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1428a)

Again, there are resonances here with the way in which Proverbs presents its arguments (Aristotle's description here sounds, in fact, very much like parallelism) and seeks to persuade and to shape a person's character towards wisdom and virtue.

In summary, there are significant overlaps between the pedagogical approach and educational aims outlined by Aristotle to those found in Proverbs. His commitment to habituation and the cultivation of the dispositions resonates with Proverbs' holistic approach to education, whilst his focus on *phronesis* is affirmed by the Proverbial understanding of the fundamentally applied nature of wisdom. Aristotle's commitment to the power of form, likewise, fits with Proverbs' emphasis on and use of poetic and literary form.

However, it must be remembered that the two systems of thought remain poles apart in several areas. First, the understanding of virtue within Proverbs is very different to Aristotelian virtue. As Ansberry observes, Proverbs' system of virtue seems more comprehensive than that of Aristotle (who identifies six intermediates dispositions):

> While Aristotle provides a general guide to moral character, Proverbs presents an extensive description of moral virtue through graphic vignettes that illuminate the various dimensions of the wise life.[548]

Second, a theological framework, so key to Proverbs, is absent in Aristotle. Again, Ansberry summarises it well when he writes:

> The theological orientation of Proverb's moral vision stands in stark contrast to Aristotle's anthropocentric ethic. It represents the fundamental difference between sapiential ethics and Greek ethical theory.[549]

[548] Ansberry, What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?, 168.
[549] Ansberry, What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?, 170.

10.3 Virtue Education beyond Aristotle

Before considering other points of contact between Proverbs and Virtue Education, I will briefly sketch out the subsequent developments of thought from key thinkers in this area of pedagogical theory.

The tradition of Virtue Education according to Aristotelian principles remained relatively unaltered for almost two millennia but things began to change with the advent of the Enlightenment. John Locke (1632-1704), the 'father of British Empiricism', did not agree with Aristotle's teleological view of virtue but, rather, a key component of his philosophy was the absence of innate knowledge: '…ideas and notions are no more born with us than Arts and Sciences.'[550] He believed there are no inherent concepts of virtue, rather they have to be constructed by and imparted to each person through reason. He understood the mind as a *tabula rasa* (blank tablet)[551] and believed that the job of education was to inscribe this correctly. With regards to pedagogy, he produced a book that set out what this might look like in practice called: *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which was one of the most widely translated and read works on education in the 18th century. Despite his differing philosophical commitments, this work demonstrates that the application of his philosophy to educational theory maintained much in common with Aristotle's key pedagogical commitments. In particular, alongside reason, Locke, like Aristotle, sees habituation as central to the educational task of inscribing the person with inner virtue:

> Every man must some time or other be trusted to himself and his own conduct; and he that is a good, a virtuous, and able man, must be made so within. And therefore, what he is to receive from education, what is to sway and influence his life, must be something put into him betimes; habits woven into the very principles of his nature…[552]

[550] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Peter H. Nidditch (ed.). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, 99.
[551] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 104.
[552] Though, for Locke, there is a limit to the power of habit so that he sees self-mastery in the face of competing desires as more important. He also believes that reason should be introduced much earlier than Aristotle and that this, not simply habit, is what will make someone virtuous. John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. Charles William Elliot. New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1914. Sections 38 and 42.

> The great business of all is virtue and wisdom: Nullum numen abest si sit Prudentia. Teach him to get a mastery over his inclinations, and submit his appetite to reason. This being obtained, and by constant practice settled into habit, the hardest part of the task is over.[553]

There is no doubt that Locke's work was influential in causing a shift in the focus of education during the Enlightenment, away from virtue as a natural law, towards virtue as apprehended (even constructed) only through reason. This idea then came to fruition in the work of Immanuel Kant who was influenced by the work of Locke. Central to Kant's deontological understanding of morality is the concept of duty as the only motivation which gives an action moral worth. It must be properly directed, namely a commitment to acting in accord with what Kant defines as the *categorical imperative*: 'I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law.'[554] This, Kant regards as an accessible and practical imperative, able to be grasped and used by every human being which will allow a person to develop maxims for life that, if followed, will make a moral existence a reality.[555]

In contrast to Aristotle, Kant is not concerned that the appetites and desires of a person are aligned with the correct action, merely that a person wills to act in accordance with the categorical imperative and the maxims that derive from this. Kant outlines some of the implications of this philosophy for educational theory in notes published posthumously as *'On Education.'* Whilst incomplete, this work gives a sense of what Kant believed the implications of his ideas would be in the field of education. He believes in the formation of character as a vital aim of education[556] but, for Kant, reason is of absolute primacy in this task and should be at the centre of any educational practice. He believes that the world of experience and emotion cannot provide maxims of the right kind, but that they must be deduced independently of one's experience.[557] This doctrine laid the foundations for much of modern

[553] Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Section 200. The proverb in the quotation translates as: 'where there is wisdom a protecting deity is not far away.'
[554] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* translated and edited by Mary Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 15 Kant formulates the categorical imperative in two other ways within the Groundwork, but they are (essentially) a restatement of the same principle.
[555] Kant, *Groundwork,* 16.
[556] Immanuel Kant, *On Education*, translated by Annette Churton, Massachusetts: Courier Corporation, 2003, 94.
[557] Kant, *On Education*, 76.

western education, with its focus on external knowledge, reason and constructed virtue, and its move away from Virtue Education as it was classically understood.

Yet, despite these influential shifts in praxis, Virtue Education according to more Aristotelian principles has not been consigned to the history books and, indeed, has experienced something of a resurgence over the last century, and especially in the last few decades. The roots of this change can be traced towards the end of the 19th century when psychology began to emerge as a separable field of experimental and theoretical study. The theories and insights of this new field had significant implications for educational theory and, as the 20th century began, they began to be incorporated into the philosophy and practical theory of education, building on the foundations laid by Aristotle.

One of the most influential of these Philosophers of Education was John Dewey, who had a hugely significant impact on Western educational theory in the 20th century. He wrote as a philosopher, yet also integrated the insights of major 20th Century educational psychologists into his work (such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky).[558] His work is heavily influenced by Aristotle and, whilst he does not represent a complete shift back towards Aristotelian commitments, he was one of the first significant educational philosophers since the 17th century to believe that education was partly the art of observing the moral and psychological realities of the world we inhabit, rather than constructing those realities through our reason.

Education comes, Dewey believed, through the environment someone inhabits,[559] it also comes through experience,[560] and so can be summarised as an attempt to direct, control, or guide those experiences within that environment in order to achieve growth.[561] For Dewey

[558] Susan Mayer, a learning and curriculum theorist and professor at the University of Chicago, claims that the work of Dewey effectively synthesises many of the insights of both psychologists. As Mayer concludes: 'Educational theorists detract from this emerging coherence when they emphasize the difference between any two of these theorists to the near exclusion of their shared concerns.' Rather she believes that, together '...the scholarship of these three major theorists underwrites the twentieth century turn toward the study of the ways and means of human intelligence as a basis for pedagogical forms and acculturation of a critical human sensibility as the defining goal of a free and fair educational system'. Susan Mayer, 'Dewey's Dynamic Integration of Vygotsky and Piaget' in *Educational Psychology Reader: The Art and Science of How People Learn*, Greg S. Goodman (ed.), 107-121 New York; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010, 114.

[559] Dewey defines the environment for this purpose as 'the sum total of conditions which are concerned in the execution of the activity of a living being.' John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: Free Press, 1916, 22.

[560] John Dewey, *Experience and Education: The Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997 (originally published 1938), 25.

[561] Dewey, *Democracy and Educatio*n, 23–25.

the value and effectiveness of an education can be reduced to an evaluation of the extent to which it creates a *desire* for continued growth and supplies the means for making the desire effective (in the same way as one would evaluate a nutritional programme for children).[562]

Dewey sees two things as central to this desire or motivation: interest (self-interest) and discipline (primarily taken to mean self-discipline, although it extends to include an externally imposed discipline). For Dewey, self-interest is the most important factor in motivating a learner. This will lead to self-discipline and will result from externally imposed discipline (carefully used). Cultivation of this self-interest is a primary target for any educational strategy or method.[563] One can immediately see a point of contact with the pedagogical approach of Proverbs, both in the advocation of externally imposed discipline (Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 29:15) but also in the development of self-interest and the encouragement of self-discipline. As can be seen in the exegesis above, Proverbs has a tendency towards vivid and striking polarisations in which the path of wisdom leads unerringly to all that is good whilst the path of folly leads in the opposite direction. This polarisation could arguably be said to be designed to engage the self-interest of the listener as they choose which path they are going to opt for (e.g. Proverbs 15:6: 'The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings ruin.'), indicating Proverbs' intuitive understanding of one of Dewey's important pedagogical principles.

Dewey's ideas, which overlap with some of Aristotle's foundational ideas and have resonances in Proverbs, mark the beginning of the resurgence of interest in Aristotle's approach to virtue and education.

[562] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 53.
[563] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 125-133.

10.4 Virtue Education and Proverbs: the emotions

One central tenet of Aristotle's pedagogy which has experienced this resurgence, and which has relevance for Proverbs, is that of the importance of the emotions in cultivating character. For example, David Carr (Professor Emeritus at the School of Education, University of Edinburgh) co-edited a collection of essays exploring the link between virtue ethics and its application in virtue education. In this collection the significance of shaping character through the emotions is repeatedly emphasized by several contributors. Firstly, Nicholas Dent highlights the importance of the emotions in education in his essay Virtue, Eudaimonia and Teleological Ethics: 'Virtues are rooted in emotions… Our emotions disclose our concern with, our tie to, something we feel to be good, important or significant to us.'[564] Nancy Sherman, makes a similar point in her essay Character Development: '…virtue education is, in no small part, education of the emotions. To teach virtue requires that we take seriously the idea that we can become (to a greater degree than we often imagine) 'agents' of our emotional lives'.[565] Joseph Dunne, writing on the idea of φρόνησῐς in Aristotle, observes that:

> If the object of *phronesis* then, is the good, the soul of the *phronimos* must be somehow attuned or predisposed to this good. It is through the ordering of appetition or desires that one is thus predisposed; and so desire must follow the same things that reasoning asserts.[566]

Writing separately in *Aristotle, Emotions and Education*, Kristján Kristjánsson believes that we can talk about an 'Aristotelian turn' in moral education which has a common distinctive of 'deeply *embodied* and *embedded* moral personhood,' and in which understanding and cultivating the emotions and dispositions plays a central role.[567]

These writers (and others like them) are returning to Aristotelian principles to address the excesses of the rationalistic approach to education. They are reacting, from the standpoint of educationalists, to what Mary Midgely sees as the 'residual dualism' of a post-Cartesian mindset which divorces mind and matter, instead recognising with Midgley that: 'Heart and mind are not enemies or alternative tools. They are complementary aspects of a single

[564] Nicholas Dent, 'Virtue, Eudaimonia and Teleological Ethics' in *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*, David Carr and Jan Steutel (eds.), New York: Routledge, 2014, 21.
[565] Nancy Sherman, 'Character Development' in *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*, 33–48, 34.
[566] Joseph Dunne, 'Virtue, Phronesis and Learning' in *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*, 49–66, 55.
[567] Kristján Kristjánsson, *Aristotle, Emotions, and Education*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007, 3.

process.'[568] In doing so, they are affirming that rhetoric (as per Aristotle) is likely to be an effective component of reasoning and of education since emotions *as well as* the rational mind are the target of rhetoric. This certainly resonates with the approach of Proverbs. As has been demonstrated above, Proverbs has an integrated and embodied view of the human being, believing each aspect of a person to be of significance when it comes to education. It takes seriously the use of different literary, poetic, and rhetorical methods to influence the emotions through the pedagogical concept of מוּסָר in its inherent and advocated forms, it seeks to shape desire. As Lyu observes:

> Moral instruction is in essence a process of persuasion and, to put it bluntly, a form of seduction… …Proverbs instructs that the reader should learn and become wise and righteous. To reach that goal, the learner is expected to go through the reshaping of his inner person. His desires, hopes and disposition must be reconditioned to reflect the ideal.[569]

This is one of the aims of the מוּסָר of Proverbs: to draw the reader into an external and internal regulation, or disciplining, of their emotions and desires. This aim can be seen explicitly in, for example, Proverbs 4:4 and 4:8 where the son is instructed to 'love' and 'prize' wisdom, or in Proverbs 6:22 when he is told to 'not desire' the beauty of the adulteress, but it can also be seen as the implicit target at which the devices of internal מוּסָר are deployed מוּסָר.

This is a form of pedagogy we might want to call (turning to the work of Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*) an *aesthetic* pedagogy. Johnson's great concern, in his attempt to challenge 'our inherited mind/body dualism', is to propose an alternative to the 'disembodied view of meaning' which normally operates.[570] Johnson recognises that: 'Emotion and feeling lie at the heart of our capacity to experience meaning';[571] going on to demonstrate compellingly, through engagement with cognitive neuroscience, philosophy, and the theory of metaphor (in which he first received critical acclaim with *Metaphors we Live By*) the significance of our emotions in cognition, action, and meaning-making and leading him to bring 'aesthetics into the centre of human meaning.' For Johnson, the idea of aesthetics is not

[568] Mary Midgely, *The Myths We Live By*, London: Routledge, 2003, 105.
[569] Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 62 (quoting Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 348) and 64.
[570] Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007, 7.
[571] Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, 53.

just related to art theory but 'the study of how humans make and experience meaning.'[572] Applying this to poetry, he asserts that poetry constructs meaning using 'images, metaphor, image schema, felt qualities, rhythm, meter, pitch contours and other devices to construct a rich, moving experience' but that 'the dimensions of meaning in poetry are the very same ones that underlie *all* our thought and symbolic interaction'.[573] This very immanent, embodied meaning, rejected by most philosophers is, he argues, in actuality an exemplar of meaning creation.[574]

James K. A. Smith, in *Imagining the Kingdom,* draws on Johnson's work, *Meaning of the Body,* to argue in favour of this idea of the aesthetics of human understanding because, he believes, 'the modes of inference and meaning-making that characterize our embodied being-in-the-world operate according to a "logic" that is more akin to understanding a story than solving an algebra problem.' This leads him to make the following statement which articulates nicely one of the pedagogical principles that, I have argued, has been observed within Proverbs:

> While my actions and behaviour are, in a sense, "pulled" out of me because of my passional orientation to some *telos* – some vision of the good life and what it means to be human – my love and my longing for that "good life" is itself a signal that I conceive that "kingdom" as something that attracts me. So, in some sense, imagination precedes desire. My longings are not simply "chosen" by me… …I don't wake up on a Monday morning and say, "From now on, I am going to long for X." We don't choose desires; they are *birthed* in us. They are formed in us as habits.[575]

This expresses both the significance of emotion and the shaping thereof which directs behaviour (as discussed above). As per William Brown: 'Forming character and growth in wisdom, in other words, have all to do with emotional learning.' [576] This is something that Proverbs clearly understands and is oriented towards. Whilst it is never articulated in these terms, my exegesis suggests that Proverbs instinctively understands this principle.

[572] Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, 209. The full argument which leads him to this point builds from p.53 right through to p.209 and, whilst too detailed to be summarised here, is very helpful.
[573] Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, 221-222.
[574] Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, 234.
[575] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013, 125.
[576] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 9-10.

10.5 Virtue Education and Proverbs: forming habits

James Smith, talking about desire (see above), suggests that these desires are 'formed through habit.'[577] This is another key Aristotelian pedagogical principle which has experienced renewed interest in recent years.

Simply stated, the Aristotelian principle of habituation is that one 'becomes just by doing just actions.' (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103b1). This idea of habituation is out of fashion in much current educational theory and practice, but it was historically important and, right through to the empiricism of John Locke, the importance of habituation was assumed.[578] With the advent of a more rationalist approach, because reason did not appear to be requisite to the practice, habituation, slowly became seen as flawed: mindless repetition.

However, the idea of habituation has experienced a revival along with Virtue Education more generally, and some commentators believe that current understanding of habituation misses an important cognitive aspect present within it that was understood, even as early as Aristotle. Reflecting on the relationship of habituation to philosophy (and reason) in Aristotle, Joel Kupperman writes:

> The foundation [of virtue], in childhood and presumably in early adolescence, requires good habits (NE 1103a). The student who does not tend to follow passions and is ready to reflect on his or her life, and to think seriously about good and bad, right and wrong, already is a certain kind of person (NE 1095a). Aristotle, I think clearly agrees with Plato that real goodness (at a high standard) requires philosophy as well as habit; yet the philosophical instruction, he insists, will be useless or inappropriate if the foundation has not been laid properly.[579]

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[577] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 125.

[578] Discussing the faults of an excessive focus on memorisation and rules, Locke writes: 'And here give me leave to take notice of one thing I think a fault in the ordinary method of education; and that is, the charging of children's memories, upon all occasions, with rules and precepts, which they often do not understand, and constantly as soon forget as given. It be some action you would have done, or done otherwise, whenever they forget, or do it awkwardly, make them do it over and over again, 'till they are perfect, whereby you will get these two advantages. First, to see whether it be an action they can do, or is fit to be expected of them… Secondly, another thing got by it will be this, that by repeating the same action 'till it be grown habitual in them, the performance will not depend on memory or reflection, the concomitant of prudence and age, and not of childhood, but will be natural in them.' *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 64.

[579] Joel Kupperman, 'Virtue, Character and Moral Disposition' in *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*, 199–209, 204.

Ben Spiecker, who writes here with reference to recent studies in early years development and the child-parent relationship, goes further:

> …following recent readings of Aristotle, we may conclude that moral training and habituation in early childhood have a distinct cognitive dimension: the acquisition of multi-track habits or habit virtues is not just preparatory to the development of moral reflection and deliberation but crucially constitutive of it.[580]

Precisely how to begin and maintain these habits is a question that Aristotle did not consider much in his extant works. However, one idea that seems common to recent theories on this topic, is that the habituated self must first be a *regulated* self (both by external and internal means). There is almost always an acceptance that habituation into virtuous dispositions doesn't just happen but requires, first and foremost, the right external regulation and restraints, as David Carr puts it:

> Only through the practical guidance of parents and other mentors in a particular context of moral evaluation, the cultivation of some affections, inclinations and sensibilities and the extinction of others, can a young person be put firmly on the road to a live appreciation of the long term lessons of practical wisdom: to a love of one's noblest instincts because they are noble, and to unswerving rejection of one's baser instincts because they are base. [581]

Writing on the formation of moral character in adolescence (drawing on a number of empirical social scientific studies), William Damon similarly emphasizes the crucial role of strong and clear external input, noting that:

> Only when there is at least a minimal level of moral coherence in a child-rearing community (a condition I have called an implicit "youth charter") is there a high likelihood that children who grow up there will form strong moral identities. This is not to say it is impossible for a child to

[580] Ben Spiecker, 'Habituation and Training' in *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*, 210-224, 210. He locates this habituation as being most significant during early years in the context of parental relationships: 'because of the mutually-encompassing character of this relationship, the training of habits of affectivity and conduct is often connected with reasons, affections and emotions the child could (or should) have had. Thus, the young child is often 'instructed' or 'invited' to have feelings of relief, joy and compassion, and parental projection of justifying reasons looks forward to the conversion of such responses into (future) multi-track habits. In sum, early moral training and habituation takes place within a framework of parental support generally characterized by contra-factual anticipation of rationality, affectivity and intentionality.' p.214.

[581] David Carr, 'Virtue, Akrasia and Moral Weakness, in *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*, 150.

> ever find moral coherence on his or her own, but rather that it is far more likely when the child receives consistent guidance.[582]

In other words, the formation of habit cannot simply be left to the student but must be encouraged by the teacher and the community and, where necessary, enforced by an appropriate disciplinary structure.

There is, secondly, an acknowledgement that virtuous habits will require a high level of internal regulation and willpower, closing a loop with emotional training and the cultivation of the dispositions, as Nancy Sherman writes:

> Aristotle assumes that emotions are within our dominion, though does not explicitly instruct us about how we take charge. His general remarks on habituation are well known. We become just by doing just actions, we become generous through generous deeds. As I have argued elsewhere, the plea is not for mindless repetition of behavior, but for critical practice that develops the cognitive skills constitutive of choice-making and action.[583]

Sherman is describing a fundamentally embodied pedagogy in which emotions are the precursor to action and thus controlled and virtuous action is the natural expression of reflective and regulated emotion which is, in turn, established through cognitive discipline and regulated and repeated action (habit). Lyu arrives at a similar conclusion, noting that:

> Proverbs tells its readers that cultivating a righteous character is a long and difficult process… …In short, one gets closer to being righteous by doing what is righteous… …as a virtue it can be acquired only through continuous praxis, aided by practical wisdom.[584]

This is habituation as Aristotle understands it but, as was shown above, whilst this is certainly a result of repeated praxis, it can also be the result of repeated immersion in forms which mimic the act: poetry, proverbs, music etc. This is certainly something that Anne Stewart finds to be true in Proverbs and is, I believe, compelling.[585] It corresponds to the aesthetic pedagogy that I outlined above and is observed in the HB by, for example, Karl Berge, who finds in Hosea the same phenomenon, explaining that: 'The kind of communication involved in this understanding of pedagogy is not one of transport of information; rather it is of an open and

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[582] William Damon, 'Setting the Stage for the Development of Wisdom: Self-Understanding and Moral Identity During Adolescence' in *Understanding Wisdom: Sources & Science Spiritual Principles*, Warren S. Brown (ed.), 340–60. Pennsylvania: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000, 355.
[583] Nancy Sherman, 'Wise Emotions', in *Understanding Wisdom*, 219–37, 220.
[584] Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 74.
[585] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 78.

generative character'.[586] Whilst not naming it aesthetic pedagogy, the same concept is observed in Hebrew Poetry by Lowth who, in his famous lectures, makes a similar link between the power of form and both the directing of emotion *and* the formation of habits:

> …it is the peculiar function of poetry… to cherish and enliven the embers of virtue… …it forms the mind to habits of rectitude by its precepts, directs it by example, excites and animates it by its peculiar force [and] has the distinguished honour of distributing to virtue the most ample and desirable rewards of its labours.[587]

He continues by observing how this aligns with Aristotle's commitment to the 'tragic Muse' and to the form of poetry as the true and perfect imitation and thus an important tool for education, pointing towards the conclusions of this thesis over 200 years ago.[588] This power of form to create habit is the same thing observed by James Smith, as he develops his thoughts on habit and the way in which they are formed by the forms and rituals – the unseen pedagogies - of our culture. He explains that habit '…is acquired, is learned, by incarnate pedagogies that in oblique, allusive, cunning ways work on the body and thus orient the whole person.'[589] The poetry and literary craft of Proverbs, I am arguing, is one such pedagogy, working not on the body but on the mind with the same ends and to the same effect to 'orient the whole person'[590] through its aesthetic approach.

In essence therefore, both the shaping of desire and the formation of habit, according to this scheme, can be achieved by the מוּסָר of Proverbs. To return to Robert Lowth as he articulates this conclusion in inimitable style:

> From Philosophy a few cold precepts may be deduced; in history some dull and spiritless examples of manners may be found: here we have the energetic voice of virtue herself, here we behold her animated form. Poetry addresses her precepts not to reason alone, she calls the passions to her aid: she not only exhibits examples, but infixes them in the mind. She softens

[586] Karl Berge, 'Divine and Human Wisdom in the book of Hosea: A Pedagogical Perspective' in *Poets, Prophets and Texts in Play,* Ben Zvi and Claudia Camp (eds.), 19-37, London: T&T Clark, 2015, 32.
[587] Lowth, *Lectures*, 25. It should be noted that, whilst Lowth describes the poetry of Proverbs 1-9 as 'varied, elegant, sublime and truly poetical', but characterises chapters 10-31 as having 'little in them of the sublime or poetical, except a certain energetic and concise turn of expression.' (*Lectures,* 270). Clearly, I believe Lowth to be mistaken on his view of Proverbs 10-31 and would classify it as having poetical merit, if not in the same league as Proverbs 1-9, at least as worthy of including wholeheartedly in that category.
[588] Lowth, *Lectures*, 11, 13.
[589] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 98.
[590] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 98.

> the wax with her peculiar ardour, and renders it more plastic to the artist's hand… …the poet teaches not by maxims and precepts, and in dull, sententious form; but by the harmony of verse, by the beauty of imagery, by the ingenuity of the fable, by the exactness of imitation, he allures and interests the mind of the reader, he fashions it to the habits of virtue, and in a manner informs it with the spirit of integrity itself.[591]

As Lowth so beautifully puts it, poetry 'calls the passions to her aid' and fashions the mind of the reader 'to the habits of virtue.' This is the distinctive pedagogy of Proverbs, the aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר.

[591] Lowth, *Lectures*, 10.

10.6 Summary

As can be seen from the survey above, despite significant moves away from Virtue Education, especially in mainstream, Western education, there remains a long and thriving tradition of pedagogical theory, rooted in Aristotelian thought, that has aims and methods very similar to those of Proverbs and to which Proverbs may usefully be compared. The exegesis of this thesis, when held alongside the survey above, demonstrates methodological ways in which Proverbs' pedagogy shares common ground with the theories of others within this area of thought. Proverbs is a collection which seeks to persuade, a rhetorical text that targets the rational mind, but recognising the integration of the human being, also seeks to shape the emotions of its student. It also recognises the importance of forming habits and approaches the student with a worldview in which character is expressed in terms of habitual action so that one can talk of the 'wise' and the 'fool', the 'righteous' and the 'wicked.' This persuasion and this habituation are advocated by the text but, most importantly, are also *performed by* the text through its inherent מוּסָר. This pedagogical approach I have termed an 'aesthetic pedagogy' or, to bring together this idea with the exegetical framework of the thesis, the aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר. As has been seen, the devices of this מוּסָר are many and varied and have been helpfully analysed using literary and rhetorical frameworks. However, in the final analysis, Proverbs operates at a level which cannot and should not be reduced to 'cold precepts' (as Lowth would have it) but, as an aesthetic text, remains always just beyond the confines of language. The text clearly shares a commitment to two of the key areas of concern within Virtue Education: the regulation and shaping of emotion (or desire), and the regulation and formation of virtuous habits. Proverbs offers an approach to these areas which stands in continuity with this tradition but in its own voice, with its own distinctive style.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

11.1 The aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר

The aim of this thesis has been to show *how* Proverbs aims to teach for wisdom and, in so doing, to further substantiate the argument that Proverbs is an educational collection of pedagogical merit, and to provide a stimulus for reflection when considering the more philosophical question: Can wisdom be taught? In Proverbs, I have argued, can be found a rich and fascinating approach to educating for wisdom and, more broadly, character, which displays a remarkable understanding of the integrated nature of the human self in its pedagogical approach, and which should take its place alongside other educational theories within the field of Virtue Education.

I have been looking, not for an articulated pedagogical 'system' but for a set of pedagogical principles and methods - unarticulated, instinctive and possibly incomplete - but woven unmistakeably – 'embedded' - into the text. Whilst a number scholars have already written about the pedagogical approach and educational themes of Proverbs, I began by showing that there was, nonetheless, still more work to be done to construct a fuller picture of Proverbs' educational approach. In this thesis, building on the work of Michael Fox and Anne Stewart (among many others), I adopted a new analytical framework of *inherent* מוּסָר and *advocated* מוּסָר to build a picture of Proverbs' educational tools which, when held alongside wider educational theory, allowed me to define Proverbs approach as the aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר. I showed how, together, the component devices of inherent and advocated מוּסָר, employed by Proverbs, endeavour to educate - to create meaning, to shape desire and to habituate - aesthetically, shaping the desires, thoughts and habits of the student according to these aesthetic patterns.

This is an approach which instinctively asserts that effective education does not operate using a mind/body dualism, as Alfred Whitehead puts it:

> [The] overhaste to impart mere knowledge defeats itself. The human mind rejects knowledge imparted in this way. The craving for expansion, for activity, inherent in youth is disgusted by a dry imposition of disciplined knowledge.[592]

Proverbs (along with much of the HB) appears to resonate with this integrated view of teaching that Whitehead believes is necessary for an effective education, and to have devised a pedagogical method in keeping with this conviction.

The overall aim of this education is summarised in the prologue where the student is encouraged to pursue wisdom and מוּסָר, beginning with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:2, 1:7). However, as has been seen, the wisdom that Proverbs seeks to convey is not an intellectual or abstract quality, but a fundamentally practical and applied one: perhaps closer to *φρόνησῐς* than *σοφία*. In the prologue, it is seen to include both ethical virtues (righteousness, justice, equity), pragmatic qualities (the 'instruction of success' and cunning), and religious ones (the Fear of the Lord), a combination found throughout the exegesis, particularly in the sections considered from Proverbs 1-9. Proverbs aesthetic approach does not mean that it is without substance, rather it is practically orientated towards outcomes – towards the behaviour that characterises the righteous wise, the composite figure who emerges from the pages of the collection, walking the path of wisdom and virtue towards life. The student is encouraged towards this path *through* the aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר, as it is made the desirable and rational choice, in contrast to the opposite path; that trodden by the wicked fool, into folly and towards death. It is a 'polyphonic' text,[593] creating wisdom-forming tensions in the mind of the hearer, through complex structural, poetic and literary features. This *aesthetic* pedagogy of מוּסָר is the reason why Proverbs envisages itself as a resource for the ongoing journey towards wisdom; teaching and equipping to teach, according to its own pedagogy, those at various points on the journey.

When Proverbs was considered alongside some of the insights of Virtue Education, the commitment to the significance of the emotions, the power of literary form, the importance

[592] Whitehead, *Aims of Education,* 32.
[593] Achim Müller, *Proverbien 1-9,* 295.

of habit, and the formation of virtuous character were all found to be shared with other voices from this field, particularly with Aristotle, placing Proverbs firmly within this area of thought and demonstrating that its pedagogical approach is one that should be taken seriously, alongside these other theories. Nonetheless, Proverbs remains a distinctive text with its own specific approach and agenda which derive from Proverbs' underlying commitments. It is a text rooted in a Yahwistic worldview that operates within the covenantal framework of the wider HB. This distinctive commitment is demonstrated when Proverbs is read within the wider context of the HB through the frequent and significant intertextual echoes and allusions found within the collection. Thus, whilst virtue in Aristotle is a philosophical concept and the Egyptian Instructions appeal to the principles of natural order and justice, in Proverbs, virtue and order is ultimately derivative and rooted in Yahweh, the God of Israel.

11.2 Implications and direction of further research

My hope is that this thesis has added to the growing consensus that Proverbs deserves to be recognised as a rhetorically sophisticated text with a rich and coherent pedagogical approach through articulating its aesthetic pedagogy. The heuristic framework I have used of inherent and advocated מוּסָר offers an approach to analysing this pedagogy, demonstrated across the collection, thus providing a method which may fruitfully be applied to other chapters of Proverbs to draw out systematically the rhetorical devices at work

I hope, above all, that my work will give scholars and other readers of the text pause as they come to study Proverbs, not by offering an over-complicated view of structure and rhetoric, but by suggesting that individual sayings should always be read within their context and that there should be an *assumption* of placement with aesthetic, pedagogical intent. I also hope that it will encourage readers to approach Proverbs with a rhetorical and poetic mindset which *expects* to encounter aesthetic meaning within the collection. More attention to this aspect of the collection might also prompt interest in a new translation of Proverbs which endeavours to translate the collection in accord with this aesthetic intent. I have also introduced a new possible way of thinking about the relationship between Proverbs and the Instruction of Amenemope which would be worth considering in greater depth. Finally, further comparative studies with Virtue Education might make it possible to introduce Proverbs within this field of study and to give it a voice in an area where, I believe, it could make a significant contribution.

11.3 Can wisdom be taught?

As Whitehead observes, we rarely encounter the concept of educating specifically for wisdom:

> The drop from the divine wisdom, which was the goal of the ancients, to text-book knowledge of subjects, which is achieved by the moderns, marks an educational failure, sustained through the ages.[594]

Yet, wisdom is what Proverbs claims to offer in its prologue (Proverbs 1:2). Is though the attainment of wisdom the experience of the average reader of Proverbs? I suspect the answer to this question is a resounding 'no' and that most readers do not even register a noticeable increase in wisdom following their encounters with the collection. Is this because, despite the best endeavours of our teachers and pedagogical methods, wisdom is a quality which fundamentally cannot be taught? This returns me to the question in the title of the thesis: *can* wisdom be taught? To level this question more directly at Proverbs: is the aesthetic pedagogy of Proverbs one which is *effective* for teaching wisdom? Without empirical evidence from the real world of teaching students, the response to this question must, by necessity, be tentative. However, it is worth drawing attention to a couple of points coming out of this study which suggest one possible answer. Firstly, on the one hand, the self-presentation of personified Wisdom in Proverbs 8 highlights the transcendence of Wisdom. Here, Wisdom is elevated to a level of transcendence and relationship to Yahweh such that some scholars have been tempted to assert that she is being elevated to the level of a goddess (Proverbs 8:22-31).[595] If Proverbs understands wisdom as such a significant aspect of Yahweh's character, then to imply that one can impart wisdom simply through human teaching comes across as arrogant in the extreme, the answer is surely clear: wisdom *cannot* be taught. Yet, on the other hand, in the same poem Wisdom makes clear that she desires to be found and is explicit that attaining her is not out of reach (Proverbs 8:17) and, as noted above, Proverbs itself also suggests that the collection will enable wisdom to be known (ידע) (Proverbs 1:2). How is this paradox to be resolved?

[594] Whitehead, *Aims of Education*, 29. I opened my thesis with this citation.
[595] Lang, *An Israelite Goddess Redefined.*

The findings of this thesis suggest that the knowledge of wisdom promised by Proverbs does not come through a mechanistic understanding of teaching wisdom. The nature of the aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר which I have discovered within the collection is persuasive, subtle and open; it is not coercive, reductive or closed (though it extends to firm discipline when required). Could this suggest that the authors and editors of Proverbs recognised that, whilst wisdom itself cannot be taught, the conditions for wisdom making can be created? In this case, education cannot impart wisdom by itself, but it can help. The right pedagogy can create wisdom forming habits and tensions, it can kindle a desire for wisdom, and it can set its students on the path towards wisdom. This is the strategy of the aesthetic pedagogy of מוּסָר.

Can wisdom be taught? The answer to that question based on this thesis would have to be 'no, but…'. No, but longing for wisdom can be kindled and nascent wisdom fostered as the right conditions are created by the right approach to education which will direct the desires, the reason and the habits of the seeker after wisdom towards their goal.

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