

**The Wisdom of the Scribe:
A Socio-Rhetorical and Theological Interpretation
of Sirach 38:24–39:11**

Douglas J. Finbow

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology, Saint Paul University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. (Th), D. Th.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	(ii)
Abbreviations.....	(v)
INTRODUCTION	(viii)
Thesis Statement	(viii)
Contributions of this Research	(xi)
Structure of the Dissertation.....	(xiii)
 1. SCHOLARSHIP AND SIRACH 38:24–39:11:	 1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The Place of Ben Sira/Sirach in Judaism and Early Christianity	1
1.3 Pre-critical Interpretations of Sirach 38:24–39:11	4
1.4 Early Critical Interpretations of Sirach 38:24–39:11	7
1.5 Recent Studies of Ben Sira/Sirach.....	11
1.5.1 Establishing a Text.....	11
1.5.2 Ben Sira/Sirach and the Hebrew-Greek Translation of Sirach 38:24–39:11	14
1.5.3 Authorship, Date and the Nature of Jewish Second Temple Discourse	18
1.5.4 Discerning an Internal Structure in Sirach	22
1.5.5 Cultural Repertoire in Sirach	27
1.5.6 From <i>Zeitgeschichte</i> to Social Science	30
1.5.7 The Expression σοφία γραμματέως	34
1.5.8 A Scribal Ideal.....	36
1.6 Conclusions that Guide this Research.....	38
 2. A SOCIO-RHETORICAL APPROACH TO SIRACH 38:24–39:11	 42
2.1 Introduction	42
2.2 Mediterranean Rhetorical Culture during the Hellenistic Period.....	43
2.3 Establishing a Presence and Configuration of <i>Topoi</i> Using Socio-Rhetorical Analysis	49
2.3.1 Innertexture: Foregrounding the Major <i>Topoi</i> in the World of the Text.....	53
2.3.2 Intertexture: The Configuration of <i>Topoi</i> and the World Behind the Text	61
2.3.3 Ideological Texture: Rhetorical Purpose and the World Beyond the Text	63
2.3.4 Transcultural Rhetorical Criticism.....	67
2.4 Conclusion of a Socio-Rhetorical Approach.....	70
 3. INNERTEXTURE: IDENTIFYING <i>TOPOI</i>.....	 72
3.1 Introduction	72
3.2 Sirach 38:24–39:11 as a Discrete, Cohesive and Integral Rhetorical Unit	72
3.3 Repetitive/Progressive Texture and Pattern	75

3.4 Sensory–Aesthetic Texture and Pattern.....	83
3.5 Opening–Middle–Closing Texture and Pattern.....	88
3.6 Argumentative Texture and Pattern	91
3.7 Foregrounded Elements in Sirach 38:24–39:11	97
3.8 Conclusion Regarding Innertexture.....	99
4. SOCIO-CULTURAL TEXTURE AND INTERTEXTURE:	100
4.1 Introduction	100
4.2 Rhetorical Patterns Evident in Sirach 38:24–39:11	102
4.3 Socio-cultural Textures and Innertexture Associated with Σοφία and Σοφίζω	106
4.3.1 Wisdom as Cosmic and Social Order Established by the Creator	107
4.3.2 Wisdom and Skilled Work.....	113
4.3.3 Wisdom as Knowledge Passed on through Tradition	122
4.3.3.1 <i>Wisdom, tradition and νόμος ὑψίστου, “law of the Most High”</i>	126
4.3.3.2 <i>Wisdom, tradition and σοφία πάντων ἀρχαίων, “the wisdom of all the ancients”</i>	131
4.3.3.3 <i>Wisdom, tradition and προφητεῖαι, “prophecies”</i>	133
4.3.3.4 <i>Wisdom, tradition and διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν συντηρήσει</i>	135
4.3.3.5 <i>Wisdom, παραβολαὶ (parables) and παροιμίαι (proverbs)</i>	136
4.3.4 Service Among the Great and Being Seen with Rulers	139
4.3.5 Wisdom and Travels in Foreign Lands	140
4.3.6 Wisdom and the Discernment of Good and Evil (ἀγαθὰ /κακά).....	143
4.3.7 Wisdom as Piety toward the Creator.....	144
4.3.8 Wisdom and Πνεῦμα Συνέσεως	150
4.3.9 Wisdom Manifest in Παιδεία and “the Law of the Lord’s Covenant”	152
4.3.10 Conclusion of Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Associated with Σοφία and Σοφίζω.	155
4.4 Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Associated with “the one lessening πρᾶξις can become wise”	156
4.4.1 Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture of Πρᾶξις.....	157
4.4.2 A Social, Literary and Philosophical Division of Σχολή and Ἔργον.	160
4.4.3 Conclusion of Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture Associated with “the one lessening πρᾶξις can become wise”	166
4.5 Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture Associated with Σχολή.	168
4.5.1 Σχολή as a Greek Aristocratic Ideal	169
4.5.2 Σχολή as an Opportunity for Ἐλευθέριος Παιδεία.....	171
4.5.3 Socio-cultural Texture and Intertexture of Σχολή with the LXX.....	175
4.5.4 Σχολή and an Opportunity for Civic and Social Participation	176
4.5.5 Conclusions of Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Associated with Σχολή.....	179
4.6 Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Associated with Γραμματεὺς.....	180
4.6.1 Scribes in a Macro-Sociological Model.....	180
4.6.2 Intertexture with Near Eastern School Texts	184
4.6.3 The “Social Superiority” of the Scribal Profession.....	193

4.6.4 Scribes, Knowledge and the Transmission of Traditions.....	196
4.6.4.1 <i>Scribes and “the law of the Most High”</i>	197
4.6.4.2 <i>Scribes and “the wisdom of the ancients”</i>	201
4.6.4.3 <i>Scribes concerned with prophecies</i>	202
4.6.4.4 <i>Scribes and sayings, parables, and proverbs</i>	203
4.6.4.5 <i>Scribes in service of the great and appearing before rulers</i>	205
4.6.4.6 <i>Scribes travel in foreign lands and good and evil in the human lot</i> ..	206
4.6.5 Scribes and the Practice of Piety.....	207
4.6.6 Conclusions Concerning Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture Associated with Γραμματεὺς.....	208
4.7 Conclusion of Socio-Cultural textures and Intertexture Configuring the <i>Topoi</i>	209
 5. IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE: MOVING THE AUDIENCE	213
5.1 Introduction	213
5.2 Re-engaging the Configured <i>Topoi</i> within the Argument Flow of the Discourse.....	214
5.2.1 Re-engaging the Configured <i>Topoi</i> with the Opening Proposition	215
5.2.2 Re-engaging the Configured <i>Topoi</i> within the Rhetology and Rhetography of the Argument	218
5.2.3 Re-engaging the Configured <i>Topoi</i> within the Syncrisis	222
5.2.4 Superior Wisdom and an Opportunity for Σχολή.....	230
5.2.5 Πνεῦμα Συνέσεως and the Unity of Wisdom.....	233
5.2.6 Γραμματεὺς and the Mind and Heart of the Scholar.....	234
5.2.7 The Concluding Encomium	236
5.3 A New Understanding of Wisdom	237
5.4 Rhetorical Force and Audience Movement.....	241
5.5 Conclusion of Ideological Texture	246
 6. CONCLUSIONS	248
6.1 Sirach 38:24–39:11 is a Rhetorical Argument	248
6.2 God is the Source of All Wisdom	250
6.3 An Opportunity for Σχολή Leads to a Superior Wisdom	252
6.4 Πνεῦμα Συνέσεως Reveals the Unity of Wisdom.....	255
6.5 The Scribe is the One Seeking Wisdom in Mind and Heart	256
6.6 Sirach and the Wisdom of the Scribe	259
 APPENDIX	261
 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES	266

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AEL	<i>Ancient Egyptian Literature</i> . Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971–1980
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AJSR	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . James Bennett Pritchard. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955.
ARA	<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
AS	Assyriological Studies
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AuOr	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibSem	The Biblical Seminar
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CATSS	Computer Assisted Tools for Septuagint/Scripture Studies
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CEB	Common English Bible
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DRA	The Douay-Rheims American Edition
EA	El-Amarna tablets. According to the edition of Jorgen A. Knudtzon. <i>Die el-Amarna-Tafeln</i> . Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–1915. Repr., Aalen: Zeller, 1964. Continued in Anson Rainey, <i>El-Amarna Tablets</i> , 359-379. 2nd rev. ed. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1978
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
GM	<i>Göttinger Miszellen</i>
GR	<i>Greece and Rome</i>

HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCM	Monographs of the Hebrew Union College
IES	Israel Exploration Society
JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
NJBC	<i>The New Jerome Biblical Commentary</i> . Edited by Raymond E. Brown et al. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JLR	<i>Journal of Law and Religion</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period Supplement
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
KJVA	King James Version Apocrypha
MLQ	<i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>
NABRE	The New American Bible, Revised Edition
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> . Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin Wright. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007
NJB	The New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTAP	<i>Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1968
PL	Patrologia Latina [= <i>Patrologia Cursus Completus</i> : Series Latina]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864
PLit	<i>Philosophy and Literature</i>
PR	<i>Philosophy and Rhetoric</i>
Proof	<i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RhetR	<i>Rhetoric Review</i>

SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
UMI	University Microfilms International
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

INTRODUCTION

THE WISDOM OF THE SCRIBE: A SOCIO-RHETORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SIRACH 38:24–39:11

Thesis Statement

This dissertation proposes that the Greek text of Sir 38:24–39:11 is a rhetorical elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως as a divinely inspired wisdom uttered by a learned scholar who embodies a dynamic correlation of the universal wisdom “poured out” at creation with the particular wisdom revealed to Israel in its covenantal history. Specifically, the thesis contends that Sirach uses the Hellenistic social concept σχολή to argue that freedom from manual labour, engagement in ἐλευθέριος παιδεία and an appropriate piety before the creator, disposes the scribe to being filled with “the spirit of understanding” and to uttering a new, superior wisdom which will be manifest in a continued, but divinely informed, correlation of παιδεία with “glory (καυχάομαι) in the law of the Lord’s covenant.”

The relationship of universal creation wisdom with the particular wisdom revealed in Israelite Torah has been recognized as an important focus for many Jewish writings during the Hellenistic period.¹ Concerns regarding the shared human condition

¹Jessie Rogers, “It Overflows Like the Euphrates with Understanding: Another Look at the Relationship of Law and Wisdom in Sirach,” in *Of Scribes and Sages*, vol. 1, *Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. Craig A. Evans (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2004), 114. A general discussion of the relationship between creation wisdom and the particularity of Jewish law is offered in Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism*, The Oxford Bible Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Both wisdom and law (torah) are complex and fluid concepts, each being characterized by a long historical and theological development which in both cases have not been described in any final or definitive way. See Frank Crüsemann, *The*

and the negotiation of a successful and productive life, which characterized earlier wisdom materials, were being refashioned to account for the religious identity and unique textual traditions of Israel in the context of a prevailing syncretistic culture.² The wisdom of Sirach has been singled out as an important instance of the attempt to relate universal creation wisdom accessible to all with the particularity of Jewish law. In his 1985 monograph, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul*, after surveying the major academic approaches to the alignment of law and wisdom in Ben Sira/Sirach, Eckhard Schnabel concluded that the majority of scholars recognized and acknowledged a “complete identification” of the two concepts.³ Reacting to this conclusion, Jessie Rogers takes issue with the expression “complete identification” as a terminological imprecision. If one posits a “complete identification” between wisdom and law, then what is true for one must hold true for the other.⁴ Both terms (wisdom and law) ought to be completely interchangeable. Thus, a “complete identification” of law (torah) with wisdom would generate either a nationalized wisdom as the exclusive possession of Israel or a universalized torah which was refracted through the lens of general didactic wisdom traditions.⁵ Either of these interpretive positions presumes an inherent dominance of one

Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law, trans. Allan W. Mahnke (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 1–2; Jacob Neusner, “Knowing God in the Torah” in Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton, *Revelation: The Torah and the Bible* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1995), 25, 30.

²“A constant feature of the Jewish intellectual tradition is the attempt to draw boundaries to distinguish between wisdom which is essential to the nation and that which remains foreign.” David Satran, “Hellenism,” in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements and Beliefs*, ed. Arthur Allen Cohen (New York, NY: Schribner’s Sons, 1987), 331.

³Eckhard Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition Historical Enquiry into the Relation of Law, Wisdom, and Ethics*, WUNT II 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 8–10, 79–88, 89, fn. 443.

⁴Rogers offers several examples of imprecision in which the dynamic of Hebrew parallelism is interpreted as an equation of terms (e.g. 34:8). She also cites Schnabel’s own philosophical and logical definitions of “identity” as unclear. “It Overflows,” 114, fn. 1.

⁵Wisdom is the exclusive possession of Israel in Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 87–88; Otto Kaiser, “Begründung der Sittlichkeit,” *ZTK* 55 (1958): 57–58; Johannes Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel. Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira*, BBB (Bonn: Hanstein, 1971), 89–91; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), 138–39. Universalized torah is refracted through the lens of didactic wisdom in Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Marton (London: S.C.M. Press,

term over the other. Either universal wisdom is interpreted as law (Torah) or law (Torah) is interpreted as universal wisdom. The result in either instance is a reductive oversimplification that distorts Sirach's teaching.⁶ That there is a very close association of law and wisdom in Sirach is indisputable but that relationship, according to Rogers, is much more finely nuanced than the expression "complete identification" allows.⁷

Recent works of Greg Schmidt Goering and Shane Berg propose an alternative, non-binary, understanding of the relationship of wisdom and law in Sirach.⁸ Viewing both the creation of the world and the election of Israel to be the work of the same God, these commentators contend that Ben Sira/Sirach is attempting to bring together and reconcile two different streams of tradition—one sapiential and the other legal—without subordinating or reducing the one to the other.⁹ Rather than collapsing wisdom into Torah or Torah into wisdom, Goering and Berg focus on the affirmation of Sir 1:1: "all wisdom is from the Lord, and with him it remains forever." Since both creation and covenant are held to be the work of the same God, Yahweh, neither tradition may be diminished or dismissed. Rather, by amplifying a double outpouring of wisdom in Sirach 1:9-10, Goering goes on to argue how Sirach holds both "outpourings" as an expression of the breadth and depth of divine wisdom. He summarizes his view when he says:

Ben Sira does not construe wisdom as completely universal, since in his view Israel alone received a special measure of wisdom. Nor does he view wisdom in wholly particular terms, because all human beings partake in a general outpouring of wisdom upon the created world. Neither completely universal, nor wholly particular—that is the conundrum of wisdom.¹⁰

1972), 242–45; Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*, BZAW 151 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 166–76; Johannes Marböck, "Gesetz und Weisheit: Zum Verständnis des Gesetzes bei Jesus ben Sirach," *BZ* 20 (1976): 10–13.

⁶Rogers, "It Overflows," 114.

⁷More qualified positions are represented in works like those of Gabriel Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 81.

⁸Greg Schmidt Goering, *Wisdom's Root Revealed: Ben Sira and the Election of Israel*, JSJSup 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Shane Berg, "Ben Sira, the Genesis Creation Accounts, and the Knowledge of God's Will," *JBL* 132, (2013): 139–57.

⁹Berg, "Ben Sira," 142.

¹⁰Goering, *Wisdom's Root*, 9.

This thesis is an attempt to test the insights of Goering and Berg into Sirach's attempt to hold together creation wisdom with torah tradition. The hypothesis contends that the discourse of Sir 38:24–39:11 is a rhetorical elaboration which correlates wisdom and law in the disciplined study and faithful obedience of a learned scribe. By remaining open to wisdom wherever it may be found (in universal creation wisdom or in particular election wisdom), the scribe is disposed to receive a divine gift of “understanding” (πνεῦμα συνέσεως), which issues in the utterance of a new wisdom that reflects and mediates the breadth and depth of divine wisdom itself. Universal creation wisdom is not collapsed into covenant wisdom nor is the wisdom of Israel and the law assimilated by universal sapiential traditions. Rather, holding both traditions together in an embodied dynamic, Sirach proposes a divinely inspired and directed (κατευθύνω) wisdom, which he identifies as σοφία γραμματέως.

Contributions of this Research

This study and its conclusions contribute several new ideas and analytic approaches to the understanding of scribal wisdom in the Greek text of *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*. First, the study proposes that Sir 38:24–39:11 is the product of a classically influenced rhetorical culture and, thus, reads the text through the lens of a programmatic socio-rhetorical interpretive analytics that takes the existing Greek text seriously as it presents itself and not as a reflection of an antecedent Hebrew text. Such an approach is not intended to recover an “objective meaning” offered by an earlier text, nor is it intended to explain the Greek text in terms of the Hebrew text. The intention is to examine the rhetorical dynamics of the Greek discourse in hand. In other words, rather than attempting to justify or explain the Greek text as measured by its reflection of a Hebrew source, a socio-rhetorical interpretation is more interested in how this Greek discourse

functions in itself to make meaning and to elaborate σοφία γραμματέως as a Judaeo–Greek construct representing a particular understanding of “wisdom.”¹¹

A second contribution resides in a fuller accounting for the term σοφία γραμματέως (38:24). Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century interpretations of this text tended toward a preoccupation with Sirach’s description of the scribe as a historical resource for understanding and interpreting the role of scribes in the New Testament. To that end, scholars projected the historical existence of a wealthy and independent class of “text scribes” (*Schriftgelehrten*) who fulfilled public functions and demonstrated a refined knowledge of Israelite scripture and tradition.¹² Sir 38:24–39:11 was read as an idealized reflection of such a historical reality within a second-century BCE Judean context.¹³ In her recent study of Jewish scribes of the Second Temple period, Christine Schams has rightly called for a fuller consideration of the figure of the scribe in this text.¹⁴ For Schams, such a study would include an examination of the relationship between the scribe and a scribal embodiment of wisdom as suggested by the Greek expression σοφία γραμματέως. This dissertation offers a socio-rhetorical examination of σοφία γραμματέως as a particular embodiment of wisdom within the social, cultural and intellectual contexts of the Egyptian–Jewish Hellenistic diaspora. As such, it serves to broaden an ideological understanding of Sirach’s “scribe” and it supports a movement beyond the historical preoccupation of earlier scholarship.

¹¹There is an emerging awareness in biblical scholarship that the Greek text of Sirach must be taken on its own terms and not simply as a reflection of a possible Hebrew *Vorlage*. See Johannes Marböck’s commentary *Jesus Sirach 1–23*, HThKAT (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2010) as an example of this newer approach to the text.

¹²This is a reference to the classical ‘Schürer-Jeremais’ notion of Torah scholars, *Schriftgelehrten*. See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–AD 135. A New English Translation)* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885, reprinted 1924); Alfred Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients: Handbuch zur biblisch-orientalischen Altertumskunde* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906).

¹³John G. Gammie, “The Sage in Sirach,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. G. Gammie and L. G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraun, 1990), 264–69.

¹⁴Christine Schams, *Jewish Scribes in the Second-Temple Period*, JSOTS 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 101.

Third, this study attempts to understand the appearance and effect of the socially complex Hellenistic term σχολή in Sir 38:24. The term appears in the Septuagint version of Sirach but has no formal equivalency in the surviving Hebrew manuscript of the same text. Further, not only does σχολή appear to be an addition of the Greek text but it holds an important place as part of a five-word opening statement that sets the direction for a detailed elaboration of scribal wisdom: σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρία σχολῆς (the wisdom of a scribe (is) in an opportunity of leisure). Fuller insights into the social, cultural and philosophical implications of σχολή seem essential for understanding Sirach's elaboration of scribal wisdom. A socio-rhetorical interpretation of the Greek text affords the opportunity for exploring this social and cultural significance.

Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of the thesis argument will proceed in six stages presented as chapters:

Chapter I offers an overview of the complex textual history and interpretive difficulties associated with Sir 38:24–39:11 from the Second Temple period to recent critical scholarship. The emphasis will be on issues involving the establishment of the text, the loss and recovery of γραμματέως in the Vulgate translations of the text, a drift away from the full social implications associated with the term σχολή in Hellenistic society, a focus on “the scribe” as *Schriftgelehrter* and more recent insights into the origin, structure and rhetorical nature of the discourse itself. Such a survey will help to avoid a repetitive hermeneutical inertia that has accumulated in the critical study of Sirach and support a forward movement into new perspectives that avoid irresolvable and unproductive academic debates. The chapter concludes by outlining several key perspectives that guide and shape this research project.

Chapter II offers a socio-rhetorical interpretive analytics suitable for the study of Sirach 38:24–39:11. The chapter begins with an overview of the pervasive importance of rhetorical culture in the Mediterranean world and then examines the nature of rhetoric

and the constitutive elements of rhetorical argumentation as explicated by Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Albrechts-Tyteca. From there it proposes a programmatic socio-rhetorical analytics as set forth by Vernon K. Robbins and L. Gregory Bloomquist, which supports the identification of specific *topoi*, their configuration by the clustering of various meaning networks, socio-cultural texture, intertexture, and an analysis of ideological movement. The emphasis on methodology reflects the perspective and approaches applied in this research even as socio-rhetorical interpretive analytics continues to develop and evolve in new directions.

Chapter III begins by establishing the boundaries of a discrete rhetorical unit (Sirach 38:24–39:11) then proceeds with an analysis of the innertexture intended to focus on the internal structure of the discourse itself as expressed in the repetitive/progressive textures and patterns, the opening–middle–closing texture and patterns, the sensory-aesthetic texture and patterns, and the argumentative textures and patterns. The analytic serves to identify foregrounded elements of the discourse, their initial configurations, and their places within the inner workings of the text. The chapter concludes with an identification of the major building blocks of the argument and presents them for a fuller configuration.

Chapter IV is concerned with socio-cultural texture and intertexture, which situate the discourse within the world from which it has emerged and within which it is heard/read. This research examines the broader contexts which configure each of the essential building blocks of the argument in order to facilitate a better insight into the very broad spectrum of issues and textual inter-connections continuously at play in the discourse. It is from the dynamic interplay among various topical elements of the text (eg. σοφία, πρᾶξις, γραμματεὺς, σχολή, παιδεία, ἀρετή, creation and covenant election) that Sirach constructs his understanding of scribal wisdom.

Chapter V considers ideological texture as the movement or expected movement of an audience toward a desired goal. The exploration of such movement begins by re-

engaging the configured *topoi* within the argumentative flow of the discourse. The richer understanding of the argumentative texture, now reflecting various arenas of meaning, provided with the configured *topoi*, allows for a grounded projection of plausible meaning(s), rhetorical situations, audience and possible rhetorical conflicts. The chapter ends with an assessment of the rhetorical force of the argumentative flow.

Chapter VI brings the dissertation to a close by highlighting the evidence supporting the thesis and drawing conclusions. It begins with a summary of Sirach 38:24–39:11 as deliberative syncrisis that establishes the superiority of the wisdom sought by the one devoting his mind to intellectual pursuits and his heart to seeking the Creator. This syncritical comparison validates the premise of the argument that “the one with little business (πρᾶξις) can become wise.” This is followed by a review of how Sirach implicitly links the superior wisdom of the learned and pious scholar with various opportunities for σχολή. By accepting the conclusion of the syncrisis concerning the superiority of the wisdom sought through intellectual pursuits, the audience is also led to accept the implicit link between that superior wisdom and the opportunities for σχολή that enable it. After this, there is a summary of Sirach’s belief that God is the source of all wisdom and order and that all wisdom and order continue to hold together in God. Such a non-binary understanding of wisdom permits a faithful scholar to engage the broad intellectual traditions and scribal practices of his Hellenistic social context and the socially successful scholar to remain faithful to the wisdom of Israel’s unique covenant tradition. Lastly, is a review of the tenet that God, the source of all wisdom, may empower the learned and faithful scholar to understand (to bring together) the extension and comprehension of divine wisdom. In prayer and gratitude the scholar continues to submit to the Lord and the Lord to inform and guide his counsel and knowledge. In this the scholar embraces the universal intellectual and wisdom traditions of the world while remaining faithful to the particular wisdom of Israel’s election tradition. The breadth, depth and unity of divine wisdom will be apparent in the παιδεία of his learned teaching

and in his submission to the law of the Lord's covenant. Such a wisdom is what Sirach identifies as σοφία γραμματέως and to achieve it the scribe requires an opportunity of σχολή.

The final encomium of the discourse serves as a great amen pronounced by the peoples of the world (ἔθνη) and the assembly of the faithful (ἐκκλησία). Such a learned and faithful scribe is remembered with great praise, a lasting renown, and a name that abides even beyond death. Such ancient wisdom lives on as it informs our own academic struggle to maintain a balance of faith and reason that guides our living and learning.

CHAPTER 1

SCHOLARSHIP AND SIRACH 38:24–39:11

1.1 Introduction

It has been asserted that *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* is to be counted among the most complex of all biblical materials.¹⁵ Partial manuscripts, redactional differences, variant recensions, and interpretive emphases have all seriously affected the reception, reading, and understanding of Sir 38:24–39:11. A prefatory survey of major textual and interpretive issues, as well as an insight into what is being proposed in current Sirach scholarship, will assist in establishing some important guides for the direction and focus of this dissertation.

1.2 The Place of Ben Sira/Sirach in Judaism and Early Christianity

The writings of Ben Sira/Sirach played a notable role in the development of ancient Judaism and early Christianity.¹⁶ Evidence of Ben Sira/Sirach's importance can already be found in the period of late Second Temple Judaism. Parts of Ben Sira were known and used in the Qumran community (2Q18, 11QPs^a) and fragments of it were found among the scrolls recovered at the fortress of Masada (Mas I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII).¹⁷

Despite being excluded from the Hebrew canon of sacred literature, Ben Sira's influence

¹⁵Maurice Gilbert, "L'étude des livres sapientiaux à l'Institut Biblique," in *Biblical Exegesis in Progress: Old and New Testament Essays*, ed. and comp. by J. N. Aletti and J. L. Ska, AnBib 176 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2009), 169.

¹⁶In this research, the designation "Ben Sira" is used to refer to the Hebrew text and the name "Sirach" refers to the Greek text that presents itself as a translation of Ben Sira.

¹⁷Pancratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*. VTSup 68 (New York, NY: Brill, 1997), 19, 113–25. 2Q18 contains fragments of Sir 6:14–15 and 6:20–31; 11QPS^a contains Sir 51:13–20 and Sir 51:30b, Mas I–VII shows portions of 39:27–44:17^c.

is clearly attested by more than a hundred citations and references in a variety of rabbinic writings. He is cited by name in both the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmuds and in the midrashim of the Talmudic period: Bava Metzi'a 112a uses "it is taught" referring to Ben Sira as if to a sacred text; Bereshit Rabbah 91:3 uses "it is written in the Book of Ben Sira"; Pirque' Avot 4:4 reflects Sir 7:17, 22; Sanhedrin 100b warns that one may not read Ben Sira because there are some objectionable statements, yet it also provides a collection of detached sayings (Sir 26:1-4; 9:8, 9; 11:29-34 and 4:10) which were considered profitable for reading. Koheleth Rabba 12:12 says whoever brings Ben Sira into his house brings in confusion, but it also says that Ben Sira "is given for discussion and not intense study."¹⁸ Such an extensive use suggests that Ben Sira must have achieved a reputation as a great and wise rabbi. As a result many of his sayings would have been expounded for their good advice and for their understanding of the law. Other proverbs may also have accumulated around his writing and may even have circulated in Ben Sira's name, thus accounting for some of the differences among later manuscripts.¹⁹

Similarities of vocabulary and framework aligning Ben Sira 36:1-17 and 51:21-35 with portions of the blessings of the Shemoneh Ezreh ("The Eighteen Benedictions" also known as the Amidah) permit some scholars to infer that Ben Sira's influence extended even into the very heart of Judaism's liturgy and prayer.²⁰ Certainly, the preservation of

¹⁸Jenny R. Labendz, "The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature," *The Journal of the Association of Jewish Studies* 30 (2006): 347-92. Benjamin G. Wright, "B. Sanhedrin 100b and Rabbinic Knowledge of Ben Sira," in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*, ed. N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeulen (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 41-50; S. Schechter, "The Quotations from Ecclesiasticus in Rabbinic Literature," *JQR* 3 (1891): 682-706. "The gilyōnim and the books of the heretics (mīnīm) do not defile the hands [i.e. are not canonical]; the books of Ben-Sira and all books written after the prophetic period do not defile the hands." Moses Samuel Zuckermann, *Tosefta, Mishna und Boraitha in Ihrem Verhältnis zu Einander, oder, Palästinenensische und Babylonische Halacha: Ein Beitrag zur Kritik und Geschichte der Halacha* (Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1908-1909), Yad, ii, 13, 683.

¹⁹Wright, "B. Sanhedrin 100b," 48-50.

²⁰David Instone-Brewer, "The Eighteen Benedictions and the Minim Before 70 CE," *JTS* 54 (2003): 26. The hypothesis is contested by a number of scholars including Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes*, AB 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 570.

partial medieval manuscripts of Ben Sira in a Cairo genizah many centuries later suggests an abiding reverence and respect for these non-canonical materials.

The influence of Ben Sira/Sirach also expanded into the development of early Christianity. While there are no direct quotations of Sirach in the New Testament, the critical apparatus of *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA²⁸) shows the text of Sirach to be alluded to more than 150 times.²¹ Many expressions used in James show a close similarity with expressions from the Septuagint text of Sirach.²² That the text of Ben Sira was translated into Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Aramaic, and Arabic suggests a broad circulation and influence during the early years.

Evidence of influence in patristic literature begins with the citation of Sir 4:31 in Didache 4:5 and in Barnabas 19:9. The Greek fathers Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, and John Chrysostom cite Sirach frequently.²³ The wisdom reflected in Sirach seems to have been congruent with Chrysostom's understanding of monastic values, almsgiving, good speech, the danger of pride, and his polemic against civic patronage and benefaction. The Latin fathers Tertullian, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine considered Sirach to be inspired reading and refer to the text in their own writings.²⁴ By the time of Cyprian of Carthage in the third century CE, the text had

²¹*Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 28th revised ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 872–873.

²²Compare Jas 1:2, 4 with Sir 2:1-5; Jas 1:6 with Sir 1:28; Jas 1:9, 11 with Sir 31:5; Jas 1:13 with Sir 15:11-20; Jas 1:19 with Sir 4:29; Jas 2:1-6 with Sir 10:26-34; Jas 3:2 with Sir 19:16, 17; Jas 3:9 with Sir 17:8 and Jas 5:13 with Sir 38:9-15. Tadros Y. Malaty, *The Epistle of James*, trans. Ferial Moawad, rev. by Nora Ei-Agamy (Orange, CA: Coptic Christian Centre, 2001), 9.

²³ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.8, 9; 3.3, 4, 11; *Strom.* 1.4,10; Origen, *Princ.* 2.8; *Cels.* 6.7.12; *Comm. Jo.* 32.14; Athanasius, *Ep. fest.* 39 and *C. Ar.* 2.79. cf. Chris de Wet, "John Chrysostom's Use of the Book of Sirach in His Homilies on the New Testament," *Studia Historica Ecclesiasticae* XXXVI, (2010): 1–10. There are a total of sixty-five individual verses from Sirach cited by John Chrysostom in his New Testament homilies. The most commonly used texts were Sir 1:22 and 5:6, but he also used 2:4; 3:30; 4:8; 9:9, 13, 15; 10:9, 12-13; 11:3; 13:15; 15:9; 16:3, 12; 18:30; 19:10-11; 21:2; 23:10, 17; 28:3 and 34:23.

²⁴Tertullian, *Marc.* 1:16; ; Ambrose, *Off.* 1.2, 3, 16, 33; 2.7, 8, 14; *Epistolae* 63.3; Jerome, *Ep. ad Julianus* 1; *Comm. Isa.* 3:13; *Pelag.* 2.5; Augustine, *Enarrat. Ps.* 1.4; 19.14; 84.1; 116.6; 119.7, 9, 18, 51, 96, 101; 126.7; 131.3; 133.8; 139.18; 144.4; 147.7; *Gest. Pelag.* 4:7; *Conf.* 10.31; 13.21; *Civ.* 13.11, 24; 20.10; 21.9, 14, 26, 27.

become so influential in the “church” community that it was retitled with the Latinized Greek name *Liber Ecclesiasticus* (The Church Book).²⁵

At the end of the fourth century, strongly influenced by Augustine, the Councils of Hippo (393 CE) and Carthage (397 CE) included Sirach in their lists of canonical texts and, in 405 CE, Pope Innocent I (d. 417 CE) included it in the Roman canon.²⁶ Conclusive acceptance into the Roman canon was fully defined April 8, 1546 by the Council of Trent.²⁷ For the reformers, Sirach remains among the non-canonical pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha.

1.3 Pre-critical Interpretations of Sirach 38:24–39:11

Specific references to the materials found in Sir 38:24–39:11 are few in early rabbinic and Christian literature. There is a passing allusion to Sir 38:24b in Pirque’ Avot 2:6:

A rude man fears not sin; and no vulgar person is pious; and the shy man does not learn nor the passionate teach, nor he that hath much business become wise. And in a place where there are no men strive to be a man.²⁸

In the fifth century *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Augustine, writing in Latin, quotes Sir 38:24 in a reflection on the appropriate use of “leisure” to acquire wisdom rather than engage in slothfulness.²⁹

The first known full commentary on Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), was published in 804 CE as *Commentariorum In Ecclesiasticum libri decem* by the Benedictine bishop of

²⁵*Test.* ii.1; iii.1, 35, 51, 95.

²⁶Maurice Gilbert, “Methodological and Hermeneutical Trends in Modern Exegesis on the Book of Ben Sira” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, ed. Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia (New York, NY: de Gruyter, 2008), 14.

²⁷“Decretum de Canonicis Scripturis”, in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. Theodore Alois Buckley (London: Routledge, 1851), 18.

²⁸The reference to Sirach is mentioned in the rabbinic footnote to this text. cf. Robert Henry Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 695–696.

²⁹St. Augustine, “Tractates on the Gospel of John,” LVII, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. John Gibb and James Innes (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890–1900), 303.

Mainz, Rabanus Maurus.³⁰ In this commentary, the verses of Sir 38:24–39:11 are dealt with at length, but, relying on the Latin Vulgate text which rendered Sir 38:25 as “sapientiam scribe in tempore vacuitatis et qui minoratur actu sapientiam percipiet qua sapientia replebitur,” Maurus makes no explicit reference to the figure of the scribe.³¹ In place of the Greek γραμματέως, the Latin second person singular, imperative “scribe” changed the sense of the text and continued to affect the interpretation of these verses until the revision of the Vulgate in the late sixteenth century. The effect was a separation of Sir 38:25–39 from 39:1–15 and the linkage of the former verses with the preceding text (38:16–24) under the heading *De exsequiis mortuorum, et temperamento tristitiae*. In this way the text of 38:25–39 became part of a broader reflection on death, wisdom, and the preparation for judgement.³² Maurus’s subsequent comments on the hard work of various

³⁰*Commentariorum In Ecclesiasticum libri decem*, PL 109, cols. 0763–1126C. (H)rabanus Maurus (780–856 CE) wrote very popular medieval commentaries on the entire Old Testament and most of the New Testament. His work is largely a representation of patristic thought and is often used as a resource for recovering and refining patristic opinions. After the twelfth century his work was available in abridged form in the work of his student Walafrid Strabo. The absence of modern critical editions of his work make a fuller assessment of Maurus’s contribution to biblical studies difficult. Cf. Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, Commentaria 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 42, 64; Fridericus Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1940), Tomb. 15, 7014–87.

³¹The Vulgate is a Latin translation of the Bible dating from the late fourth century. The translation was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 CE and the work is credited to St. Jerome who had completed the work by 405 CE. By the thirteenth century, a revision of the Old Latin text had come to be called the *versio vulgata* the “commonly used translation,” which became the definitive and officially promulgated Latin version of the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church. See Raymond E. Brown, David W. Johnson, Kevin G. O’Connell, “Texts and Versions” in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 1100–1101.

The Vulgate versification of Sirach differs from Greek manuscripts: Sirach 38:24–34 and 39:1–11 of the Greek texts are numbered as Sirach 38:25–39 and 39:1–15 in the Vulgate.

The Latin translation of the Greek combines the present, active imperative second person singular of the verb *scribo*, “write,” with the accusative “*sapientiam*,” thus, the command “write wisdom.” With this translation, the figure of the “scribe” disappears from the Vulgate text. The Latin *vacuitas* is used to translate the Greek σχολή.

³²“Sapientiam scribe in tempore vacuitatis et qui minoratur actu, percipiet sapientiam.” Docet ergo ut, dum vacat, et otium habemus, sapientiam divinam discamus, et eam in tabulis cordis nostri scribamus, quia ille qui concupiscentiis carnis et voluptatibus saeculi servire desistit, ille Scripturam intente meditando supernae contemplationis munere gaudebit; sed quoniam sapientiae dono penitus extranei non sunt qui agriculturae tempore opportuno insistent, et artificiorum singulorum, quibus in praesenti vita homines studiose laborant, peritiam habent, primum ergo eorum enumerat scientiam; deinde addens proponit illis veram sapientiam, quae in agnitione voluntatis Dei, et in custodia mandatorum ius per dilectionem consistit,

artisans were aligned with texts from the New Testament epistles (I Cor 3:9-11; Gal 4:19; Eph 4; 5; 6; 1 Thess 5) to form a reflection on the ways of seeking wisdom and living wisely. Rather than a reflection on “the wisdom of the scribe,” these verses had become a meditation on finding wisdom in the midst of life, hard work, and a Christian understanding of the world. The comments on Sir 39:1-15 were entitled *Sapientiae laus, id est Filii Dei, quod per ipsem omnis sapientia et prophetia sit: quia semper cum Patre et cum Spiritu sancto opere et potentia ubique est* and directed readers to seek wisdom in a study of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and evangelists.³³ Like other pre-critical biblical interpretations, the commentary of Rabanus Maurus engaged in allegorical, tropological, anagogical, and intensely christological readings of Old Testament texts.

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas quotes Sirach more than two hundred times in his *Summa Theologica*.³⁴ Of these quotes, two reflect his reading of Sir 38:25–39:15. First, in *Summa Theologica* (Part 1, Question 112, “The Mission of Angels,” Objection #3) Thomas cites Sir 38:25^b:

Further, external occupation hinders the contemplation of wisdom; hence it is said: “He that is less in action, shall receive wisdom” (Ecclus. 38:25). So if some angels are sent on external ministrations, they would seemingly be hindered from contemplation. But the whole of their beatitude consists in the contemplation of God. So if they were sent, their beatitude would be lessened; which is unfitting.³⁵

The objection centres on the question of maintaining angelic contemplation of God through an uninterrupted *vacuitas* (empty time, leisure) rather than any outside preoccupation. The equation between less activity and the development of wisdom in 38:25^b aligns with Aquinas’s projected objection to angelic ministrations. The

ut ipsa arcem teneat dignitatis, quae sola in rebus potestatem habet justi regiminis. Nos quoque, primum breviter historiam tangentes singulorum artificiorum, allegoriam deinde exponendo subsequamur: . . .” Rabanus Maurus, PL 109, col. 1034.

³³Rabanus Maurus, PL 109, col. 1038.

³⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translations, Introductions, Notes, Appendices and Glossaries* (London: Blackfriars, 1981).

³⁵*Summa Theologiae* 1.112.3.

interpretation of the text is focused on its application to the argument concerning the activity of angels and does not consider the text of Sirach itself.

Regarding the establishment of a religious order for the purpose of study (*Summa Theologica*, Part III, Question 188, article 5, *Respondeo*), Thomas quotes Sir 39:1.

For the contemplative life of which we are now speaking is directed chiefly to the consideration of divine things, as stated above (Q[180], A[4]), to which consideration man is directed by study; for which reason it is said in praise of the righteous (Ps.1:2) that “he shall meditate day and night” on the law of the Lord, and (Ecclus. 39:1): “The wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will be occupied in the prophets.”³⁶

Here, the concern remained with the acquisition of wisdom, but this time through an active embrace of the contemplative life and a focused study of the law of the Lord, the wisdom of the ancients and prophets. The interpretation of the text is given an application to the lives of those living in a religious order who find time to meditate and seek out wisdom.

It is not until the approval of the Clementine Vulgate (1598 CE) with a revision of Sir 38:25 from *sapientiam scribe* to *sapientia scribae* that the “wisdom of the scribe” reemerged as the subject of the Latin text.³⁷ Combined with the early stages of critical scholarship, significant shifts soon became apparent in commentaries on *Ecclesiasticus*.

1.4 Early Critical Interpretations of Sirach 38:24–39:11

In the early eighteenth century le R. P. D. Augustin Calmet, using the Clementine Vulgate translation (as well as a Greek LXX text), rendered Sir 38:25^a into French as “Le Docteur de la Loi deviendra sage au tems [sic] de son repos...”³⁸ He proposed an interpretation of Sir 38:25–39:15 as a comparison of a life committed to the study of wisdom with lives

³⁶*Summa Theologiae* 3.188.5.

³⁷Raymond E. Brown, David W. Johnson, Kevin G. O’Connell, “Texts and Versions” in *NJBC*, 1102.

³⁸Calmet taught philosophy and theology at the abbey of Moyen-Moutier and during the early years of his career worked on a massive twenty-three volume commentary of the Bible, which appeared between 1707 and 1716. *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l’Ancien et du Nouveau Testament: L’Ecclésiastique* (Paris: Chez Pierre Emery, Fils à saint Benoît, 1709–1725), 484.

which were preoccupied in the practice of various trades.³⁹

L'étude de la sagesse demande de la tranquillité, & du repos de corps & d'esprit. Cette science demande toute l'attention, & tout recueillement dont l'esprit est capable. Il faut se défaire de toute autre occupation, si l'on veut réussir [sic] dans les ouvrages de méditation, & d'esprit. ... Leur industrie [the tradesmen's industry] est nécessaire pour bâtir, & pour habiter commodément les villes: mais ils ne sont point capables ni de gouverner les peuples, ni d'occuper les premiers emplois de l'Etat. Il faut pour cela des hommes sages & instruits de la morale, de la politique, des loix, & de tout ce que l'Auteur comprend sous le nom de sagesse.⁴⁰

Calmet further proposed that Sir 39:1-15 be read as a continuation of chapter 38, in which Sirach juxtaposed a life committed to study and wisdom (39:1-15) with the rigours and limits of the trades, which he elaborated in the preceding verses (38:25-39).⁴¹ The commentary concludes with reflections on the glory of wisdom and a sage who will live “éternellement dans la mémoire des hommes.”⁴²

In England, Richard Arnald began his consideration of Sir 38:25 with a description of γραμματεὺς as:

One learned in explaining the Law and answering the Difficulties arising concerning the true Sense of it; one, who being bred up in Knowledge of the Law of God, and the Tradition of the Elders concerning it, taught it in the Schools and Synagogues of the Jews and judged according to it in the *Sanhedrin*. Such a one, says this writer, arrived to his Perfection of Knowledge by a right employment of his vacant Time. Or the Sense may be, that the Study of Wisdom requires Retirement and Solitude; a Man should divest himself of all other Business and Avocations, who would excel in those Sciences or Callings, which require Meditation and deep Attention. The wise man's leisure Hours, if they may be so called, is the best and most useful of his Time, and generally produces better — Works, than the more publick and active Life of others.⁴³

As for the tradesmen, they perform industrious, but inferior, duties to support the “Mechanik Business of the World, and in their Sphere are very useful to Society, as their whole Employ and Study is, to furnish the Implements necessary for the use of it.”⁴⁴

³⁹*Commentaire: L'Ecclésiastique*, 484–489.

⁴⁰*Commentaire: L'Ecclésiastique*, 484, 487.

⁴¹*Commentaire: L'Ecclésiastique*, 490.

⁴²*Commentaire: L'Ecclésiastique*, 494.

⁴³Richard Arnald, *A Critical Commentary Upon the Book of the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach. Being a Continuation of Bishop Patrick and Mr. Lowth* (London: Printed for the author by W. Bowyer, 1748), 198.

⁴⁴Arnald, *A Critical Commentary*, 200.

Arnald contends that, if these workers take such pain to attend so industriously to the provision of “Conveniences,” the “learned man” must engage his noble calling to the study of heavenly wisdom without negligence or indifference. The artisans, on their part, must defer to the learned in the ministry of the care of souls. As with Calmet, Arnald links 39:1-11 with chapter 38 to create a fuller comparison of the concerns and prayers of the tradesmen with those of the γραμματεὺς.⁴⁵ Here Arnald engages in a very enthusiastic elaboration of the practices and concerns of the “learned” which he compares freely with the wisdom of other biblical characters and the concerns of classical and Jewish scholars.⁴⁶

Within a few decades a variety of new critical studies of Ecclesiasticus focused on the questions of the text, the internal structure of the book and its sources. Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, for example, argued that the book was composed of three large collections (1–24; 25:1–42:14; 42:15–50:24), possibly from different sources, redacted around the theme of wisdom.⁴⁷ Of contrary voice were Karl Gotlieb Bretschneider, who argued that there were not actually three coherent collections of materials, and Otto Fritzsche, who argued that Sirach was to be seen as a singular work in both content and form, presented in seven large sections (1:1–16:21); (16:22–23:27); (24:1–30:24; 33:12–36:16^a, 30:25–27); (30:28–33:11, 36:16b–22); (36:23–39:11); (39:12–42:14); (42:15–50:26 excluding 50:27–29 and chapter 51).⁴⁸ Each new proposal affected the reading and understanding of the place of 38:24–39:11 within the entire work.

⁴⁵Arnald, *A Critical Commentary*, 201.

⁴⁶Arnald, *A Critical Commentary*, 204–205.

⁴⁷Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung in die apokryphischen Schriften des Alten Testaments*, Kritische Schriften (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1795), 4.51.

⁴⁸Karl Gotlieb Bretschneider, *Liber Jesus Siracidae Graece ad Fidem Codicum et Versionem Emendatus et Perpetua Annotatione Illustratus* (Jerusalem: Ratisbonae, 1806), 17–18. Bretschneider cites the classic gnomic structure and textual interchanges beginning with chapter 30 and onward to show there was a more complex arrangement than was implied by three large collections. Otto F. Fritzsche, *Die Weisheit Jesus Sirach erklärt und übersetzt* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1859).

The work of Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht de Wette signalled an emerging concern with a reconstruction of the religious, social, and cultural history behind biblical texts. Carried forward in the writings of Julius Wellhausen and Emil Schürer this new focus on the history behind the text deeply affected studies of *Ecclesiasticus*.⁴⁹ Texts of Sirach were understood to provide important insights into “wisdom” in late Second Temple Judaism, the status and interpretation of the Torah during that period, an early identification of Jewish heroes, the nature and function of the scribe and possibly autobiographical details of the author. The text of Sir 38:24–39:11 with its detailed description of the “sage scribe” came to be of particular interest for biblical scholars who referred to this text to assist in delineating the historical roots of Torah piety and as a starting point for exploring the status and role of scribes as they are presented in the New Testament.

Questions of the impact of Hellenism, Alexandrianism, and Hebraicism in the Greek text also became important topics of interest for critical scholars. The work of August Dähne, Johann Bruch and Alfred Edersheim represent some of the intensive scholarship in this area.⁵⁰ Commentaries like those of Edwin Cone Bissell offered historical perspectives that attempted to situate *Ecclesiasticus* historically and to initiate a nuanced appreciation of the connection between social and cultural contexts and the actions and characters described in the text.⁵¹

⁴⁹Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht de Wette, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel Alten und Neuen* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1852); Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1895); Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–AD 135)*, a new English translation (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885).

⁵⁰August Ferdinand Dähne, “Geschichte Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religions-Philosophie,” in *Geschichte Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religions-Philosophie* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1837). Johann Bruch, *Weisheits-Lehre der Hebräer: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie* (Strassburg: Treuttel und Würtz, 1851). Alfred Edersheim, “*Ecclesiasticus*: Introduction and Commentary,” in *Apocrypha*, ed. H. Wace; (London: Murray, 1888).

⁵¹Edwin Cone Bissell, *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament: With Historical Introductions, A Revised Translation, and Notes Critical and Explanatory* (New York: Scribner, 1890).

1.5 Recent Studies of Ben Sira/Sirach

Sirach studies of the last century number in the thousands. A topical overview of this recent work will help establish some of the new parameters and emerging concerns for a twenty-first century reading of Sir 38:24–39:11.

1.5.1 Establishing the Text

The earliest known complete texts of *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* exist in Greek, Syriac, and Latin.⁵² At the time of this research there are no known extant ancient Hebrew manuscripts containing the full text of Ben Sira. The existence and shape of a Hebrew *Vorlage*, as referred to in the Prologue of the Greek text, has been a matter of some speculation and debate. Jerome (345–420 CE) points to the existence of a Hebrew text of Ben Sira in Palestine during the fourth century CE.⁵³ Saadia ben Joseph (823–942 CE), Jewish exegete and philosopher, refers to the text of Ben Sira as ספר מוסר, *The Book of Instruction*.⁵⁴ After Saadia ben Joseph, there are no extant literary references to a Hebrew text of Ben Sira until the manuscript discoveries of the late nineteenth century in Cairo.⁵⁵ The disappearance of the Hebrew text of Ben Sira from the tenth to the nineteenth centuries is commonly explained by the fact of its exclusion from the Palestinian canon.⁵⁶ The 1896 discovery of six different, partial, medieval Hebrew manuscripts of Ben Sira in the genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue at Fustat in Cairo, and

⁵²Richard J. Coggins, *Sirach*, Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 38–39.

⁵³In *Incipit prologus Hieronymi in Libris Salomonos*, Jerome mentions that he has a text in his possession, “Quorem priorum et Hebraicum reperi, non Ecclesiasticum ut apud Latinos, sed Parabolas praenotatum...” B. Fischer, et al., *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, editionem quintam emendatam retractatam, ed. Roger Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 1348.

⁵⁴Saadia ben Joseph, *Sefer Hagaluy*, ed. A.A. Harkavy (Berlin: M’kize Nirdamim, 1891), I:151, II. 11–22. Cited by Pancratius Beentjes, “Prophets and Prophecy in Ben Sira,” in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 135.

⁵⁵Pancratius C. Beentjes, “Scripture and the Scribe: Ben Sira 38:24–39:11,” in *Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 116.

⁵⁶Charles, *OTAP*, 275–278.

the subsequent uncovering of three collections of Ben Sira fragments from excavations at Masada and Qumran, have permitted a reconstruction of about 68 percent of a Hebrew text.⁵⁷ Such a reconstruction has allowed for considerable speculation of what a possible Hebrew “parent text” for the Greek Sirach may have been. Some scholars vehemently maintained that the genizah materials were, in fact, re-translations (retroversions) from Syriac or Greek texts into Hebrew.⁵⁸ Most of these arguments, however, were made before the discovery of the fragments at Masada and Qumran. When the ancient fragments from the Judean desert sites are compared to the medieval Hebrew manuscripts of the Cairo genizah, it is clear that the manuscripts are, at least partly, rooted in early Hebrew materials.⁵⁹ At the same time, significant differences among the various manuscripts and between the Greek and Hebrew texts make an undisputed identification

⁵⁷May 13, 1896, some fragments of text found in the genizah of a Cairo synagogue were identified by Solomon Schechter as parts of the Book of Ben Sira. In 1931 and 1958–9 more fragments were discovered in the Cairo collection (manuscripts A, B, C, D, E). During the 1960s, fragments of the Hebrew text were also discovered in caves 2 and 11 at Qumran (2Q18, 11QPs^a). A little later, in 1964–5, twenty small fragments of a Hebrew Ben Sira Scroll were recovered from the fortress at Masada (Mas I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII). In 1982, parts of another manuscript (F) were recovered from the Cairo materials. Finally, in 2011, the discovery of a new fragment of Manuscript D from the Cairo genizah was announced by Sulimat Elizur and Michael Randin in *Dead Sea Discoveries*, vol. 18, 2, 200–205. Also see Pancratius C. Beentjes, *Ben Sira in Hebrew*, vii–10; Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 51–62; M. Baillet, J. T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, “Les ‘Petites Grottes’ de Qumran,” in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert 3* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 75–77; Corrado Martone, “Ben Sira Manuscripts from Qumran and Masada,” in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28–31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands*, vol. 255, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes, BZAW 255 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 81–94; J. A. Sanders, “The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs^a),” in *DJD 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 79–85; Yigael Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada, with Introduction, Emendations and Commentary by Yigael Yadin* (Jerusalem: IES, 1965).

⁵⁸Declaring the Cairo texts to be worthless late retroversions of the Syriac are D.S. Margoliouth, *The Origin of the ‘Original Hebrew’ of Ecclesiasticus* (London: James Parker, 1899); H. L. Ginsberg, “The Original Hebrew of Ben Sira 12:10–14,” *JBL* 74 (1955): 93–95. A review of the questions of authenticity in the early 1900s is provided by Charles, “Sirach” in *OTAP*, 275–78. Also see Alexander Di Lella, *A Text-Critical and Historical Study of the Hebrew Text of Sirach*, *Studies in Classical Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 148–49; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction, Including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphy, and Also the Works of Similar Type from Qumran; the History of the Formation of the Old Testament*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 599.

⁵⁹Coggins, *Sirach*, 34. The possibility of at least some retroversions in a few isolated texts (e.g. Sir 51:13–30) remains a likelihood according to Di Lella, *A Text-Critical and Historical Study of the Hebrew Text of Sirach*, 148–149.

of an *Urtext* extremely difficult.⁶⁰ Indeed, Benjamin Wright questions the very possibility of reconstructing such (a) parent text(s) at all.⁶¹ The establishment of the Greek text was equally complex. According to the Prologue of Sirach, a Greek translation of Ben Sira was completed by the author's grandson very soon after the original writing. H. B. Swete's careful study of Sirach shows that the Greek text has come down to us in a quite poor condition.⁶² There are corruptions from transmission including glosses, marginal notes that were inserted into the text, and displaced blocks of material.⁶³ Major divergencies exist among surviving Greek manuscripts, which add or omit various verses.⁶⁴ Significant contributions to correct and recover the text were made by Joseph Zeigler, Rudolph Smend, Alfred Rahlfs, and Robert Hanhart.⁶⁵ When these studies are combined with Antonio Minissale's study of the Greek text in relation to the surviving Hebrew it becomes quite apparent that the Greek text does not offer a reliable source for the reconstruction of (a) Hebrew text(s).⁶⁶ Faced with these multiple differences and

⁶⁰These differences are quite obvious in the study of formal equivalency by Emanuel Tov and Frank Polak, *The Revised CATSS Hebrew/Greek Parallel Text* (Jerusalem: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, 2005). See also Martone, "Ben Sira Manuscripts," 81–94; Friedrich V. Reiterer, "Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira," in *The Book of Sirach in Modern Research*, 26–34.

⁶¹Benjamin G. Wright III, *No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to Its Hebrew Parent Text*, SCS 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 232–233, 237–247. Reflecting on Di Lella's attempted retroversion of Sirach 24 from the Greek, Wright remains pessimistic about the possibility of recovering a Hebrew *Urtext*. The translation of Ben Sira is not consistent enough in matters of word order, segmentation, quantitative representation, and lexical choice to offer enough reliable clues for a safe reconstruction.

⁶²*An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, rev. by R. R. Ottley and an appendix containing the Letter of Aristaeas, ed. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), II, vi.

⁶³Charles, *OTAP*, 275–278.

⁶⁴Scholars have distinguished two types of Greek text: a primary text (GI) (represented in the four major uncials: *Vaticanus*, *Alexandrinus*, *Sinaiticus* and *Ephraemi*) which lies behind all the Greek manuscripts and a secondary text (GII) (represented in the *Lucianic* rescension and Origen's recension of the Septuagint) which includes many reverential embellishments and expansions. Coggins, *Sirach*, 37–38; Beentjes, "Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom" (*Sir. 14,20*): *Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 43 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 4–5.

⁶⁵Rudolf Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt: Hebräisch und Deutsch* (Berlin: Reimer, 1906); Joseph Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesus Filii Sirach, Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis Editum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); *Septuaginta, Editio Altera*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart (Göttingen: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

⁶⁶*La versione greca del Siracide: confronto con il testo ebraico alla luce dell'attività midrascica*

textual complexities for which there are few answers, Pancratius Beentjes concludes that “there is only one legitimate way to investigate the Book of Ben Sira properly, namely to study each text, each version, even each manuscript, on its own, and not to mingle them *ad libitum*, thus offering a text which does not even exist.”⁶⁷

1.5.2 Ben Sira/Sirach and the Hebrew-Greek Translation of 38:24–39:11

The text of Sir 38:24–39:11 is only partially represented in the extant Hebrew materials. Manuscript B from the Cairo genizah includes a Hebrew text of Sir 38:24-27^b (preceded in the manuscript by a blank line).⁶⁸ A “formal equivalency” of the Hebrew and Greek texts of these four verses seems to follow without extreme lexical deviations except in the opening of 38:24 where the Hebrew and Greek texts differ:

חכמת סופר תרבה חכמה
The wisdom of the scribe increases wisdom

σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρία σχολῆς
The wisdom of the scribe (is) in an opportunity of leisure.⁶⁹

e del metodo targumico, AnBib 133 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1995). Minissale was unable to establish clear principles for the choice of one text over another. He also noted the translation style of the *midrashim* and *targumim* in the Greek text.

⁶⁷Beentjes, “Some Major Topics in Ben Sira Research,” in “*Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom*”, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 6.

⁶⁸S. Schechter and C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Cambridge, 1899, B VIII verso [Taylor-Schechter Collection, Cambridge University Library, 16.312] cited by Pancratius C. Beentjes, *Ben Sira in Hebrew*, 15.

חכמת סופר תרבה חכמה וחס[.] עסק הוא יתח[...]
מה יתחכם תומך מלמד ומתפאר בחנית מרעיד
באלוף ינהג ישובב {לשדך} בשור ושעיתיו ע[.] בן[....]
ושקדתו לכלות מדבק לב ישית לשדך[.....]
אף עשה[.....] שב אשר ליל[.....]

Beentjes, *Ben Sira in Hebrew*, 67.

⁶⁹“Formal equivalency” is defined as an arbitrary procedure of comparing the Hebrew text and the Greek translation as if the Hebrew text were the parent of the Greek. It is obvious that the Hebrew text of Ben Sira and the Greek text of Sirach are not identical. There can be variant Hebrew texts of the same passage, places where the Hebrew text is only partially preserved, and a possibility that corruptions may have entered into the extant manuscript texts. This increased susceptibility to the problems of using a procedure of formal equivalence must be considered constantly when one compares the Hebrew and Greek text of Sirach. Very careful attention must be paid to every individual passage. Wright, *No Small Difference*, 13–15. The formal equivalencies referred to in this research are based on the work of Emanuel Tov and Frank Polak, *CATSS*.

There are defective texts and lacunae in each verse, especially in vv. 26, 27. Cf. Beentjes, *Ben Sira*

The Greek text refers to “an opportunity for σχολή” in place of the Hebrew’s increased “wisdom.”

The incomplete text of MS B appears in colometric form suggesting that the Hebrew text was intended as a “poem.”⁷⁰ The Greek text is presented in prose form but it attempts to maintain a literary balance. From this, J. P. Sanders argues that, because the Greek text of 24^a offers a better literary balance with 24^b than the Hebrew manuscript, the Greek, ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς, better represents the original text.⁷¹ Such assertions concerning original and secondary or derivative texts, especially in a multilingual context, have attracted the attention of contemporary translation theorists.

The relationship between Hebrew and Greek Jewish religious texts of the late second century BCE, a period of many translations, revisions, and retranslations, has been a concern of Dries De Crom.⁷² His view is that modern thinking about translation has been dominated by a paradigm of “directionality” which understands translation as a movement from a source text to a target text with the primary purpose of overcoming language boundaries.⁷³ With LXX biblical texts, translation was assumed to be primarily a transfer act (*transfere*, “to carry across”) moving from a homologous Hebrew/Aramaic milieu in which texts were transmitted and studied only in their original Semitic form to a Greek milieu in which they were transmitted and studied only in the Greek language.⁷⁴ Such a view seems to imply that translation is simply a process of code-switching

in Hebrew, 67. Jan Liesen notes the defective nature of 38:24^a, which is missing a verb and does not seem well completed when the reader supplies the customary verb “to be.” *Full of Praise*, 50, n.30.

⁷⁰Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 142, 449.

⁷¹Jack T. Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, SBLMS 28 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 61, fn. 4.

⁷²Dries De Crom, “Translation and Directionality in the Hebrew–Greek Tradition,” in *Complicating the History of Western Translation*, ed. Siobhán McElduff and Enrica Sciarrino (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2011), 77–87.

⁷³Andrew Chesterman, *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*, Benjamins Translation Library 22 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997), 8. Chesterman identifies “directionality” as a “translational super-meme” marking Western translational theory.

⁷⁴Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Benjamins Translation Library 4 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995).

between two different languages.⁷⁵ De Crom argues that such a paradigm, which implies a linguistic or cultural barrier to be crossed, may not be appropriate in multilingual environments like second century BCE Palestine and Egypt (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic) where originals and translations circulated together and could be read by those capable of reading any of these texts.

Looking beyond a language-based “directional” paradigm of translation, De Crom turns to the “translational sociology” of Anthony Pym in which translation is understood as a bridge-building space between a source and a target culture. This middle space, referred to as “interculture,” is an arena of mediation and a place for a dynamic negotiation of meaning.⁷⁶ It is a place that involves tangled identities, hybridities, ambivalences, and insecurities at both intellectual and practical levels. Source and target are no longer seen to be separate, independent categories; rather, they overlap to a certain extent and create a forum of exchange, a place of possible resistance, and a medium for a new artistic expression that involves both the source and target cultures. Translators, for whom “interculture” is the primary base of operation, belong to both the source and the target and, therefore, function as agents of cultural exchange/change.⁷⁷ Furthering this idea, Reine Meylaerts stresses that, in multilingual environments, a target text may circulate in the same milieu as a source text, translations may be very influential in both source and target cultures simultaneously.⁷⁸ In such situations, it is suggested that translations may be better seen as rhetorical or scholarly constructs emerging from “intercultural” space. Thus, the source and/or target may be functioning at the level of ideology.⁷⁹ Language deficits and text access still remain serious issues of concern, but

⁷⁵Elzbieta Tabakowska, *Cognitive Linguistics and Poetics of Translation: Language in Performance* (Tübingen: Narr, 1993); L. Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁷⁶Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998).

⁷⁷Pym, *Method in Translation History*, 177–192.

⁷⁸Reine Meylaerts, *L'aventure flamande de la Revue Belge: langues, littératures et cultures dans l'Entre-deux-guerres*, Documents pour l'histoire des francophonies. Europe 5 (Brussels: Presses

in multilingual contexts it may not be the only motivation for translation. Language status, the prestige of a particular language, and the text or the translation itself must also be considered. In other words, translations can and do effect changes in the cultural realities of which they are a part.

When De Crom directs this insight at the Ben Sira/Sirach relationship described in the translator's prologue to the Greek text, ideological and performative constructs become apparent.⁸⁰ The translator uses the prologue to "create" a target culture which is in need of the translation he will offer. Then, selecting specific themes and motives, he confirms the value and authority of the "source" text and transfers that authority to his own translation.⁸¹ The identification of such ideological constructs must inform critics and interpreters as they deal with the "translated" texts of Sirach.

Tracing a "directional" history of a textual translation and its development(s) certainly assists in the reconstruction of defective, partial, or unclear texts. Carefully noting language variants and shifts in texts can offer deeper insights into the relationships that obtain among manuscripts and translations, but such text-critical approaches are, by themselves, not especially well suited for probing the inner nature of texts as written discourse.⁸² Shifts in language and context also introduce significant shifts in the arenas of meaning within which a text is produced and understood. To fully appreciate these different arenas, it is necessary to consider each text on its own terms, within its own horizons of meaning and meaning effects, and not simply as a blended text or as a neutral translation objectively replicating a source text. Pancratius Beentjes's "obvious solution"

Interuniversitaires Européennes, 2004), 300.

⁷⁹De Crom, "Translation and Directionality," 80.

⁸⁰De Crom, "Translation and Directionality," 83–85.

⁸¹De Crom, "Translation and Directionality," 85–87; Johann Cook, *Septuagint and Reception: Essays Prepared for the Association for the Study of the Septuagint in South Africa*, ed. Johann Cook, *VTSup* 125 (Boston: Brill, 2009), 292–293.

⁸²Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 8–9.

for adequately dealing with Hebrew and Greek textual variations applies equally to respecting the distinctive horizons of meaning which may attend the very process of translation itself. Modern Sirach studies must attend to the unique nature of each individual text with its own individual literary dynamics, including the possibilities of new, borrowed, or shifted ideologies, extended arenas of meaning, and the meaning effects evoked by each individual text. The Greek text of Sir 38:24–39:11 must be considered in light of possible ideological and performative constructs at play within the very dynamics of the text which may differ from those of the Hebrew text.⁸³ For example, the addition of the concept σχολή in the Greek text of Sirach certainly evokes a range of social and cultural experiences and images associated with σοφία γραμματέως that are not evoked by the Hebrew text. A socio-rhetorical interpretation of the Greek text of Sirach will take account of such additions or alterations on their own terms within the dynamic of the new, “translated,” text.

1.5.3 Authorship, Date, and the Nature of Jewish Second Temple Discourse

The Greek Prologue of *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* presents the text as a translation of an earlier writing. The conclusion of the text identifies the author as Yeshuah ben Eleazar ben Sira of Jerusalem who lived early in the second century BCE and who prepared a book containing “παιδείαν συνέσεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης” (“instruction in understanding and knowledge” (Sir 50:27)).⁸⁴ The eulogy of the High Priest in Sirach 50 (when taken as a reference to Simon who died in 196 BCE), the lack of references to the

⁸³Lester L. Grabbe, in his review of Johannes Marböck’s commentary *Jesus Sirach 1-23*, HThKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2010), notes that this is the first full commentary on the Greek text rather than an attempt to reconstruct an “original” Hebrew text. He also comments that the Greek translation offers an “updating of this work for the Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora in Egypt about 132 BCE... He [Marböck] believes that Ben Sira engaged with the culture of Hellenism and had an openness to new impulses of thinking (such as the Stoa) and practice (medicine, journeys, symposia) of his time.” Book List 9. *Apocrypha and Postbiblical Studies* (Book List 2013), JSOT 37,5, 221.

⁸⁴The Greek text identifies the author as Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Σιραχ Ἐλεάζαρ ὁ Ἱεροσολυμίτης in a colophon at Sir. 50:27. The Greek text omits the Hebrew colophon found at 51:30. Manuscript B of *Ben Sira* presents identical Hebrew colophons in 50:27^e and 51:30 (בן ישוע בן אליעזר בן סירא).

events of the Maccabean Revolt, the time reference in the Prologue to the “thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes,” and the reference to “my grandfather,” have been used as evidence to date the composition of the Ben Sira text to a time between 190 and 175 BCE in Jerusalem and the Greek “translation” in Egypt to sometime after 132 BCE.⁸⁵ While such conclusions seem straightforward, they are not without serious challenges and concerns.

Aside from particular questions raised by historical-critical scholars concerning the possibility of multiple authors/redactors and the date and place of composition, a broader research concerning the relationship between interpretation and text-production in the Second Temple period raises a number of general cautions concerning composition and authorship of works from this period, including Sirach.⁸⁶ Michael Fishbane, James Kugel, and Hindy Najman have progressively examined the inner interpretive life of texts and have shown that much of the literature from this period is an intertwining of interpretation with earlier traditions which have been presented pseudepigraphically (i.e. as the work of an author of the past) in an attempt to establish an interpretive authority through a “discourse tied to a founder.”⁸⁷ In other words, “textual creativity” in the

⁸⁵Richard Coggins asserts that he is unaware of any serious case for an alternate dating. Coggins, *Sirach*, 18–20; D. S. Williams, “The Date of Ecclesiasticus,” *VT* 44 (1994): 563–65; Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, 597; *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Revised Standard Version: Expanded Edition Containing the Third and Fourth Books of the Maccabees and Psalm 151*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128.

⁸⁶Maurice Gilbert, “Methodological and Hermeneutical Trends in Modern Exegesis on the Book of Ben Sira,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, ed. Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia (New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 7. The dating of Sirach has been challenged by Ingrid Hjelm, *The Samaritans and Early Judaism*, JSOTSup 303 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000) who would place it in the Hasmonean period. The location of authorship is removed from Jerusalem and placed in Egypt by Paul McKechnie, “The Career of Joshua Ben Sira,” *JTS* 51 (April 2000): 3–26. It has been proposed by Lutz Schrader that the work is actually a posthumous collection of Ben Sira’s teaching notes. *Leiden und Gerechtigkeit: Studien zu Theologie und Textgeschichte des Sirachbuchs*, BBET 27 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994), 67.

⁸⁷Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*. JSJSup 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2003). Hindy Najman, *Past Renewals: Interpretative Authority, Renewed Revelation, and the Quest for Perfection*

Hellenistic world sometimes took the form of new works which were attributed to earlier, respected authors or sometimes new materials were added to older works.⁸⁸

To impose on ancient texts the modern notions of “book” and “author” seriously misrepresents the nature of ancient literature. Parchment or papyrus scrolls, a millennium before the invention of the codex, were never taken to be an object, like a book, that had clear boundaries. Professional scribes charged with the maintenance of the scrolls exercised considerable licence in expanding or modifying their contents, incorporating elements of oral lore and inventing new materials. The implications of such a proposal are rich and the quest for interpretive authority can easily blur the lines between interpretation and text-production. Whether or not such a concern applies specifically to the text of Sirach is yet to be determined, but Sirach’s praise of scribal wisdom and its close connection with the study and interpretation of the law and the prophets (Sir 39:1-3), which he roots in the authority of his grandfather, requires a circumspect approach to any “certainties” regarding composition and attribution.

In a similar critical direction, Richard Horsley, when discussing the authorship of Sirach, draws attention to the dominance of orality/aurality in the text. The children “listen” to their father and mother (Sir 3:13). Wisdom becomes known through “speech” and education through “the words of the tongue” (Sir 4:24). If you love to “listen” you will gain knowledge (6:23). The teacher is presented as a skillful “speaker” (Sir 37:16-25). Such an understanding seems natural enough in a culture where oral communication was the common discourse in the assemblies of the rulers (Sir 11:7-9; 15:5; 21:15-17) and in society at large (Sir 5:13–6:1; 23:7-12; 27:11-15). As a teacher in his “house of

in *Jewish Antiquity*, JSJ Sup 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), xvii–xix. Although Najman focuses her work on texts tied to Moses and “interpretations” (“revisions”) of the Law she does not limit this use of pseudepigrapha exclusively to these texts.

⁸⁸David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 186.

instruction,” Sirach “opens his mouth” so that his students may acquire wisdom (Sir 51:23-25). Horsley cautions that:

Wise scribes carried out their role not by reading and writing texts, but by learning spoken words and, in turn, speaking wisdom. The prophecies, sayings, and parables that the wise scribes have “sought out” and “preserved” and “penetrated” comprise a repertory readily available in their memory, not inscribed on scrolls that they must consult (39:1-3).⁸⁹

Referring to the work of Susan Niditch and David Carr, Horsley points out that nearly all scribal writing, except for a few administrative lists, were either extensions of oral statements or derived from oral communication and were written mainly for enabling later recitation.⁹⁰ Materials set out in writing are formed in ways that promote memorization, but that is not because they were written texts but rather because they were taught orally, then written, then repeated orally.⁹¹ From this observation, it is concluded that virtually all the instruction presented in the Book of Sirach is in the form of “oral derived text,” short poetic speeches focused on particular topics. For Horsley, Ben Sira stands in a tradition of wise scribes who taught using speeches composed of various rhetorical patterns that included admonitions, motive clauses, and maxims. Because of this it would be anachronistic to conceive of “Sirach” as a “writer” concerned with authoring new aphorisms, poems, or wise sayings in the same way as modern authors might do.⁹² Scholarship must exercise extreme caution when dealing with questions of “authorship” and “dating” of such “scribal discourse” and attend much more carefully to the “oral register” and rhetorical qualities of the materials.⁹³

⁸⁹Richard A. Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 90.

⁹⁰Richard A. Horsley, *Scribes*, 101; Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, LAI (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1996); Carr, *Tablets of the Heart*.

⁹¹Horsley, *Scribes*, 106.

⁹²Horsley, *Scribes*, 131. The notion of the author as an autonomous agent of creative genius is a historical construct. It is not a fixed truth, but was born in early modern times.

⁹³Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible and the Jewish Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 157–158.

1.5.4 Discerning an Internal Structure in Sirach

Critical efforts to detect an underlying consciously intended structure in the book of Sirach remain unsuccessful and without consensus. Individual units of material generally have a clear internal consistency, yet the larger instruction seems to have a notebook style.⁹⁴ In both the original and revised editions of his work, Emil Schürer describes Sirach as an anthology of traditional materials.⁹⁵ Mathias Delcor claims that Sirach offers no more than an “unordered collection of sayings on very diverse subjects.”⁹⁶ In a similar vein, Skehan and Di Lella comment: “except for chaps. 44–50...the book manifests no particular order of subject matter or obvious coherence.”⁹⁷ John J. Collins describes Sirach as “a collection of instructions rather than a tight, coherent, compositional unity.”⁹⁸ More recent scholarship has suggested that such a description is not necessarily a negative one. An anthology may be seen as more than a simple gathering of other people’s thoughts and ideas; rather, a *style anthologique* may be described as a demonstration of an author’s familiarity with a broad literary tradition—in this case biblical tradition—and a facility to use terms and images from that tradition to orchestrate and expand those ideas for a new audience.⁹⁹ The anthological style includes collections of multiple literary forms that appear in different groupings and elaborations.¹⁰⁰ In

⁹⁴Samuel L. Adams, *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions*, SJSSup 125 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 163.

⁹⁵Schürer, *The History*, III, 23–25.

⁹⁶Mathias Delcor, “The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Hellenistic Period,” in *The Hellenistic Age*, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. William D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 416.

⁹⁷Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 4.

⁹⁸John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 46.

⁹⁹Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 67; Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, 597.

¹⁰⁰Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 70–71. Murphy suggests that Sirach relies on instructional materials shared with Proverbs but organizes them into thematic sections or expands on them in creative ways. Leisen, *Full of Praise*, 43. Leisen argues that Sir 38:24–39:11 appears as a high point in a series of descriptions of “categories of people” including women (36:23–31), friends (37:1–6), counsellors (37:7–18), experienced men (37:19–26) and physicians (38:1–15).

Sirach, such materials include collections of sayings (13:1–14:2), hymns (16:24–18; 39:12–35; 42:15–43:33), prayers (22:17–23:6; 36:1–22), numerical proverbs (25:7–10), beatitudes (26:5–6) and other literary forms. In such an anthology Sirach 38:24–39:11 could be seen as an independent literary unit representing one of seven wisdom poems: 1:1–10, 4:11–19, 6:18–37, 14:20–15:10, 24, 32:14–33:6, 38:24–39:11.¹⁰¹ Because of the fragmentary nature of the Hebrew text, no single Hebrew manuscript preserves all seven of these poetic units. In some cases such as Sir 24 and 38:24–39:11, the poetic nature of the materials has been projected as a retroversion of rhythmically balanced Greek texts.¹⁰²

There are other more or less complex approaches to the thematic structure of the Wisdom of Sirach, each one influenced by subjective, conjectural factors. Wolfgang Roth, for example, proposed a complex structure based on the assumption that Sirach was composed in four successive stages. The first stage is comprised of an original book of wisdom represented in Sir 1:1–23:27 and 51:1–30. This original material is divided into four subsections of material: 1:1–4:10; 4:11–6:17; 6:18–14:19; 14:20–23:27, 51:1–9. Each subsection is introduced by its own programmatic prologue: 1:1–2:18, 4:11–19, 6:18–37, 14:20–15:10.¹⁰³ To this original material Sirach successively added three new blocks of material: 24:1–32:13, 32:14–38:23, 38:24–50:29. Each of these additional blocks was also prefaced by a programmatic prologue setting forth the intention of the new materials: 24:1–29, 32:14–33:15, 38:24–39:11. Unlike the original sections, where a prologue was followed immediately by topical collections of maxims, the prologues of

¹⁰¹Beentjes, “Some Major Topics,” 7–8; Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 70–71; Johannes Marböck, “Structure and Redaction History in the Book of Ben Sira: Review and Prospects,” in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, BZAW 255, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 66.

¹⁰²See Benjamin Wright’s comments on Di Lella’s reconstruction of Sirach 24 and the supposition that Sirach 38:24–39:11 reflects a twenty-two-line Hebrew poem. *No Small Difference*, 232–247.

¹⁰³Wolfgang Roth, “On the Gnostic-Disursive Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach,” *Semeia* 17 (1980): 74, section 5.1. Here Roth is assuming that Sirach is “of one cast” with Proverbs, and that because Proverbs proceeds in four sections, so must Sirach. Roth and others suggest that the “prologue–wisdom” construction in Sirach is also modelled on Proverbs with its prologue in chapters 1–9 and the collections following. Roth, “Gnostic-Disursive Wisdom,” 74, Section 5:1; Moshe Segal, *The Complete Book of Ben Sira* (Jerusalem: Bialik Foundation, 1958), paragraphs 8–21; Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, 2.

the three additions are followed by an autobiographical note, which is in turn followed by instructional material. Each of the autobiographical notes claims that an increase in God's grace expanded Sirach's wisdom and compelled him to write the additional section.¹⁰⁴ In this attempt to uncover an inner logic and structure, Sir 38:24–39:11 is identified as a programmatic prologue to the third and final addition to the book.¹⁰⁵ In these verses, according to Roth, Sirach asserts his “most self-conscious and developed explanation of his method” and “summarizes his hermeneutic-pedagogic theory: from understanding to explanation, from assimilation to exposition, from learning to teaching, from apprenticeship to mastery.”¹⁰⁶

Another, different but related, attempt to discern an organizational structure claims to detect within the Hebrew of Ben Sira a possible acrostic pattern in which successive themes can be identified through the initial letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This pattern is only partial and those elaborating the thesis have only illustrated materials for א (3:1-16), ב (4:2-28), ג (7:17) and ד (16:25^b–23:27).¹⁰⁷ Such an extended acrostic or “alphabetic-climactic arrangement” stretching over several chapters would be a unique literary structure in ancient literature of which there are no other extant examples.¹⁰⁸ Sirach 51:13-30 contains an alphabetic acrostic poem that imitates the final chapter of Proverbs, but is a compact literary unit and not an extended pattern.

Following the work of Moshe Zevi Segal, J. D. Harvey proposed a structure that divides Sirach into two sections, each containing four thematic subsections and all of this bracketed by a prologue and an epilogue.¹⁰⁹ Otto Fritzsche had divided Sirach into seven

¹⁰⁴Roth, “Gnomic-Discursive Wisdom,” 60, section 1.1.

¹⁰⁵Roth, “Gnomic-Discursive Wisdom,” 62, section 1.41; Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, 353; Segal, *The Complete Book of Ben Sira*, 258.

¹⁰⁶Roth, “Gnomic-Discursive Wisdom,” 65, 63.

¹⁰⁷Roth, “Gnomic-Discursive Wisdom,” 74, section 5.11; Crenshaw, “The Book of Sirach,” 609.

¹⁰⁸Coggins, *Sirach*, 25.

¹⁰⁹Segal, *The Complete Book of Ben Sira*, 16. Segal sees Sirach as modelled on the Book of Proverbs and, according to J. Marböck, this has influenced a number of modern scholars including J. D. Harvey, Patrick Skehan, Alexander Di Lella and R. H. Pfeifer. J. Marböck, “Structure and Redaction

large units and attempted to demonstrate that the text was composed as a whole and that it represented a carefully structured form.¹¹⁰ Inspired by the Pentateuch, Alfred Edersheim had proposed that Sirach be separated into five sections (1–23; 24–32; 33–43; 44–50:21; 50:22–51:20) which combined to create a coherent and consequent work.¹¹¹ Ceslas Spicq, agreed that there is a five-part division of the materials but that this division lacks any coherent structure as it moves from universal wisdom (1:1–10) to the wisdom of Israel (24:44–50).¹¹²

A simpler structure proposed by Eichhorn in 1795, using the headings/sub-headings already offered within the Greek text, divides Sirach into three sections: 1–23; 24–42:14; 42:15–50:24 (with the colophon).¹¹³ This understanding, with variations, has been adopted by a number of scholars through the centuries, including: Cornelius Lapide, Luis Alonso-Schökel, Morela Asensio, Richard Coggins and most recently by Hans-Winfried Jüngling.¹¹⁴ The most obvious division occurs at 44:1, αἰνέσωμεν δὴ ἄνδρας ἐνδόξους (“Let us now praise famous men”). In the Greek text, this is followed by the heading τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν τῇ γενέσει (“our ancestors in their generations”). This clear division occurs toward the end of the book, and certainly suggests that what follows is intended as the climax to the entire work.¹¹⁵ The heading at 44:1, however, is not the only one of its kind in the text. There is also a heading at 24:1, ἡ σοφία αἰνέσει ψυχὴν

History,” 65. J. D. Harvey, *Toward a Degree of Order in Ben Sira's Book*, ZAW 105 (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1993), 52–62.

¹¹⁰Otto Fritzsche, *Weisheit Jesus-Sirach's erklärt und übersetzt* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1859), xxxii–xxxiii.

¹¹¹Edersheim, “Ecclesiasticus,” 18–20.

¹¹²Ceslas Spicq, “L’Ecclesiastique,” in *La Sainte Bible*, ed. Louis Pirot and Albert Clamer (Paris: Société civile d’études et de publications non-commerciales, 1951), 553–554.

¹¹³Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, 51.

¹¹⁴Cornelius Lapide, *Commentaria in Ecclesiasticum* (Antwerp: I. Meursium, 1643); Luis Alonso-Schökel, *Proverbios y Ecclesiastico* (Madrid: Los Libros Sagrados, 1968); Morela Asensio as cited by Marböck in *Weisheit im Wandel*, 68; Coggins, *Sirach*, 25; Hans-Winfried Jüngling, “Der Bauplan des Buches Jesus Sirach,” in *Den Armen eine frohe Botschaft: Festschrift für Bischof Franz Kamphaus zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Joseph Hainz, Hans-Winfried Jüngling, and Reinhold Sebott (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1997), 89–105.

¹¹⁵Coggins, *Sirach*, 25.

αὐτῆς (“Wisdom praises herself”) and this has led some scholars to suggest that chapter 24 may actually represent the climax of the text. It has been argued that the materials following chapter 24, though they appear similar to those that precede it, bear a specific identification of wisdom with the Torah and, therefore, represent a distinctive slant to the perception of wisdom.¹¹⁶

Even this apparently simple division of Sirach poses several critical problems. First, there are more headings contained in the text than 24:1 and 44:1. James Crenshaw finds titles also in 20:27; 23:7; 30:1,16; 51:1.¹¹⁷ Selecting just two of these titles as indicators of an overall textual structure seems to be too subjective a decision. Secondly, does the “Praise of the Ancestors” end at 49:16, or should the eulogy on the High Priest Simon in 50:1-24 also be included with it? Patrick Skehan and Alexander Di Lella argue the view that 50:1-24 should be grouped with what precedes.¹¹⁸ Third, chapter 51 is widely held to be an addition to the main body of the text, not least because of the disparate nature of its contents.¹¹⁹ Within this chapter, at 51:12, the NRSV includes a text found only in the Hebrew (usually regarded as a later addition). Finally, there is added a Hebrew acrostic poem, ostensibly in praise of wisdom, but it has more than a slight hint of self-praise (51:13-30). For those who suggest that Sirach is consciously patterned on the Book of Proverbs, this acrostic is seen to be an imitation of the “Ode to a Capable Wife” in Proverbs 31:10-31.

The recent work of Jeremy Corely seeks thematic and structural links between Ben Sira, Proverbs, Job, the prototype of Papyrus Insinger, the poetry of Theognis and the pre-Maccabean sections of I Enoch. Arguing from Roth’s eight-fold division of the entire book, with each division introduced by a wisdom poem, Corely places Sirach 38:24—

¹¹⁶Coggins, *Sirach*, 25.

¹¹⁷Crenshaw, “The Book of Sirach,” 636.

¹¹⁸Note the correction to the text 50:1-21 becomes 50:1-24. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 546.

¹¹⁹Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 70.

39:11 as the introduction to the seventh section, which he entitles “Demonstrating the results of Wisdom.”¹²⁰

The attempts to uncover a coherent unifying structure for the extensive and pluriform work of Sirach have been many. The place of Sir 38:24–39:11 within the various proposals ranges from being one wisdom poem among many others, to a central programmatic statement of intention for the work, to a summary for the second major division of the text, or being an introduction to a third redactional supplement. In the end, there is simply no critical consensus on an central organizational structure of Sirach and, as a result of this, there is no agreement concerning the place of Sir 38:24–39:11 within the work as a whole. Rather than choosing to follow one from among the many proposed organizational models, this research offers an alternative interpretive approach which begins with a close reading of the text of Sir 38:24–39:11 and then establishes a range of textual and socio-cultural connections to other materials from the Sirach corpus and beyond. By engaging the text in this way, it is possible to probe broad networks of meaning and meaning effects which are implicitly and explicitly elicited by the discourse of Sir 38:24–39:11. Chapter two outlines the details of an interpretive approach which begins with a focus on the particularities of a text and then extends to intertextual, socio-cultural and ideological concerns.

1.5.5 Cultural Repertoire in Sirach

Some commentators see the author of Sirach as an educated scholar who has embraced and fully adopted Greek philosophy, especially Stoicism, and applied it within his own formulation of Jewish wisdom. This position is best represented by Theophil Middendorp who identifies many textual allusions to classical Greek literature

¹²⁰Jeremy Corley, “Searching for Structure and Redaction in Ben Sira. An Investigation of Beginnings and Endings,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, ed. Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia (New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 21–47.

(Sophocles, Hesiod, Homer, Cleanthes, Theognis, and Euripides) and Hellenistic concepts and patterns embedded in Sirach's thought.¹²¹ Burton Mack and Jack T. Sanders emphasize Sirach's reverence for learning and highlight his attempt to preserve only the best of Hellenistic thought and only that which could be fully aligned with traditional Judaism.¹²² Victor Tcherikover and Hans Volker Kieweler see Sirach as a severe critic of the Hellenistic "free spirit" and as a defender of traditional Jewish values and practices embodied in temple cult and Torah.¹²³ Likewise Sharon Mattila argues that Ben Sira depends less on Greek thought than on already well-developed biblical traditions such as the Deuteronomic equation of obedience to Torah with "fear of the Lord."¹²⁴

J. J. Collins comments that Sirach's acceptance of Hellenistic banquets (31:12–32:13) shows that he was not opposed to Hellenistic culture. The conflict evident in Sirach is not between Greek and Jew but rather between an attitude of arrogance and humility or between temerity and caution.¹²⁵ Collins argues that the impact of Hellenistic literature and philosophy on Judean intellectuals in the early second century BCE is modest. He asserts that there is simply no evidence that Sirach, or anyone else, actively engaged in an open polemic against Greek wisdom or philosophy.¹²⁶

¹²¹Theophil Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 8–24. There are about 163 passages from Greek literature paralleling about 100 passages in Sirach. A little more than sixty of these passages are from the poems of Theognis, almost twenty are from Euripides.

¹²²Burton L. Mack, "Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)," in *The Books of the Bible II: The Apocrypha and the New Testament* (New York: Schribner's Sons, 1989), 65–86; Jack T. Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, 59.

¹²³Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 142–51; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 249; Hans Volker Kieweler, *Ben Sira zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus: Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit Th. Middendorp*, BEATAJ 30 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1992), 252.

¹²⁴Sharon Lea Mattila, "Ben Sira and the Stoics: A Re-examination of the Evidence," *JBL* 119, (2000): 474–501.

¹²⁵John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 33.

¹²⁶John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 38.

The existence of a Greek text presented as a translation of a Hebrew *Vorlage* for an Egyptian Jewish audience, the frequent use of the word παιδεία, commonly considered the social glue of Hellenism, and the strategic use of the expression παιδεία καὶ σοφία in the first and third rhetorical periods of the Prologue clearly demonstrate important elements belonging to several cultural worlds. What seems to be at stake for the author/translator of Ben Sira is to remain a faithful Jew, while at the same time embracing a life within a culturally diverse community.¹²⁷ The customary approach to this issue, which discusses cultural identities in terms of particularizing theologies, pieties, and social practices, serves only to establish a pattern of competition and to track the degree to which the acceptance of the other's cultural constructs accommodates that position. In a recent study of *The Letter of Aristeas*, Ronald Charles uses the concept of “hybridity” as an analytical tool to examine the Hellenized world of Second Temple Judaism.¹²⁸ Based on Homi Bhabha's attempts to deconstruct discourses of colonialism and their social instantiation, Charles's goal was to capture the hybrid condition of the dynamics of negotiating life and discourse in a contentious mixing of traditions and cultures that colonial situations create.¹²⁹ In this context, religious culture is neither static nor autonomous but always emerging; always “at the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space” as Bhabha would express it.¹³⁰ Charles contends that *The Letter of Aristeas* assimilates the linguistic “arsenal” of the Hellenistic community in which Aristeas finds himself and then utilizes it to show the skeptical Jews in Alexandria and the conservative Palestinian Jews in the homeland that it is possible to express the ancestral Jewish faith in a language other than Hebrew, and that it is possible to live as a

¹²⁷De Crom, “Translation and Directionality,” 79, 83–85. Translation as intercultural is explored by Pym, *Method in Translation History*, 177–192.

¹²⁸Ronald Charles, “Hybridity and the Letter of Aristeas,” *JSJ* 40 (2009): 242–259. Charles attends to historical specificities of Aristeas in the application of this “analytical concept” which is extracted from post-colonial studies.(p. 245).

¹²⁹Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹³⁰Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 38.

genuine and faithful Jew in the midst of a pagan culture.¹³¹ He concludes that Aristéas offers a complex depiction of how a diasporic community could “integrate and assimilate comfortably in the life of a host country without losing any of what constitutes the essence of its cultural and religious identity.”¹³² Such an insight invites a careful rereading of the translation of Ben Sira into Greek, with an eye to the possible “hybridity” of Greek, Hebrew, and Egyptian elements within the text. Sirach 38:24–39:11 offers clear evidence of Second Temple Jewish beliefs and tradition, Greek social thought, rhetorical argumentation, and scribal themes linked to Egyptian school texts. The concept of a non-binary “hybridity” may be especially useful in appreciating the full extent of the cultural repertoire operating in this text.

1.5.6 From *Zeitgeschichte* to Social Science

Late nineteenth-century German theological interests focused on understanding Jesus, his early followers, and New Testament texts in their *Zeitgeschichte* (i.e. their historical, social, and political contexts). The scholarly work of Emil Schürer, Hermann L. Strack, Paul Billerbeck, Alfred Jeremias, and Adolf von Schlatter centred on the history and society of the Jewish people in antiquity.¹³³ Such scholarship, when applied to the “scribes,” led to a conflation of evidence from the Gospels, the writings of Josephus, and rabbinic literature that resulted in the construction of an artificial category identified as *Schriftgelehrte*, understood as “text (Torah) scholar.”¹³⁴

¹³¹Charles, “Hybridity,” 252.

¹³²Charles, “Hybridity,” 259.

¹³³Emil Schürer, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* (Leipzig: Hinrichs Buchhandlung, 1874); Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Alten Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: Beck, 1922); Alfred Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients: Handbuch zur biblisch-orientalischen Altertumskunde* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906); Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu: Kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1923). Adolf von Schlatter, *Das neu gefundene Hebräische Stück des Sirach: der Glossator des griechischen Sirach und seine Stellung in der Geschichte der jüdischen Theologie*, BFCT (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1897).

¹³⁴Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, II, 322.

Schürer's understanding of *Schriftgelehrte* was based on the assumptions that the New Testament information related to the scribes was historically accurate and that סופר and γραμματεὺς were equivalent terms used to identify Torah scholars. Further to this, he also assumed that the titles νομικοί and νομοδιδάσκαλοι designated scribes as legal experts and teachers of the Law and that Josephus had used the Hellenistic terms σοφισταί and ιερογραμματεῖς in reference to the same group.¹³⁵ Projecting the constructed image of *Schriftgelehrte* onto the historical development of scribes from the time of Ezra to the compilation of the first rabbinic writings in the Mishna and Tosefta, Schürer argues that during the Hellenistic period there emerged an influential class of lay scholars who were expert in the scriptures and who, side by side with the priests, became ardent teachers and guardians of the Torah.¹³⁶ By the time of the New Testament these scribes formed a well-defined class and supposedly became the undisputed spiritual leaders of the people.¹³⁷ Because of the casuistic interpretation of the Law as preserved in the Mishna the *Schriftgelehrte* is understood to be associated with the Pharisees, the administration of justice, the interpretation of Torah, teaching in synagogues, the development of the Haggada, the passing on of biblical texts, and eventually the creation of the Babylonian Talmud.¹³⁸ According to Christine Schams such a construction, while it has been an important influence in the history of biblical studies, does not correspond to any actual social category in ancient Jewish society.¹³⁹ The work of scribes as writers (copyists, secretaries, and recorders in government or temple service) is completely missing in this image of the Torah scholars.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵*The Jewish Wars*, i, 33.2; ii, 17.8,9; vi, 5.3; Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, II, 314.

¹³⁶Schürer asserted that the scribes, סופרים, were already regarded as “authorities” by the time of the Mishna and Tosefta. Contemporary scribes were designated as חכמים in the Mishna. The honorary titles רבי and חכם, he saw as later designations for legal experts who succeeded the scribes. Thus, the scribes were seen to be predecessors of the rabbis. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, II, 313–315.

¹³⁷Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, II, 313–314.

¹³⁸Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, II, 320–328.

¹³⁹Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 16.

¹⁴⁰This opinion aligns with S. Cohen's observation that academics have ranked scribes using two

Nineteenth-century scholarship considered Sir 38:24–39:11 to be an important piece of evidence in determining the role and influence of scribes in Jewish society.¹⁴¹ It presented the scribe in relation to other professions, asserted his superiority, and pointed to a class of experts in the Law and prophets who also served as teachers of the people.¹⁴² The effect of such an interpretation was long-lasting and reached well into the twentieth century. Later scholars such as Martin Hengel take up similar notions of a scribal class and link it with the attempt of Jewish traditionalists to educate the masses against Hellenistic cultural influences.¹⁴³ Other scholars such as Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, who set out to translate and update Schürer's work, failed to offer any corrections or changes to that understanding of the scribe. The work of J. Marböck, P. Skehan, and A. Di Lella, H. Stadelmann, and J. G. Gammie all assume the existence of a class of scribes who advised the royal courts, attended to public business and served as teachers of Torah and wisdom.¹⁴⁴ The scholarship of David E. Orton similarly begins with the assumption that the typical and most important skill of the scribe was to interpret and to teach Torah and that everyone with that skill and expertise in Torah is a scribe.¹⁴⁵ He concludes that the scribe of Sir 38:24–39:11 sums up all that has gone before and determines what will unfold in the scribalism of the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Gospels:

Typically in [the intertestamental] literature the concept of the scribe involves: (1) social eminence and religious authority of the scribe — as in Ben Sira and the OT; (2) occupation with hidden meanings, of scripture, visions, prophecies and “parables”—as in Ben Sira; (3) a concomitant emphasis on “understanding,” especially divinely inspired insight, and on “interpretation” — as in Ben Sira and

different “grids”: one “economic,” the other “religious.” Shaye J. A. Cohen, “The Political and Social History of the Jews in Greco-Roman Antiquity: The State of the Question,” in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert A. Craft and George W. E. Nicklesberg (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 47.

¹⁴¹Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 98.

¹⁴²Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 16–17; Schürer, *The History*, II, 223–225.

¹⁴³Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 79–80, 132–133.

¹⁴⁴Najman, *Past Renewals*, xx. Cf. John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel After the Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*; Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era*.

¹⁴⁵David E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal*, JSNTSup 25 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

the levitical scribalism of the OT; (4) function as a mediator of revealed insights, a writing teacher of contemporary and future generations, whose concern is to cause others to understand — like Ben Sira; (5) a “prophetic” or quasi-prophetic charisma and vocation — like some of the OT scribes (and their representation in the targums) and once again Ben Sira.¹⁴⁶

Christine Schams, following positions taken by Elias Bickerman and E. P.

Sanders, openly challenges this scholarship and suggests that the Sirach text represents a “redactional idealization” of Second Temple writers rather than a reliable reflection of an actual historical social group. She suggests that scholars have been too

strongly influenced by modern assumptions and preconceived ideas about scribes. Many views on schools, the training of scribes, the production, publication and circulation of books seem too rigid and too modern to provide an adequate backdrop for understanding scribes in ancient Jewish society.¹⁴⁷

New Testament and rabbinic ideas, she suggests, have been projected back into earlier texts.

More recently, Dennis Duling, responding to Schams’s position, points out that “redactional idealizations” both distort and mirror historical/social realities. Moreover, such idealizations can have an effect on later views even if they are not founded in historical realities.¹⁴⁸ Then, applying Gerhard Lenski’s macrosocial model of social stratification in an advanced agrarian society, he offers a hierarchical analysis of the social groups contrasted in Sir 38:24–39:11.¹⁴⁹ This analysis presents scribes as “retainers” of the elite and as political and economic officeholders or bureaucrats. As Nickelsberg describes it, “Ben Sira’s ideal is an ideal of life which is determined by social role.”¹⁵⁰ Duling argues that the scribes also appear to be sages or Torah scholars in

¹⁴⁶Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 120.

¹⁴⁷Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992); Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 35.

¹⁴⁸Dennis C. Duling, *A Marginal Scribe: Studies of the Gospel of Matthew in Social-Scientific Perspective*, Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 7 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 267.

¹⁴⁹Duling, *A Marginal Scribe*, 206; Gerhard Emmanuel Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*, McGraw-Hill Series in Sociology (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

¹⁵⁰George W. E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone, *Faith and Piety in Early Judaism: Texts and Documents* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 94.

Judean “textual communities.”¹⁵¹ For scribes, such positions would have been reinforced by what some scholars have called “literacy power.”¹⁵² As Goodman puts it, “perhaps the two roles of scribes, as writers and interpreters, were mutually reinforcing.”¹⁵³ In the scribe, professional, educational and religious roles are fused. Based on this study, Duling asserts that the Torah scholar role “should remain among the normative role options for scribes in Second Temple Judaism and early Christian communities.”¹⁵⁴

1.5.7 The Expression σοφία γραμματέως

The expression σοφία γραμματέως/חכמת ספר is unique in biblical tradition to Sirach/Ben Sira 38:24^a. Most modern English renderings of the expression maintain a literal translation of a nominative case noun followed by a genitive, “the wisdom of the scribe” or “the scribe’s wisdom.” Skehan and Di Lella render it as the “the scribe’s profession” suggesting the traditional link between wisdom and craft or skill, thus “scribal craft.”¹⁵⁵

That the expression juxtaposes two different notions, “wisdom” and “scribe,” has led many scholars to assume that the roles of “sage” and “scribe” may be equated. Christine Schams believes that this equation requires some serious critical attention.¹⁵⁶ For one thing, she points out that Sir 38:24–39:11 is primarily concerned with “wisdom” and “the quality of wisdom” rather than with “scribes” as such. The term γραμματεύς occurs only once at the very beginning of the text. Thereafter, the focus is on wisdom and sages in general rather than on scribes in particular. Perhaps some scribes were seen by their communities to be wise men or perhaps some wise men engaged in activities that

¹⁵¹Duling, *A Marginal Scribe*, 268.

¹⁵²Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁵³Martin Goodman, “Texts, Scribes and Power in Roman Judea,” in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Alan. K. Bowman and Greg Woolf (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 108.

¹⁵⁴Duling, *A Marginal Scribe*, 267.

¹⁵⁵Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 445, 447.

¹⁵⁶Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 102.

would be identified as scribal. Such a cross identification of sage and scribe may have resulted from Sirach's identification of wisdom with Torah (Sir 24). Scribes who would have been engaged in copying various texts could have been exposed to wisdom materials or other sacred texts and through that experience, have become very familiar with the content of the texts. In any event Schams will contend that the text must be read as an overlap among positions, functions, the expertise of scribes, and the learning of wise and educated sages.¹⁵⁷

Gerald T. Sheppard asserts that by the beginning of the Common Era all scripture (not just Torah) was coming to be understood as "wisdom".¹⁵⁸ He cites Sir 38:34–39:3 as clear evidence of this emergent "sapientializing" of all biblical discourse:

How different the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High! He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables.

J. J. Collins notes that even parts of the book of Deuteronomy came to function as instances of wisdom literature (e.g. Deut 4:5-6).¹⁵⁹ In this regard Vernon K. Robbins observes that as part of this "sapientializing" process biblical wisdom speech genres had now expanded beyond proverbs, aphorisms, and admonitions to include the Law of Moses, some psalms, prophetic oracles, and parables.¹⁶⁰ R. E. Clements reaches even further when he states that "Wisdom reinvented and reinvigorated the ideas and language of the *cultus* to suit the needs of scattered communities of Jews living in exile."¹⁶¹

A number of scholars account for this convergence of the roles of sage and scribe, as well as an expanded notion of wisdom, by suggesting that Judaism during the Second

¹⁵⁷Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 104–105.

¹⁵⁸Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 1–18.

¹⁵⁹John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 15, 54–55.

¹⁶⁰Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity, Vol.1 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009), 126–27.

¹⁶¹Ronald E. Clements, *Wisdom for a Changing World: Wisdom in Old Testament Theology*, Berkeley Lectures Series (Berkeley, CA: BIBAL, 1990), 35.

Temple period no longer experienced unmediated divine revelation or prophecy but looked instead to textual traditions and their interpretation as a locus of encounter with God and as a means of redemption.¹⁶² Here scholars can begin to speak of a transformation from prophecy to scribalism which replaces prophetic revelation with “an inherited and inspired text read by an authorized interpreter.”¹⁶³ The text itself and the authorized interpreter now become mediators of Yahweh’s presence from the “texts” of Israel’s sacred history.¹⁶⁴ That Sirach places such an emphasis on the study of Law and traditions as a part of wisdom seems to highlight an experience of this transformation to text and text interpretation as a new locus of divine encounter. The readers and interpreters of sacred texts, including scribes, then become key figures in the mediation of God’s presence to the people.¹⁶⁵ The craft of the scribe and sacred wisdom tradition have come together so that the expression “the wisdom of the scribe” represents a newly constructed identity and responsibility.

1.5.8 A Scribal Ideal

Most modern interpretations of Sir 38:24–39:11 present the text as comprised of two interconnected poems. The first poem offers a comparison of the scribe with the hard lives of peasants and artisans (38:24–34) while the second poem presents a description of the “ideal sage/scribe” who, as a wise interpreter of parables, proverbs, prophecies, and enigmas, is inspired to bring his understanding and insights to others including rulers and leaders (39:1–11).¹⁶⁶ The first poem is taken as introductory to the second, which bears

¹⁶²Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), xix–xx.

¹⁶³Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 445, 447; Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, “Literary Observations on ‘In Praise of the Scribal Art’,” *JANES* 27 (2000): 51.

¹⁶⁴Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 573.

¹⁶⁵Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 572–577.

¹⁶⁶Helge Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter: Eine Untersuchung zum Berufsbild des vor-makkabäischen Sofer unter Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Priester-, Propheten- und Weisheitslehrertum*, WUNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980); John G. Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus, or The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary, New English Bible (London:

the interpretive emphasis focused on the description and activities of the learned scribe. Benjamin Wright, building on a comment by Hindy Najman concerning exemplary figures, suggests that Ben Sira “holds up the ideal sage, with whom he identifies, as someone to be emulated.”¹⁶⁷ Thus, for Ben Sira, the sage scribe, is identified as both the author of the text and the exemplar to whom it points. While the overall compositional structure of Ben Sira/Sirach remains unsettled, several excellent links to other significant passages of the Sirach corpus offer strong arguments supporting the view that Sirach takes seriously the idea that his students should identify with an exemplary figure, possibly himself, as an ideal sage/scribe.¹⁶⁸ Such a figure, inspired by divine revelation and by the interpretation of inherited tradition, is presented as belonging to a class of people who “produced, transmitted and preserved the Israelite wisdom/literary tradition.”¹⁶⁹

Chris Rollston agrees that the text is an ode to the ideal scribe and to “things sapiential.” He also suggests that the text functions in a way similar to Egyptian and Mesopotamian instructional materials comparing a life in the trades with the benefits of the scribal profession. Such a comparison was intended as a practical pedagogical device designed to recruit, retain, and motivate students in a scribal training program.

Identifying an explicit reference to “school” and exhortations to pursue a scribal vocation

Cambridge University Press, 1974), 191; Johannes Marböck, “Sir 38,24–39,11: Der Schriftgelehrte Weise,” in *La Sagesse de l’Ancient Testament: Nouvelle édition mise à jour*, ed. Maurice Gilbert (Leuven: University Press, 1990), 295; Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 244; Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 451; Gammie, “The Sage in Sirach,” 365, 368; Liesen, *Full of Praise*, 26.

¹⁶⁷Hindy Najman commenting on 4 Ezra suggests: “So, we seem to be able to identify a thread here [i.e., in the pursuit of perfection] of using exemplary figures to construct paths of living—in texts and in people. The two, we might say are inextricably linked.” Benjamin G. Wright III, “Ben Sira on the Sage as Exemplar,” in *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction: Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristeeas and the Septuagint*, (citing the unpublished paper “The Quest for Perfection in Ancient Judaism”), JSJSup 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 168.

¹⁶⁸Wright III, “Sage as Exemplar,” 179–181.

¹⁶⁹Wright citing Leo Perdue, “Ben Sira and the Prophets,” in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella*, ed. Jeremy Corley and Vincent T. M. Skemp (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 132–54.

(e.g. Sir 51:23-30), Rollston aligns 38:24–39:11 with traditional motivational school texts encouraging scribal students to remain at their studies. In this sense, the ideal serves as an appeal to retain and motivate scribal students.¹⁷⁰

In a different interpretive direction, James Crenshaw reads Sirach 38:24–39:11 as an apologetic on behalf of poorly paid and barely respected scribes. For Crenshaw, the intention of the text was to elevate an appreciation of intellectual pursuits at a time when society tended to value expertise in various crafts and trades much more than the acquisition of literary skills.¹⁷¹ The description of the ideal scribe of the second poem is intended as an apologetic in defense of the scribal intellectual pursuit of a wisdom that stands over against the wisdom underlying the excessive “work” but highly valued activity of the first poem.

1.6 Conclusions that Guide this Research

The last decades have seen major shifts in the scholarly understanding of Second Temple Jewish literature in general and of *The Book of the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* in particular. Multi-disciplinary readings and the use of new interpretive approaches have become important keys to avoiding a repetitive hermeneutical inertia that has accumulated in the critical study of Sirach and to supporting a forward movement into new perspectives that avoid irresolvable and unproductive academic debates. The following insights guide the direction of this research.

First, at the level of textual and translation studies, modern scholarship has set an important course for future Sirach research. Much effort has been expended in exploring, relating, and aligning details among the various Hebrew manuscripts and fragments, Greek, Syriac and Old Latin texts. The high degree of irresolvable difference among the

¹⁷⁰Christopher A. Rollston, “Ben Sira 38:24–39:11 and the Egyptian Satire of the Trades: A Reconsideration,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 138–139.

¹⁷¹Crenshaw, “The Book of Sirach,” 813.

materials has led Pancratius Beentjes to declare that every text, and even every manuscript, must be considered on its own terms. When coupled with the insights from translation theory regarding the role of ideology in the translation process and the identification of ideological and performative constructs within the Prologue of Sirach, future studies will have to focus much more carefully on individual texts and textures before drawing too sharp conclusions from comparative studies rooted only in language equivalencies or in a “directional” understanding of translation. Each version of Sir 38:24–39:11 will have to be approached individually in its uniqueness, considering its own inner literary dynamic, its own context, and the meaning world(s) associated with it. It is no longer possible to assume a directional equivalency between the Hebrew and Greek texts of Sirach. To that end, this research will base itself in the Greek Sirach text of the *Göttingen Septuaginta-Unternehmen* produced by Rudolf Smend, Alfred Rahlfs, and Joseph Ziegler, recently edited by Robert Hanhart (2006), and the literary dynamics of that text.

Second, the recognition of the oral/aural and rhetorical nature of texts/discourse in Sirach alerts scholars to the idea that texts were composed in order to persuade audiences and/or to authorize and legitimate particular institutions or circumstances.¹⁷² The role of scribes involved speaking in assemblies, giving advice, and counselling leaders. Their skills of reading and writing were embedded within the very act of oral communication. Such an awareness of rhetorical culture requires a fuller appreciation and exploration of the rhetorical features and the argumentative intent of the Sirach texts, their social location, and their implied audiences. A programmatic socio-rhetorical analysis of Sir 38:24–39:11 has yet to be undertaken. Following the analytical insights of Vernon K. Robbins and L. Gregory Bloomquist, this research proposes an approach to Sirach which

¹⁷²Frank H. Polak, “Book, Scribe, and Bard: Oral Discourse and Written Text in Recent Biblical Scholarship,” *Proof* 31 (2011): 118–140.

will pose questions appropriate to the analysis of rhetorical discourse and an exploration of the ideological movement(s) sought by the text.

Third, discerning an overall literary structure within the Sirach remains problematic and without any clear resolution or consensus concerning a central organizing pattern. Many equally astute and well founded conjectures suggest quite diverse and incompatible solutions. The result is that Sir 38:24–39:11 has been identified in a variety of different structural positions and roles. Rather than adopting and defending a single structural model to situate this text, it seems more productive to move forward by establishing the limits of a discrete rhetorical unit and then, by exploring intertextual patterns to determine various relationships between the defined rhetorical unit and other texts within the corpus of Sirach materials and beyond. These patterns of relationship would be useful in helping to contextualize and interpret the place of the “sage scribe” within contemporaneous literature.

Fourth, the role of the social sciences in recent biblical studies provides newer approaches to older questions of cultural influence and social status. The insights derived from post-colonial analysis concerning the negative impact of Eurocentric thought on the structuring and interpretation of classical and Mediterranean history has opened new, non-binary, approaches to understanding cultural hybridity and the complex negotiation of meaning in Hellenistic diaspora communities. Such insights provide a better understanding of cultural integration and the construction of ideological adaptations capable of holding together ideas that often seem to represent binary opposites (e.g. Hellenism vs. Judaism).

Further, the use of macro-sociological models for a heuristic exploration of social roles allows for a mapping of relationships, social stratification, dependencies, and responsibilities at play within a particular text. Applied to Sirach studies, such insights offer the possibility of fresh approaches to the questions of the cultural influence of Hellenism and/or the social status and roles of various persons present in a text/discourse.

In addition, the social sciences can raise and probe possible relationships among the political-economic aspects of a text and the cultural-religious-symbolic language grounded in those relationships. The scribe of 38:24–39:11 can be seen within a context of social expectations, obligations, and links to cultural contexts which shape, direct scribal activity, and evoke particular political, cultural, and/or religious responses. Here the works of Shane Berg and Greg Goering are already leading the way in a consideration of Sirach’s non-binary approach to diaspora Judaism, its beliefs, and its practices.¹⁷³

The next chapter outlines a methodological proposal that emerges from the insights of this overview and offers a socio-rhetorical approach to understanding “the wisdom of the scribe.

¹⁷³Shane Berg, “Ben Sira”; Greg Goering, *Wisdom’s Root*; Shane Berg, *Religious Epistemologies in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Heritage and Transformation of the Wisdom Tradition* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

A SOCIO-RHETORICAL APPROACH TO SIRACH 38:24–39:11

2.1 Introduction

Much valuable work has already been done in the study of the Sirach as a historical and literary production. Patrick Skehan, Alexander Di Lella, James Crenshaw, Georg Sauer, Leo Perdue, and Johannes Marböck among many others, have provided extensive historical-critical substance for understanding the historical and literary frame of Sir 38:24–39:11.¹⁷⁴ To date, there have been no programmatic studies of this text as a Hellenistic rhetorical argument, nor has the text been approached as a rhetorical ideological construct. However, the Greek text of this discourse presents a twenty-two verse argument opening with the claim that “the wisdom of the scribe” is linked with “an opportunity of leisure,” σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς (38:24), and closing with three verses of encomiastic praise for the one who achieves such wisdom (39:9-11). This research proposes to explore the rhetorical and persuasive nature of the discourse and, by posing questions from within the framework of a programmatic socio-rhetorical interpretive analytics, to tender an appreciation of what Sirach understands as σοφία γραμματέως, the ideological dynamics at play within the argument, and an assessment of its rhetorical force on a plausible audience.

¹⁷⁴ Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*; James L. Crenshaw, “The Book of Sirach” in *New Interpreter’s Bible V*, 603-865; Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach, Ben Sira*; Leo Perdue, “Ben Sira and the Prophets,” in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella*, ed. Jeremy Corley and Vincent T. M. Skemp (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 132–154; Johannes Marböck, *Das Buch Jesus Sirach*, 285–292.

2.2 Mediterranean Rhetorical Culture during the Hellenistic Period

It has been convincingly argued that the Hellenistic world is properly understood to be a “rhetorical culture” characterized by a comprehensive interaction between spoken and written statements.¹⁷⁵ “Rhetorical culture” is identified by Vernon K. Robbins as part of a taxonomy distinguishing different relationships among speaking, reading, and writing in various contexts.¹⁷⁶ The term “rhetorical culture” clearly signals that the categories of orality or literacy as individual terms do not adequately describe the textual compositions of the Hellenistic world. Rather, oral operations (speaking and hearing) and literary operations (reading and writing) were conjoined as firmly fused communal activities. Speech was influenced by writing, and writing was influenced by speech.¹⁷⁷ Because literature was chiefly transmitted and experienced through the medium of vocal sounds and not primarily by the sight of marks on a page, both the composition and reception of materials often took place simultaneously. Such a lively interaction between oral and written compositions led Margaret Dean to conclude that the auditory mode of public reception “shaped the composition of every literary work in the Hellenistic world.”¹⁷⁸ Even in those situations where a rhetor may not actually have composed a work extemporaneously, the process of carefully crafting and editing was certainly concerned with questions of audience impact and reception. George Kennedy has identified

¹⁷⁵ Vernon K. Robbins, “Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response,” *Semeia* 65 (1994): 75–91.

¹⁷⁶ Vernon K. Robbins, “Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach,” in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and New Literary Criticism*, ed. Camille Focant; BETL (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 111–47. A rhetorical culture is aware of written documents, uses both oral and written language interactively and composes both orally and scribally in a rhetorical manner. See also Tony M. Lentz, *Orality and Literacy in Hellenic Greece* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).

¹⁷⁷ Vernon K. Robbins, “Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels,” in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honour of George A. Kennedy*, ed. Duane F. Watson (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 145.

¹⁷⁸ Margaret Dean, “Textured Criticism,” *JSNT* 70 (1998), 81.

audience reception as a primary concern of Greek reflections on literary composition from the time of Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates to the period of Roman rhetoric.¹⁷⁹

The interrelated nature of oral and written communication is evident in the *Progymnasmata* (Preliminary Exercises) and in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which offered models of argumentation and style used in the training of students.¹⁸⁰ By copying, repeating, and imitating the progymnastic compositions, students were trained in habits of thinking and writing that allowed them to move progressively away from verbatim scribal copying of oral or written materials to the composition of arguments configured or reconfigured in the style of the exemplary traditional materials.¹⁸¹ Now, the preliminary exercises turned to the art of “elaboration” and the production of original essays and speeches scribed and recited following the conventions of the well-practiced exemplars.¹⁸² Familiarity with progymnastic rhetorical compositions, such as those offered by Aelius Theon of Alexandria, introduced a realization that such oral and written recitals of action and speech also served as a medium for the transmission of data, values, attitudes, and concepts inherent to life in Mediterranean culture.¹⁸³ This meant that texts were complex and represented much more than a timeless, or neutral alignment of words and symbols on a page, or a “lifeless” representation of things, ideas, and events. They were textual confections emerging from and reflecting the historical, geographical, social,

¹⁷⁹ George A. Kennedy, “The Evolution of a Theory of Artistic Prose,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. I*, ed. George A. Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 188–237.

¹⁸⁰ The earliest surviving Exercises, *Progymnasmata*, are attributed to Aelius Théon of Alexandria from the first century CE and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (authorship uncertain) possibly dated to the first century BCE. Ronald F. Hock and E. N. O’Neill, *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises*, Writings from the Graeco-Roman World 2 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 86–87.

¹⁸¹ Robbins, “Writing as a Rhetorical Act,” 145–147; George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 10 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), ix–xiii; R. F. Hock and E.N. O’Neill, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric. I. The Progymnasmata*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 1 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986); *Classroom Exercises*, 79–84.

¹⁸² Robbins, “Progymnastic Rhetorical Compositions,” 121–131.

¹⁸³ Kennedy, “The Exercises of Aelius Theon” in *Progymnasmata*, 1–72; Robbins, “Progymnastic Rhetorical Compositions,” 119.

and cultural settings within which they were composed. Such public rhetorical media transmitted a particular perception of the world, reacted to that world as it was perceived (or as the rhetor would like it to be), and in so doing, the texts either affirmed or rejected existing social and cultural norms and values. Such rhetorical materials are deeply ideological in nature and serve to echo the biases, insights, and desires of the rhetor.

The *progymnastic* texts also showed that rhetorical productions employed a collection of overt and covert strategies, techniques, and figures intended to persuade an audience to adopt or maintain a particular course of thought, attitude, or action.¹⁸⁴ When the audience was persuaded to adopt the proposed course, the rhetoric was regarded as successful because it brought about an ideological shift that redefined or reconfigured the culture in a new direction, that is, the audience had rejected the current culture in favour of a newly proposed construct. In a similar way, if the rhetoric proved to be unpersuasive, or if it was successful in confirming the norm, then the audience maintained or continued to affirm the existing dominant culture.

The work of Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca offers a well known and much referenced twentieth-century treatise on rhetoric and argumentation, which reflects on the constitutive characteristics of compositions produced within a classically influenced rhetorical culture.¹⁸⁵ According to these authors, four key assumptions underlie rhetorical compositions.¹⁸⁶

1) The goal of rhetorical argumentation is “to create or increase the adherence of minds to the theses presented for their [audience] assent.”¹⁸⁷

The aim of argumentation is not to deduce consequences from given premises; it is rather to elicit or increase the adherence of the members of an audience to the

¹⁸⁴ Robbins, “Progymnastic Rhetorical Compositions,” 121–131.

¹⁸⁵ Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

¹⁸⁶ See the comments of Alexandra Gruca-Macaulay, *The Role and Function of Lydia as a Rhetorical Construct in Acts: A Sociorhetorical and Theological Interpretation* (PhD diss., Saint Paul University, 2012), 30–32.

¹⁸⁷ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 45.

theses that are presented for their consent. Such adherence never comes out of thin air; it presupposes a meeting of minds between speaker and audience.¹⁸⁸

2) Rhetorical acts are pragmatic and they come into existence as the result of a perceived need or a situation within an author's environment to encourage an action or change in the world.¹⁸⁹ Such discourse is "oriented toward the future, it sets out to bring some action or prepare for it by acting, by discursive methods, on the minds of the hearers."¹⁹⁰

3) Rhetorical argumentation depends on social logic rather than the mathematical syllogistic proofs of formal reasoning.

People who argue do not address what we call "faculties," such as intellect, emotion or will; they address the whole person, but, depending on the circumstances, their argument will seek different results and will use methods appropriate to the purpose of the discourse as well as the audience to be influenced.¹⁹¹

4) Rhetorical figures, popularly understood to be simple, stylistic embellishments, when used in the context of rhetorical argumentation, contribute to a change of audience perspective.

Forms which seem at first to be used in an unusual manner may come to appear normal if their use is justified by the speech taken as a whole. We consider a figure to be *argumentative*, if it brings about a change of perspective, and its use seems normal in relation to this new situation.¹⁹²

The following paragraph summarizes Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca's understanding of the nature and function of rhetoric:

The speaker gains adherence of any audience by attempting to transfer existing adherence from premises that the audience presumably already accepts to conclusions drawn from those premises. Furthermore, the speaker wins adherence by creating "presence" for the main premise of the proposition. Presence or foregrounding, is created using the topics.... The different types of argument

¹⁸⁸ Chaïm Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*, trans. William Kluback (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 9. This work represents Perelman's subsequent clarification of ideas presented in *The New Rhetoric*.

¹⁸⁹ A rhetorical situation may be defined as a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence, which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about significant modification of the exigence. Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *PR* 1 (1968): 6.

¹⁹⁰ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 47.

¹⁹¹ Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*, 13.

¹⁹² Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 169.

create “liaisons”—not necessarily [formal] logical connections—between premises and conclusions.¹⁹³

As brief as this summary is, it offers several very important insights that act as useful directional guides for determining a methodological base from which to approach the rhetorical nature of Sir 38:24–39:11.

1) In aiming to persuade, rhetorical argumentation must be adapted to the audience and, hence, to beliefs accepted by the audience with such conviction that the rest of the discourse can be securely based upon them.¹⁹⁴ Thus, rhetoric is culturally and socially contextualized and the premises of a rhetorical argument are to be located in the “communion” of values, conventions, opinions, and beliefs held in common by the rhetor and the audience.¹⁹⁵ Implicit within this assertion is the realization that audience choices and judgements may be affected not only by an audience’s knowledge and experience, but also by their situation at the time of the argument. Thus methods of arguing must shift and adapt as the nature and conditions of the audience shift. An argument addressed to one particular audience at a particular place or moment in time cannot be the same as an argument addressed to another particular audience at a different place and time. Because of this, whatever the relation between the Greek and partial Hebrew texts of Sirach, the different audiences and contexts of each text require that each text be considered separately, each with its own particular rhetorical dynamics. The concern of this rhetorical study is the frame, audience, and dynamics of the Greek text of Sirach, even if it presents itself as a translation of a prior Hebrew text.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Introduction to “Chaim Perelman,” in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed., ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston, MA: Bedford of St. Martin’s, 2001), 1067.

¹⁹⁴ Perelman, “The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning (1970),” in *Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, 1393.

¹⁹⁵ Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*, 21–22.

¹⁹⁶ This point is closely related to the idea of “translational sociology” as set out in 1.5.2 of the last chapter. Translation may be about more than language directionality; it may also be a negotiation of meaning within different cultural horizons. These new horizons provide a different frame for the rhetorical dynamics of the translated document and need to be considered independently of any possible *Urtext*.

2) From the “communion” of opinion, convictions, and commitments, the rhetor selects and foregrounds specific elements (*topoi*) to be used in the argumentation. Using literary techniques and rhetorical figures, the rhetor creates, as it were, a special presence (a drawing to mind, a highlighting, an emphasis) in the minds of the audience of the specific *topoi* that will support the main premise of the discourse.¹⁹⁷ This approach to Sir 38:24–39:11 will begin with a consideration of how specific topics have been foregrounded in the minds of the audience as the basis and building blocks of the argument. Establishing the presence and configuration of *topoi* will be achieved through the use of a socio-rhetorical interpretive analytics as set out by Vernon K. Robbins and L. Gregory Bloomquist.

3) The argument moves toward its conclusion through a web of “liaisons” (associations or dissociations) among concepts and attitudes argumentatively developed (enthymematically or paradigmatically) to establish a bond between the starting point of accepted premises and the theses, the acceptance of which the speaker wants to achieve.¹⁹⁸ An examination of the ‘liaisons’ or juxtapositions of *topoi*, their meaning networks and their argumentative development will demonstrate how skillfully Sirach moved from thesis to a successful conclusion. This movement from thesis to conclusion will be traced using the insights of L. G. Bloomquist who “seeks to probe the plausible ways in which a speech or a text seems to be attempting to move an audience in relation to plausible contexts in which it finds itself.”¹⁹⁹ Appealing to recent findings in neuroscience and cognitive linguistics, especially with respect to conceptual integration theory, cultural frames and “embodied simulation,” Bloomquist offers useful new insights

¹⁹⁷ Perelman, “The New Rhetoric,” 1393–1396; Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*, 33–40.

¹⁹⁸ Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*, 21.

¹⁹⁹ L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Eyes wide open, seeing nothing: The challenge of the Gospel of John’s non-visualizable texture for readings using visible texture” (paper presented at Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminars, Atlanta, GA, 16 September 2013), 6.

into the mechanics of meaning among *topoi*, “topical fields,” patterns of argumentation, and models of ideological movement.²⁰⁰

2.3 Establishing a Presence and Configuration of *Topoi* Using Socio-Rhetorical Analysis

Socio-rhetorical interpretation (henceforth SRI), introduced and developed by Vernon K. Robbins, has most recently been described as an approach to literature that attends to the values, convictions, emotions, and beliefs in the texts we read as well as to those in the world in which we live.²⁰¹ It has been further described as “an interpretive analytic that uses rhetorical analysis and social and cognitive sciences to advance literary, historical, social, cultural, ideological, and religious interpretation in the twenty-first century.”²⁰² SRI understands texts as “performances of language” in the context of particular historical and cultural situations interacting at all times with myriads of meanings and meaning effects. L. Gregory Bloomquist, in collaboration with the Religious Rhetoric of Antiquity working group (henceforth RRA), describes socio-rhetorical interpretation as the “rhetorical analysis of discourse by interpreting social and cultural movement or flow in the narration and ideological interactions among social locations and discourses in the Mediterranean context.”²⁰³ In other words, SRI is concerned with the oral and linguistic dynamics embedded within the social, cultural, ideological, and religious contexts of

²⁰⁰ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think*; Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012), 13–17; L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Methodology Underlying the Presentation of Visual Textures in the Gospel of John,” (paper presented at the Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminars, Atlanta, GA, 29–30 September 2013), 13–14.

²⁰¹ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse, Vol. 1*, Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Series (Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing; *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (New York: Fortress Press, 1984); *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996); *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretations* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).2009), xxviii–xxix.

²⁰² Vernon K. Robbins, “Socio-Rhetorical Criticism,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, Vol. 2, ed. Steven L. McKenzie (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 311.

²⁰³ “Guidelines for Socio-Rhetorical Commentary,” Religious Rhetoric of Antiquity project, Ashland, Ohio, 2002, as cited by L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture, and Ideology: Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the Reading of New Testament Texts,” in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium*, ed. James D. Hester and J. David Hester (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2010), 115.

interaction in the communities from which the texts emerge. The prefix “socio” refers to the numerous resources of literary, social-scientific, cultural, and cognitive linguistic scholarship that may be used to approach the social nature of reality and the interrelationship between language and human action.²⁰⁴ The term “rhetorical” concerns “the way that the language in a text is a means of communication among people” and how language attempts to create effects on an audience.²⁰⁵ Characteristic of rhetorical analysis is a special attention to the subjects and topics (*topoi*) that a text uses to express thoughts, speech, stories, arguments, and so on. By integrating the ways people use language with the ways that they perceive the world and live in it, SRI offers an analytical tool capable of a robust and “full-bodied” exegesis of texts produced in a rhetorical culture.

More than a “methodological matrix,” which Robbins understands to be an entity in itself, socio-rhetorical “interpretive analytics” is an active reading process, hermeneutically sensitive to posing “questions in such a way that the appropriate methods available for analysis are brought to bear to answer the questions asked in a programmatic way.”²⁰⁶ Appealing to the image of a rich tapestry, which may be viewed from different perspectives, Robbins refers to the “textures of texts” as the variety of configurations,

²⁰⁴ “Using insights from sociolinguistics, semiotics, rhetoric, ethnography, literary studies, social sciences, and ideological studies, socio-rhetorical interpretation enacts an interactive interpretive analytic that juxtaposes and interrelates phenomena by drawing and redrawing boundaries of analysis and interpretation. The approach uses a transmodern philosophical position of relationism to interrelate ancient, modern and post-modern systems of thought with one another.” Vernon K. Robbins, “Beginnings and Developments in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation,” (May 1, 2004).
<http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/SRIBegDevRRA.pdf>

²⁰⁵ David B. Gowler, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and Its Reception,” *JSNT* 33 (2010): 194.

²⁰⁶ “The philosophy of a method is grounded in a belief that the true nature of something is ‘in something itself.’ In contrast, the philosophy of an interpretive analytic is grounded in the belief that the true nature of something is exhibited in the way it relates to all other things. This is the difference between a philosophy of essence or substance and a philosophy of relations.” Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse, Volume 1*, 5. L. Gregory Bloomquist, “The Rhetoric of Suffering in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: Socio-Rhetorical Reflections and Further Thoughts on a Post-Colonial Contribution to the Discussion,” *Theoforum* 35 (2004): 202.

patterns, and images inherent in the warp and woof of a text. These textures (inner-, inter-, social and cultural, ideological, and sacred) can serve as a taxonomy of various possible approaches that an interpreter might use to develop a fuller understanding of a text as a product of human reflection, interaction, language, and the socio-cultural dynamics of its world. SRI provides a theoretic space that invites various analytic tools into open conversation with one another as interpreters try to make sense of ancient texts. In this way, the full tapestry of textures and patterns can be seen as a programmatic embodiment of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical categories: the world of the text (inner texture), the world behind the text (social and cultural textures, intertexture) and the world in front of the text (ideological texture).²⁰⁷ Such a programmatic reading of texts and textures of texts offers an especially appropriate tool for the identification of the presence of major *topoi* in a text, their social, cultural, and intertextual configurations, and their place within the ideological dynamic of an argument.

The Greek word *topos* (plural: *topoi*), which corresponds to the Latin *locus* (plural: *loci*), is commonly translated into English as “topic,” but “place” and “sphere” offer better translations.²⁰⁸ Aristotle, using the metaphor of place, describes the rhetorical function of *topos* as a conceptual place to which an arguer may go to find arguments.²⁰⁹ Though *topoi* did not embody the formal deductive validity of Aristotelian syllogistic logic, they did provide useful and popular arguments and a social logic for speakers in a variety of practical contexts, which included political debate (deliberative rhetoric), legal

²⁰⁷ Paul Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), 75–85.

²⁰⁸ Richard D. Rieke and Malcolm O. Sillars, *Argumentation and Critical Decision Making* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1993), 25–26.

²⁰⁹ Carolyn Miller, “The Aristotelian Topos: Hunting for Novelty,” in *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 132. Cicero discussed *topoi* as “places where arguments lurk”. Quintilian described them as “seats of arguments.” J. P. Zompetti, “The Value of Topoi,” *Argumentation* (2006): 18–19.

argument (forensic rhetoric), or public ceremony (epideictic rhetoric).²¹⁰ Within each particular context, *topoi* were considered to be accurate and reliable foundations for argument, even if their truth was an assumed truth based in common beliefs, value hierarchies, and social conventions that emerged from the discourse and quotidian experiences of a given culture.²¹¹

Building on this “common-place” tradition of classical rhetoric, Vernon Robbins defines *topos* as:

A place to which an arguer, problem solver, or thinker may mentally go to find arguments. Thus, *topoi* (plural) are landmarks on the mental geography of thought which themselves evoke a constellation of networks of meanings as a result of social, cultural or ideological use. A *topos* contains a pictorial dimension, which SRI calls its rhetography, and an argumentative dimension, which SRI calls its rhetology.²¹²

L. G. Bloomquist, who has continued to refine and extend the application of socio-rhetorical interpretation from its initial textural analysis into a *topos*-centered analytics, explains that for Robbins:

The analysis of textures is primarily intended to uncover not disparate and often fragmented threads (or “textures”) in a text but rather the essential, rhetorical building blocks of the text, namely, the *topoi*, even where these are not directly discernible via one texture or another, which give the text its “look.”²¹³

The suggestion is that a careful examination of the various textures of a text enables the discovery of discrete *topoi* which have been “strategically semantically clustered” within

²¹⁰ Aristotle’s logic is characterized by his theory of syllogism (συλλογισμός) or deduction. Aristotle says: “A deduction [συλλογισμός] is a discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so. I mean by the last phrase that it follows because of them, and by this, that no further term is required from without in order to make the consequence necessary.” Aristotle, “Prior Analytics” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. A. J. Jenkinson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 24b23–24b26.

²¹¹ Barbara Warnick, “Two Systems of Inventions: The Topics in the Rhetoric and the New Rhetoric,” in *Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, ed. Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 120.

²¹² Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse, Volume I*, xxix. See also L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Paul’s Inclusive Language: The Ideological Texture of Romans,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, ed. David B. Gowder, L. G. Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 174.

²¹³ Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 135.

the text itself and their rich connectivity in the dynamic mental elaborations of the “long term schematic knowledge” of the audience.²¹⁴ SRI, then, offers an interpretive analytics which “seeks to understand rhetorical discourse found in written texts as the by-product of the communication of actual people with bodies and minds living out their existence with others within their social, cultural and ideological geography.”²¹⁵

This research understands *topoi* to be the ideas or beliefs commonly accepted by Sirach and his audience with such conviction that the argument of the discourse may be securely based upon them. These *topoi* are implicitly or explicitly foregrounded (made present to the minds of the audience) in the text of Sir 38:24–39:11 as the essential rhetorical building blocks with which the discourse constructs its understanding of σοφία γραμματέως in relation to σχολή. An investigation of the innertexture, socio-cultural texture, and intertexture will identify and configure the major *topoi* as evidenced by the text itself and by the social, cultural, historical, economic, political, and theological contexts that give them a fuller shape and meaning. This configuration of the *topoi* sharpens their interpretive focus, highlights the various contours of their mental or rhetorical landscapes, and supports a closer examination of how the identified and configured *topoi* have shaped the ideological texture of the discourse and thus how the *topoi* are used argumentatively to advance a new meaning and understanding for “the wisdom of the scribe.”²¹⁶

2.3.1 Innertexture: Foregrounding the Major *Topoi* in the World of the Text

Innertextural analysis concerns relationships among words, phrases, narrational patterns, structural elements, feelings, emotions, senses, and persuasive argumentative strategies that produce the “networks of signification” within a text itself. At this level of

²¹⁴ Gruca-Macaulay, *The Role of Lydia*, 33; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 40.

²¹⁵ Bloomquist, “Eyes wide open,” 4.

²¹⁶ Cf. Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 137–139.

exploration, a textual artifact is approached only as a formal medium or instrument of communication. The intention is to initiate and cultivate an intimate relationship with the words, techniques, and infrastructure that have been used to construct and convey meaning and meaning-effects in a written or spoken discourse. There is little concern for language beyond basic meanings or any information outside of the text, but rather, the focus is only on the intrinsic and formal aspects of the text itself.²¹⁷ By focusing on various dimensions of innertexture (repetitive/progressive texture and pattern, narrational texture and pattern, opening-middle-closing texture and pattern, sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern, and argumentative texture and pattern) the “presence” of major *topoi* and their places in the text begin to become apparent.²¹⁸ Repetitive texture and pattern is established in the recurrence of words and phrases, grammatical or syntactical choices, topical foci, conjunctions or adverbs used more than once in a unit of discourse. Such repetitions become a first indicator of possible *topoi* that function rhetorically within a text. For example, applied to this research, the analysis of repetitive texture in Sir 38:24–39:11 will identify a number of repeated elements associated with σοφία, γραμματεὺς and σχολή/ἔργον as possible *topoi*. Then an analysis of innertexture, especially argumentative texture, will identify the place of each of these terms/words within the overall argument schema of the discourse. A subsequent configuration of each term within the vast webs of socio-cultural texture and intertexture amplifies the cultural knowledge, societal attitudes, historical events, and literary connections that are consciously or unconsciously assembled to create meaning and to disclose common-place understandings which determine the significance of each term within the argument. When fully configured, the terms identified to be essential building blocks of the argumentative flow and reasoning

²¹⁷ Proponents of Russian Formalism and French Structuralism speak of “intrinsic” and “text-immanent” analysis. Robbins, *Tapestry*, 29–30.

²¹⁸ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 46; *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7; Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 117.

of the discourse are considered to be its operative *topoi*.

Progressive texture and pattern is apparent in the sequence of words and phrases, repeated or not, or in a repetition of clustered elements as the discourse moves forward to achieve its purpose.²¹⁹ Progressive texture is also evident in alternating patterns of words, a shift of language, a discontinued repetition, or an introduction of new language. This level of analysis offers an initial indicator of rhetorical structure. In the Sirach text, for example, a frequent repetition of ἔργον in the early verses will completely disappear in later verses in which the focus of the text has shifted to a different lexis.

Opening-middle-closing texture, closely related to and contoured by the repetitive and progressive textures and patterns, concerns the beginning, body, and conclusion of a discourse and thus helps to establish the limits of a rhetorical unit.²²⁰ In the Sirach text, the initial textures will highlight a clear pattern of development moving in several stages from an opening thesis (Sir 38:24^a) toward a concluding praise for scribal achievements (Sir 39:9-11). In the process, the opening-middle-closing texture reinforces the identification and configuration of the major *topoi* through the consistent use and development of those *topoi* in the flow of the rhetorical unit.²²¹

Narrational texture and pattern is formed by the voices of a text and by a wide range of actors, actions, spaces, and places, which create and configure the textual world of a text.²²² The voices may include the narrator, actors, real author, implied author, narratee, implied reader, and real reader. Beyond the voices, there are chosen characters (and omitted characters) along with their actions in particular places and spaces. While the narrational texture may appear to be an innocent, straightforward accounting of

²¹⁹ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 8–14.

²²⁰ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 50–52; *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 19–21. The limits of Sirach 38:24–29:11 will be discussed in chapter three when considering the innertexture, which shows the internal cohesion of an identified rhetorical unit of discourse.

²²¹ Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 117–118.

²²² Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 29–36.

events, in fact, this texture represents a controlled staging of characters, their actions and limitations, emotions, decisions, and convictions from a particular point of view—all directed toward achieving the purpose of the communication. The text of Sir 38:24–39:11 is not itself a narrative, yet it contains some features that would be found in a narrative: the description of artisans, the demands of physical labour, the exclusion from positions of influence in the βουλή, ἐκκλησία, and δίφρος δικαστοῦ and the essential role of artisans in human society. These are all significant elements in a deliberately constructed image of the world used to carry the argument forward.

Sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern refers to the range of senses and sense-related activities that a text embodies or evokes (thoughts, feelings, emotions, sights, sounds, touch, smells, activity, etc.) and the manner in which it evokes or embodies them (reason, intuition, imagination, humour, repetition, etc.).²²³ This texture provides colour and tone to a discourse as it helps to foreground significant *topoi*. In the context of other textures, especially in the argumentative texture, it appeals to the lived experiences of the readers/listeners.

Argumentative texture and pattern is concerned with the kind of inner reasoning that is employed in a discourse to make and support its points or rhetorical purpose. According to Aristotle, reasoning may be logical and deductive (ethymematic) with an explicit assertion, supporting reasons, rationales, clarifications, and even the anticipation of counter-arguments. Alternatively, reasoning may take the form of a qualitative or an implicit portrayal of images, descriptions, examples, analogies, ancient testimonies, thematic elaborations and the like, which operate in a persuasive manner to create an inductive (paradigmatic) reasoning.²²⁴ Frequently arguments are constructed using some com-

²²³ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993); Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 29–31. Here one might refer to Bruce Malina's identification of "body zones" and their related phenomena in the Mediterranean world: purposeful action, self-expressive speech, or emotion-fused thought.

²²⁴ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 19–21.

bination of these two types of reasoning to generate the argumentative resources necessary to move arguments forward toward their goals.

In 2006, Vernon Robbins adopted the terms rhetography and rhetology to describe the types of reasoning with which an argument is conveyed in discourse.²²⁵ By the term rhetology (the expressible [rhetos] reasoning [logos] of a text) he meant the presence and unfolding of rationales, arguments and conclusions of a speaker/author about the world and the things and processes in it.²²⁶ Closely related to rhetology is rhetography, which deals with a speaker's/writer's use of language or signs that "conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke 'familiar' contexts and/or experiences that provide meaning for a hearer or reader."²²⁷ Although not an exact equation with Aristotle's categories of deductive and inductive reasoning, rhetology tends to involve a deductive type of thinking that is expressed in rhetorical enthymemes while rhetography tends toward the inductive in pictorial-narrative images.²²⁸ Scholars seem to have paid much closer attention to rhetology than to rhetography, yet it is precisely when visualizations are blended with rational argumentation that a text achieves its full rhetorical force.²²⁹

As part of an interpretive analytics, rhetography is the way in which a text, written or spoken, evokes images, scenes, or simulations in the imaginations of the readers or hearers. In creating these images and simulations, rhetography takes seriously the ancient

²²⁵ Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing Familiar Text" (paper presented at Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Seminar at the Annual Meeting of The Society of Biblical Literature; Washington, D.C., November 2006), 1.

²²⁶ Vernon K. Robbins, "Enthymeme and Picture in the Gospel of Thomas," in *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*, ed. Jon M. Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 175–207; David A. deSilva, "Seeing Things John's Way: Rhetography and Conceptual Blending in Revelation 14:6–13," *BBR* 18 (2008): 273; deSilva, "Seeing Things John's Way," 273. L.G. Bloomquist speaks of the elaboration of *topoi* as "topography" (pictorial-narrative development) and "topology" (enthymematic-syllogistic development), which configure the landscape of the argumentative texture. "Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology," 137.

²²⁷ Robbins, "Rhetography," 1.

²²⁸ Robbins, "Rhetography," 4–5; Bloomquist, "Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology," 137–38.

²²⁹ Vernon K. Robbins, "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," in *Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the 2000 Lund Conference*, ed. A. Erikson, T.H. Olbricht, and W. Übelacker; (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 27–65.

Greek rhetorical exercise of *ekphrasis* which is “descriptive language bringing what is shown before the eyes.”²³⁰ Beginning with a single “verbal picture” a text may elaborate that image by offering additional, sequential images in order to create a “graphic story.”²³¹ Hearing or reading these “verbal pictures” the audience, in turn, creates in its own mind images or simulations which evoke a conceptual domain providing a context “in which assertions can be understood as reasonable.”²³² Such “expressible graphic images” work together with rhetorology of a text to persuade an audience to adopt a particular attitude or course of action.²³³ In other words, rhetographic interpretation is concerned with how graphic images and the conceptual domains which they evoke augment the expressed argumentation (rhetorology) of a discourse.²³⁴ Thus “a speaker or writer composes, intentionally or unintentionally, a context of communication through statements or signs that conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke “familiar” contexts that provide meaning for a reader or hearer.”²³⁵ For example, the analysis of

²³⁰ Aphthonius, “Preliminary Exercises” in *Progymnasmata*, ed. and trans. George Kennedy (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2003), 117. Aristotle instructed ancient rhetoricians that to persuade hearers successfully, one “must be made to see things” (*Rhetoric*, 3.11). W. T. J. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1994), 11–34.

²³¹ Gowler, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation,” 199.

²³² Robbins, “Rhetography,” 4–5. Cf. Vernon K. Robbins, “The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse,” *Scriptura* 59 (1996): 356; Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 138–9.

²³³ The current attention to rhetography arises from the work of cognitive theorists, especially those who have pioneered the notions of “conceptual blending” and “cognitive integration networks.” What is being suggested is that human beings, at the most basic level, make decisions based on the ability to create “imaginative mental simulations” and to project imaginatively the processes they would entertain as possible courses of action and their consequences. This process is supported by past experience and observations (including past cultural experiences encoded in, for example, rituals, texts, and traditions which serve as a resource for current decision making. The human capacity for language allows for the sharing of these “mental simulations” with others. By assigning phonemes to represent the “imaginative simulations” in the public domain, it is possible to affect and influence each other’s thoughts and feelings. Such principles appear in the rhetorical theories of many modern rhetoricians. Todd Oakley, “The Human Rhetorical Potential,” *Written Communication* 16 (1999): 98–100; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*; Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Allan Paivio, *Mind and Its Evolution: A Dual Coding Theoretical Approach* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

²³⁴ deSilva, “Seeing Things John’s Way,” 274; Robbins, “Enthymeme and Picture,” 179.

²³⁵ Quoted from L. G. Bloomquist, “Eyes wide open, seeing nothing” a paper presented at Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminars, Atlanta, 16 September 2014.

Sirach 38:24–39:11 will show that the first half of Sirach’s argument evokes images of the physical demands of manual labour with the resultant exclusion from positions and places of influence which allows the audience to “see” why the wisdom of the scribe requires σχολή. The images created in the mind of the audience point toward a plausible and particular conclusion.

The conceptual domains created by such rhetographic images serve as cultural frames that may be characterized by particular kinds of reasoning, enthymematic forms, and constellations of *topoi* that are archetypally native to particular social spaces. This is the foundation of Robbins’s understanding of “rhetorolects” (rhetorical dialects) that he defined as “a form of language variety or discourse identifiable on the basis of a distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentation.”²³⁶ Considering various distinctive conceptual domains and cultural frames, Robbins has identified six distinctive rhetorolects: wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, priestly, and miracle. Guided by insights derived from critical spatiality theory, and conceptual blending theory, Robbins demonstrated how each of the six rhetorolects understands and represents the interaction among Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace.²³⁷ Firstspace is formulated

²³⁶ Robbins, “Rhetography,” 4–5.

²³⁷ Critical spatiality theory contends that like history and society, space is not encountered as a transparent and objective reality, but rather it is constructed in social practice and must therefore be theorized. Edward Soja, reworking Henri Lefebvre’s perceived space, conceived space, and lived space, understands space as an epistemological triune comprised of Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996). For Soja, Firstspace represents the “geophysical world as perceived”; “the concrete materiality of spatial forms...things that can be empirically mapped.” Jon Berquist, “Theories of Space and the Construction of the Ancient World,” (paper presented at The Constructs of the Social and Cultural World of Antiquity Group at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, MA, 20 November 1999), 6. Secondspace is imagined space, “ideas about space,...thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms;” (Soja, *Thirdspace*, 10) and Thirdspace includes the notion of “lived realities as practiced” (Berquist, “Theories of Space,” 6) but it is much more than this. Jim Flanagan uses the terms material space, designed space, and lived space. “Ancient Perceptions of Space / Perceptions of Ancient Space,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 15–43. Also see Claudia V. Camp, “Storied Space, or, Ben Sira ‘Tells’ a Temple,” *JSOTSup* 359 (2002): 64–80; *‘Imaging’ Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honour of James M. Flanagan*, ed. David M. Gunn and Paula McNutt (New York, NY: Sheffield Academic 2002). Robbins, *The Invention*, Vol. I, 104–120.

by Robbins as experienced physical, social, and cultural *realia*; Secondspace is a visualization, conceptualization, and imagination of God's world; and Thirdspace represents the ongoing bodily enactments of a religious life.²³⁸ In other words, the interaction and blending of these three spaces are used to account for and describe the ongoing experiences of alternatively perceived worlds in which people actualize their day to day living.²³⁹

A *topos*-centred analysis of argumentative texture is concerned with how texts "develop or elaborate *topoi* in pictorial-narrative ways [rhetography] and/or in enthymematic-syllogistic ways [rhetology]" to configure the landscape of arguments.²⁴⁰ By extending beyond the surface concerns of an innertextural analysis of argumentation, an intertextural perspective will show that there is also a level of transcultural or social and cultural argumentation embedded, configured, and reconfigured within the reasoning and rationales of a text. The combination of the innertextural modes of argumentation with the topics of social and cultural argumentation produce rich rhetorical environments (rhetorolects) that are relatively consistent and identifiable in appearance.²⁴¹ L.G.

Bloomquist comments:

The *topoi* and the relationship between the modes of elaboration in which the *topoi* are used create new social, cultural, textual, and sacred locations that are intended to nurture and promote the ethos of those argumentative modes, and these have a certain consistency and constancy and are therefore able to be used in a variety of situations and contexts that are thus identifiable across texts. Furthermore the identification of a rhetorolect enables rhetorolects to serve as heuristic constructs that enable interpreters to identify other *topoi* that may form part of a rhetorolect, or even the potential for *topoi* to evoke particular topographies and topologies.²⁴²

SRI seeks to understand how a text selects *topoi* that evoke particular rhetorolects and then amplifies the *topoi* and utilizes them in argumentation to generate new configurations of meaning.

²³⁸ Robbins, "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism," 313.

²³⁹ Robbins, "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism," 313.

²⁴⁰ Bloomquist, "Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology," 137.

²⁴¹ Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse, Volume I*, xxvii–xxviii.

²⁴² Bloomquist, "Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology," 138.

2.3.2 Intertexture: The Configuration of *Topoi* and the World Behind the Text

Intertexture moves beyond the self-contained world of the innertexture to consider how the possible *topoi* of a discourse interact with other simultaneous networks of signification that intersect with the world of the text.²⁴³ Robbins delineates a variety of ways that intertexture may be analyzed.²⁴⁴ Oral-scribal intertexture concerns the interweaving of ideas and materials from other literary sources and oral traditions that have been employed by a writer in the creation of their own work.²⁴⁵ Such intertexture may be in the form of recitation (the presentation of speech or narrative received from either written or oral sources), recontextualization (the presentation of speech or narrative received from elsewhere without any indication of the source), reconfiguration (the restructuring of antecedent traditions as “new”), narrative amplification (an extended composition containing recitation, recontextualization and reconfiguration), or thematic elaboration. Sirach 38:24–39:11 offers an example of oral-scribal intertexture in its obvious use of written school text traditions, which deal with the training of scribes and a comparison of scribal culture in relation to the working lives of artisans.

Historical intertexture looks at the portrayal of specific events that have occurred at specific times and locations.²⁴⁶ Historical intertexture must consider a number of issues such as the availability of data (whether the text being studied provides the only source of information about the event, or whether there are other accounts not dependent upon it) and the nature of the data (whether the source is a record of some kind or a literary recounting with particular rhetorical interests).

In the *topos*-centred perspective of L. G. Bloomquist, which will be followed in this research, a consideration of intertexture also includes a concern for the

²⁴³ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 40–68.

²⁴⁴ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 96–143.

²⁴⁵ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 40–58.

²⁴⁶ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 63–68; *Tapestry*, 118–20.

embeddedness of socio-cultural meaning in texts as well as the specific ways a text stands in relation to other texts.²⁴⁷ Intertexture, now including socio-cultural considerations, investigates elements that either contribute to or help to form and configure the *topoi* and argumentation within the living environments from which a text has emerged. Thus, intertexture is not about constructing a picture of the entire ancient world. Rather, guided by the findings of innertextural analysis, attention is focused on the interplay of associations and dissociations of specific *topoi* with various “outside” texts, objects, historical events, customs, values, social roles, cultural institutions, and traditions that form the networks of meaning within which and out of which texts arise. Indeed, rhetorical discourse is predicated on the “communion” of such shared social, cultural, and religious meanings as the very foundation of its argument(s).

Social texture explores the representation of knowledge commonly held by all persons of a particular region or the perception of the overall context in which people live.²⁴⁸ Social texture appears as social roles (scribe, artisan, farmer), social identities (Jew, Greek, *ethnos*), social institutions (βουλή, ἐκκλησία, δίφρος δικαστοῦ), social codes (honour, shame, hospitality), the dyadic nature of relationships (patron, friend, enemy, kin), the perception of “limited goods” (all goods in life, including honour, wealth, or love exist in a finite, limited supply), and rules governing purity and so on, the meaning of which may be explored with the aid of texts, inscriptions, archaeological data, sculptures, paintings, and other works of art.²⁴⁹ The perspectives of social science theories and research can offer important insights with which to explore the behaviours,

²⁴⁷ Because of the way that L.G. Bloomquist understands ideological texture, he has found it useful to present Robbins’s five textures (inner-, inter-, social and cultural, ideological, and sacred) as three (inner- inter- and ideological textures). Common social and cultural topics, as well as sacred texture, are folded into the exploration of intertexture. Specific social topics and final cultural categories have been considered with an exploration of ideological texture. Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 116–124, 135–136.

²⁴⁸ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 62–63; *Tapestry*, 115–118.

²⁴⁹ Malina, *New Testament World*, 28–183.

norms, and relationships operative within the world inhabited by the author and audience of a text. The heuristic use of social science models allows for the creation of various reading scenarios that may be able to account for social and cultural behaviours expressed in a text. This research will make specific use of Gerhard Lenski's macrosociological model of an advanced agrarian society and the common social stratification and roles common in such communities.²⁵⁰ Beyond that, studies of literacy skills and power in ancient societies offer possible perspectives concerning the social place of the scribe in a Jewish diaspora community.²⁵¹

Cultural texture focuses on the representation of specific cultural knowledge (words, concept patterns and configurations, values, scripts, codes, systems, and myths) in the development of a text, its themes and concerns.²⁵² Cultural texture may appear through a reference (a word or phrase that points to a personage or tradition that may be known on the basis of tradition), an allusion (a statement that presupposes a tradition that exists in textual form but without any attempt to recite it), or an echo (a word or phrase that evokes, or potentially evokes, a concept from cultural tradition). Here, the culture of σχολή and the attitudes toward ἔργον, in both the Greek and traditional Judaic communities, will offer important insights underlying the ideological texture.

2.3.3 Ideological Texture: Rhetorical Purpose and the World Beyond the Text

The initial focus of SRI seems to be a more or less descriptive phase of analysis concerned with the operation of language within the boundaries of the text itself (innertexture) and then with the dynamic relation to phenomena outside of the text

²⁵⁰ Gerhard Emmanuel Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1966); *Human Societies: A Macrolevel Introduction to Sociology* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

²⁵¹ Ralph Turner, *The Great Cultural Traditions: The Foundations of Civilization* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1941); Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²⁵² Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 58–62; Robbins, *Tapestry*, 108–115.

including the social and cultural systems explicitly and implicitly presumed by the text (social and cultural texture/intertexture). Rhetorical texts, however, do much more than simply present the textual world of a text itself or describe the social and cultural realities behind a text. Authors also write for a particular purpose, deploy *topoi* to achieve a particular goal, and configure or reconfigure existing cultural historical belief systems, including their “biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes.”²⁵³ Such concerns constitute the ideological texture of a text.

L. G. Bloomquist has suggested that:

Ideological texture is manifest in the rhetorical goal of texts, namely, where authors attempt to get an audience, real or fictive, to do or understand something, and that not just negatively or for reasons of coercive power. While other textures of socio-rhetorical analysis discern static pictures of the inner world of the text, or of the intersecting relations of the text and its players to the textual, social, cultural and historical world around it or to the great cosmic scenario on which the drama is played out, or of the social and cultural scenarios on which the drama is played out, ideological texture is the arena for the exploration of movement away from, or back to, or just around the scenarios suggested in the static views. As such the text attempts to move an audience to new static positions in which people will find themselves, or putative movement in which people are reconfirmed in the place which they have not left.²⁵⁴

The premise of Bloomquist’s understanding of ideology is that people and groups normally remain in the social and cultural worlds they have been given (static) and, within that world, they create value systems reflecting their given social and cultural realities (static) unless compelled, by experience or reflection, to adopt another world (dynamic).²⁵⁵ In other words, if a cultural world (static) is unable to meet the needs of people, or groups, the resulting tension or problem leads to movement and choices that attempt to address the problem by reconfiguring the culture or moving to a different one. Such movements and choices lead people out of or into different relationships with other

²⁵³ Bloomquist, “Rhetoric of Suffering,” 205.

²⁵⁴ Bloomquist, “Paul’s Inclusive Language,” 171.

²⁵⁵ Bloomquist, “Rhetoric of Suffering,” 205–206.

individuals, groups or ideas. Thus a programmatic analysis of ideological texture will involve some way to get at the choices and movements of an audience.²⁵⁶

Getting at the movement and choices that underlie ideological texture involves the identification of cultural location and the manner in which people present their propositions, reasons, and arguments both to themselves and to other people. In other words, it involves what social scientists call “social topics” and “final cultural categories” with which individuals explain their world and their place within it. This movement and choice may be approached through sociological analysis such as Bryan Wilson’s “A Typology of Sects” or Keith Roberts’s concepts of culture.²⁵⁷

Bryan Wilson’s typology of new religious movements schematizes the way various religious groups might perceive and respond to the world.²⁵⁸ The response to the outside world constitutes a visible, social variable which is influenced by doctrinal thought, although it may also be determined by other factors.²⁵⁹ The responses may be acceptance, rejection, neglect, an effort to transcend, improve, or transvalue opportunities that the world offers. Wilson presents such responses in seven broad categories:

- 1) *conversionist*, a religious perception that the world is corrupt because people are corrupt and if people can be changed, the world can be changed;
- 2) *revolutionist*, a religious perception that only the destruction of the world, and specifically its social order, will be sufficient to save people;

²⁵⁶ Bloomquist, “Paul’s Inclusive Language,” 172.

²⁵⁷ Bryan R. Wilson, “A Typology of Sects,” in *Sociology of Religion*, ed. Roland Robertson (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969), 361–383. Keith A. Roberts, “Toward a Generic Concept of Counter-Culture,” *Sociological Focus* 11 (April 1978): 111–126.

²⁵⁸ Wilson, “Typology,” 361–383.

²⁵⁹ Wilson is well aware of the possible effect of age, social class, and levels of education on our responses to the world, but sees his identified types as views that tend to dominate the customary practices and beliefs of members. Wilson, “Typology,” 363–364.

- 3) *introversionist*, a religious perception that the world as irredeemably evil and considers salvation to be attainable only by the fullest possible withdrawal from it;
- 4) *gnostic-manipulationist*, a religious perception that seeks only a transformed set of relationships because salvation is possible and evil may be overcome if people learn the right techniques to deal with their problems;
- 5) *thaumaturgical*, a religious perception that focuses on the individual's concern for relief from present and specific ills by specific dispensations which take the form of healing and restoration;
- 6) *reformist*, a religious perception that views the world as corrupt because social structures are corrupt— if the structures can be changed so the behaviours they sanction are changed, then salvation will be present in the world; and
- 7) *utopian*, a religious perception that seeks to reconstruct the entire social world according to divinely given principles, rather than simply to amend it.²⁶⁰

These categories will be heuristically useful in approaching the ideology underlying Sirach's presentation of the wisdom of the scribe.

Final cultural topics may be approached through Keith Roberts's analysis, which situates people and groups in terms of different types of culture: dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture.²⁶¹ Each of these cultures may be represented in a particular rhetorical style. *Dominant culture rhetoric* presents a system of attitudes, values, dispositions, and norms which a speaker either presupposes or asserts as supported or imposed by the existing social structures. *Subculture rhetoric* imitates dominant culture rhetoric while claiming to enact it better than members of the dominant status. *Counterculture rhetoric* rejects characteristics of the dominant culture

²⁶⁰ Wilson, "Typology," 364–371.

²⁶¹ Final social and cultural categories are topics that most decisively identify one's cultural location. In contrast with social location, these final topics are concerned with the manner in which individuals present their propositions, reasons, and arguments to themselves and to other people.

or subculture rhetoric and responds with a rhetoric that evokes a “new future” grounded in a well-developed supporting ideology. *Contracultural rhetoric* is primarily a reactive response to some form of dominant culture, subculture, or counterculture rhetoric; it does not form an alternative response developed on the basis of a different system of understanding, but simply reacts in a negative way to certain values and practices in other cultures. Finally, *liminal culture rhetoric* occurs at the outer edges of identity. It exists among individuals and groups that have yet to establish a clear social and cultural identity in their setting.²⁶² The sociological categories set out by Keith Roberts provide a useful language for exploring cultural categories and for the determination of cultural location.

In the end, movements and shifts from one static position to another require the creation of explanatory systems to resolve the tension and conflict generated by the re-ordering of the old “topics” and/or the creation of new ones.²⁶³ This explanatory system is “ideology” and that is what is expressed in the ideological texture, as a text or discourse attempts to move an audience from one way of being or looking at the world to another. Bloomquist summarizes this idea by saying:

...ideological texture deals with what authors do with preexisting *topoi*: alter, confirm, nuance, reshape, etc. Rhetorically, authors employ them in ways that reconfigure them (changing them from a static identity to another) or what is done with them (changing how they have been employed or could otherwise be used in argumentation to that point).²⁶⁴

2.3.4 Transcultural Rhetorical Criticism

In his discussion of Wuellner’s hermeneutic, Robbins introduces the topic of transcultural rhetorical criticism and cites Steven Mailloux’s work in ideology and ethnocentrism as an

²⁶² Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 86–88.

²⁶³ Bloomquist, “Rhetoric of Suffering,” 206–208.

²⁶⁴ Bloomquist, “Paul’s Inclusive Language,” 75.

important consideration for twenty-first century scholarship.²⁶⁵ According to Mailloux:

It is our own ethnocentric web of beliefs and desires that gives us interpretive purchase on any object of attention, including the texts or classification of systems of another culture. The validity of our interpretation is a function of the rhetorical context in which we argue them: who participates in the conversation, when and where, with what purposes and so on.²⁶⁶

As he develops his argument further, Mailloux refers to “transcultural judgements” and crossing boundaries:

If transformational judgements are always cross-cultural translations, then such interpretations are liminal acts opening up space in which boundaries are transformed yet paradoxically maintained even as they are crossed. Boundaries are crossed in interpretation when one culture becomes the conversational topic or interpretive topic of another; boundaries are maintained as the interpretive act in its rhetorical exchanges figures and persuades within the context of the interpreting culture; the boundaries are moved as interpretation changes the shape—trivially or dramatically—of the culture in which the interpretation is produced and received.²⁶⁷

To understand an act within a foreign culture, the differences must be found in the margins of our own ...[A]s we interact with other communities, traditions, cultures, we can reweave our webs of belief to take account of the other, and we do this more or less successfully from differing points of view within and outside our own groups.²⁶⁸

The effect of such a view, as understood by Robbins, will allow us to overcome oppositional language and proceed through the doors of a transcultural rhetorical critical approach to texts.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ Vernon K. Robbins, “Where is Wuellner’s Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us?: From Schleiermacher to Thistleton and Beyond,” in *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics: Wilhelm Wuellner and His Influence*, ed. James D. Hester and J. David Hester (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2004), 115–116.

²⁶⁶ Steven Mailloux, “Articulation and Understanding: The Pragmatic Intimacy Between Rhetoric and Hermeneutics,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, ed. Walter Jost and Hyde J. Michael (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 387–88 as cited by Robbins, “Where is Wuellner’s Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us?” 115–16.

²⁶⁷ Mailloux, “Articulation and Understanding,” 388.

²⁶⁸ Mailloux, “Articulation and Understanding,” 388–389.

²⁶⁹ Robbins, “Where is Wuellner’s Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us?” 116–17. For a further probing of what is being suggested by such a transcultural rhetoric see James P. Zappan, “US and Russian Traditions in Rhetoric, Education and Culture,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 44 (2012): 745–760 for comments concerning the approaches of Kenneth Burke and Mikhail Bakhtin to an appreciation and acceptance of multiple persuasive acts and the achievement of more complex unities.

Citing Mikhail Epstein, Robbins notes that transculturalism avoids “oppositional binaries—especially center and periphery—and emphasizes cultural identity as a dynamic, unstable, and ongoing construction.”²⁷⁰ The goal is “a model of cultural interaction that would not unify cultures but diversify them further through their mutual interaction.”²⁷¹ Beyond that, transculturalism invites and welcomes interference, “the spontaneous interaction between various kinds of cultural activity.”²⁷²

Within a transcultural model, spaces between diverging cultures are filled by the effects of their interferences... Instead of isolated spots or separate points, interference produces “polychromatic patterns” and three dimensional cultural spaces.²⁷³

Interference “transposes the borders of interacting cultures, mentalities, and disciplines in multiple directions.”²⁷⁴ The effect of this interaction of cultures is “transforming a divisive politics of identity into a politics of creative interference.”²⁷⁵ This insight offers new possibilities in an approach to cultural interaction in diaspora Judaism.

Multiple transcultural dynamics were inherent within the formation of Judaism and also Christianity. “Much of the genius of biblical canon and Jewish religious texts resides in its transcultural nature.”²⁷⁶ Indeed, the entire history of Israel is filled with examples of cultural destruction, including the Israelite culture itself, that initiates a continual deconstruction of traditional canonical modes of discourse and reconstruction of new transcultural discourse.²⁷⁷ Israel’s movement from nomadic desert life into Canaan led to transcultural discourse surrounding kingship; a shift from multiple local shrines to a centralized temple and priesthood utilized transcultural language for both;

²⁷⁰ Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 4.

²⁷¹ Berry and Epstein, *Transcultural*, 8.

²⁷² Berry and Epstein, *Transcultural*, 9.

²⁷³ Berry and Epstein, *Transcultural*, 9.

²⁷⁴ Berry and Epstein, *Transcultural*, 10.

²⁷⁵ Berry and Epstein, *Transcultural*, 12.

²⁷⁶ Robbins, “Where is Wuellner’s Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us?” 117.

²⁷⁷ Robbins, “Where is Wuellner’s Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us?” 117–118.

settled cultural certainties were transformed by the experience of Exile. This research contends that the Greek text of Sir 38:24–39:11 is a transcultural elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως as it is embodied in a faithful Jewish scribe living within the Egyptian diaspora.

2.4 Conclusion of a Socio-Rhetorical Approach

The Greek text of Sir 38:24–39:11 is the product of a Hellenistic rhetorical culture. As such, it embodies particular characteristics and concerns regarding audience adherence to premises, the selection and use of specific *topoi* within its argumentation, liaisons among *topoi*, the expansion of meaning networks, and the transference of adherence from the premises to the conclusions of the argument.

SRI, as outlined by Vernon K. Robbins and L. Gregory Bloomquist, offers an appropriate analytical tool that allows for an exploration of Sir 38:24–39:11 as a rhetorical text. A careful examination of innertexture allows for an initial identification of the presence of major *topoi* and the liaisons among them as evidenced through a close reading of the text itself. At this level of analysis, the argumentative texture of Sirach and its modes of reasoning, at least at the surface level of structure, will become apparent and provide a scaffolding for what will be uncovered in other textures.

Intertextural analysis, which in the *topos*-centred approach of L. Gregory Bloomquist includes socio-cultural textures, explores a fuller configuration of the *topoi* within various meaning networks and liaisons outside of the text itself. The consideration of intertexture will include an investigation of common understandings, hierarchies, and values operative in the world from which the text has emerged. The sources will include commonly shared social and cultural behaviours and patterns and the interweaving of materials from other literary sources that have been used in the construction of the Sirach text. Here one encounters the broad conceptual integration networks that have been called up from and for audience consideration. The networks, set in relation with one

another, dynamically advance the elaboration of the emergent structure of σοφία γραμματέως.

Ideological texture is concerned with the rhetorical goal of the discourse and an analysis of the rhetorical force of its argument(s). Here the attempt is to probe

the plausible ways in which a speech or text seems to be attempting to move an audience in relation to plausible contexts in which it finds itself. If successful, the speech or text has a rhetorical force that can lead to emergent discourse that creates a new, emergent cultural context.²⁷⁸

The analysis of ideological texture includes a re-engagement of the configured *topoi* into the argumentative flow of the discourse and considers insights that open out to a plausible transcultural understanding of scribal wisdom. Taken together, the socio-rhetorical textures and patterns of Sir 38:24–39:11 will achieve a rhetorical force, effectively persuading the audience to embrace an elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως as a gift from God to a scholarly and faithful scribe who embodies a learned παιδεία and a pride in the law of the Lord’s covenant (ἐν νόμῳ διαθήκης κυρίου).

²⁷⁸ L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Eyes wide open,” 6.

CHAPTER 3

INNERTEXTURE: IDENTIFYING *TOPOI*

3.1 Introduction

A socio-rhetorical analysis of innertexture begins by establishing the boundaries of a discrete, cohesive, and integral rhetorical unit and then examines the lexical patterns, structural elements, sensory-aesthetic qualities, and argumentative flow from which the discourse has been constructed. A careful examination of these textures and patterns enables the identification of foregrounded elements that may serve as specific *topoi*, the rhetorical building blocks of a text, which have been strategically arranged to establish a connection with the dynamic mental elaborations of the long-term schematic knowledge of the audience. This chapter establishes the rhetorical boundaries of Sir 38:24–39:11, explores its innertexture and patterns, and identifies the major highlighted elements of the discourse to be configured by exploring their socio-cultural texture and intertexture.

3.2 Sirach 38:24–39:11 as a Discrete, Cohesive, and Integral Rhetorical Unit

The discrete, cohesive, and integral rhetorical unity of Sir 38:24–39:11 has not always been readily accepted. The earliest interpretations of Sirach did not even regard 38:24–34 and 39:1–11 as a single literary unit. It was only after the promulgation of the Clementine Vulgate and the eighteenth-century commentaries of Augustin Calmet and Richard Arnald that the text of 38:24–39:11 was studied as a single interpretive unit.²⁷⁹ Beyond that, the rhetorical nature of the material was not seriously recognized until the very

²⁷⁹See comments on the work of Calmet and Arnald in section 1.4.

Critical approaches of the last century attempted to situate Sir 38:24–39:11 within larger literary structures or as a part of broader interpretive units. Johannes Marböck and Helge Stadelmann, for example, have argued that the Sirach discourse pictures the scribe as an idealized culmination of an extended discussion concerning different “categories of people” (36:23–31 about women; 37:1–6 about friends; 37:7–18 about counsellors; 37:19–26 about experienced men, and 38:1–15 about physicians).²⁸⁰ While this proposal holds a particularly strong appeal for interpreters seeking to uncover a broad organizational scaffold within *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*, the arguments adduced for this thematic structure tend to assume or project a consistency and coherence of thought which is not so clearly demonstrated by the texts themselves.²⁸¹ The arguments for a larger unit leave several significant passages completely unaccounted for (viz. 37:27–31 on temperance; 38:16–23 on mourning the dead).²⁸² Beyond that, the arguments fail to consider problems that arise when the text of 37:19–26, on the counsellor, is cited and interpreted without any reference to the place of 37:16–18 with which it forms a textual unity.²⁸³ In effect, the evidence presented to support a thematic structure centred in the “categories of people” lacks both the clarity and the precision required to conclude that the discourse on scribal wisdom is the climax of a larger literary, thematic or rhetorical unit.

Dealing with the text that follows Sir 39:11 Josef Haspecker and Johannes Marböck have attempted to demonstrate that the arguments of Sir 38:24–39:11 function

²⁸⁰Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, 120; Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, 222–23. Stadelmann argues that these texts are paralleled with the categories of peoples presented in Sirach 7:21–31 in order to arrive at “eine Personalunion von Sofer und Priester.”

²⁸¹See page 33 to review the difficulties in establishing an internal organizational structure in Sirach.

²⁸²Sirach 38:20 suggests a link-word connection of δῶς εἰς λύπην τὴν καρδίαν with the repetitions of 38:26, 27, 28, 30, 34; 39:5. Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, 120; Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, 223.

²⁸³Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, 120; Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, 223.

as a kind of introduction to the hymnic verses of 39:12-35.²⁸⁴ They propose that the instruction offered in 39:12-35 is “occasioned” by the idealized description of the scribal life and by the remarks on scribal productivity in 39:6.²⁸⁵ Jan Liesen adopts this argument and appeals to Greek link-words which connect the earlier portrayal of the sage-scribe with the didactic verses of the hymn text.²⁸⁶ These connections, however, are not well enough integrated or structurally aligned with the clearly established lexical patterns of 38:24–39:11 to compel an inclusion of 39:12-35 within the rhetorical boundaries of the discourse on the sage-scribe. In point of fact, Liesen’s own argument presumes the preexistence of the sage-scribe discourse as the reflective referent of the didactic hymn.²⁸⁷ Thus, while Sir 38:24–39:11 may have come to serve an extended or reconfigured purpose within an expanded text or as part of a collection of texts, this alternative proposal recognizes the central place of a discrete, coherent, and integral “anchor text” that undergirds the wider interpretive proposals. This research will limit its attention to the rhetorical nature and unity of Sir 38:24–39:11 as a clearly identifiable, discrete, cohesive, and integral rhetorical unit. A fuller consideration of the place and function of an “anchor text” within a proposed overall compositional structure of *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* will have to be left for others to consider.

According to George Kennedy the text of a rhetorical unit must have “a

²⁸⁴Josef Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach: Ihre religiöse Struktur und ihre literarische und doktrinaire Bedeutung*, AnBib Dissertationes (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 181; Johannes Marböck, “Sir 38,24–39,11: Der Schriftgelehrte Weise,” in *La Sagesse de l’Ancien Testament: Nouvelle Édition Mise à Jour*, ed. Maurice Gilbert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 294.

²⁸⁵Liesen, *Full of Praise*, 43.

²⁸⁶Here Liesen highlights link-word connections including: διανοέομαι (39:7; 39:12^a, 32^b); διήγησις (ἐκδιηγέομαι) (39:2,10; 39:12^b); ἐμπίλημι (39:6; 39:12); thanksgiving and praise of the Lord (39:6; 39:14-15); ὁνομα (39:10; 39:35); αἰνέω (39:9; 39:14-15); “good and evil” (39:4; 39:25). *Full of Praise*, 41.

²⁸⁷Liesen, *Full of Praise*, 41, 43. In the same vein, Martin Löhr has proposed that 38:24–39:11 represents an introduction to a series of didactic units extending from 39:12 to Sirach 41:15 which he describes as instruction based in the preceding portrayal of the scribal profession. “Bildung aus dem Glauben: Beiträge zum Verständnis der Lehrreden des Buches Jesus Sirach,” (PhD diss., University of Bonn, 1975), 96–99.

discernible beginning and ending, connected by some action or argument.”²⁸⁸ Further, he suggests that the boundaries of such a rhetorical unit must encompass at least five or six verses or a portion of a chapter, a full chapter or more. To this end, an interpreter seeks to establish a clear opening and closing of a discourse and then explores the materials bracketed within these limits. Sir 38:24–39:11 presents a coherent discourse offering a twenty-two-verse argument moving from an opening proposition (Sir 38:24^a) to an epideictic closing (39:9-11) that celebrates the achievement of scribal wisdom. A closer examination of the innertexture of this discourse will be the focus of the following sections in this chapter and will support the delimitation of the text as a rhetorical unit.

3.3 Repetitive/Progressive Texture and Pattern

Repetitive/progressive texture is fashioned from the *lexica* and phrases, grammatical and syntactical choices, topical foci, conjunctions, and adverbs used in a unit of discourse. At this level of analysis, because the concern is with emergent patterns of sign, sound, structure, and movement taken on their own terms, words are seen as tools for communication to which only the most basic lexical meaning is assigned. This underlying structure, form, and movement of the text provides the basic constituent elements, the building blocks, which support a meaning process and the meaning-effects that become apparent at other levels of interpretation. The text of Sir 38:24–39:11 is especially rich in both repetition and progression and shows typical signs of a strophic arrangement in several repeated phrases. The text of Sir 38:24-39:11 exhibits clear lexical blocks and patterns.²⁸⁹

The first word of the discourse is σοφία. It is the subject of the five-word assertion, σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς (“The wisdom of the scribe (is) in an

²⁸⁸George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 34.

²⁸⁹A graphic presentation of repetitions and progression is attached as Appendix 1.

opportunity of leisure,” Sir 38:24^a).²⁹⁰ Σοφία as embodied in the scribe is the central topic and concern of the entire discourse.²⁹¹ The occurrence of σοφία at the beginning of the text is followed by three verbal references to “becoming or being made wise”—σοφισθήσεται; Sir 38:24^b; τί σοφισθήσεται, Sir 38:25; σοφίζεται, Sir 38:31—and, then, by three repetitions of the noun (Sir 39:1, 6, 10).

The words γραμματεὺς and σχολή each appear in the text only once, but both words implicitly recur throughout the entire discourse, γραμματεὺς in the lists of scribe-like activities and concerns (Sir 38:32^b-34; 39:1-4) and σχολή in the privileges, opportunities, and engagements associated with the one devoting his mind to study (Sir 39:1-5).²⁹²

The opening hemistich (Sir 38:24^a) is linked with the assertion: ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται (“the one who has little business can become wise,” Sir 38:24^b). The first word of the verse, “wisdom” (σοφία) is counterpoised by the last word of the verse, the indicative passive future verb σοφισθήσεται (“he will become or be made wise”). Similarly, “leisure” (σχολή) is balanced by the idea of “one decreasing or making less” (ἐλαττώω) of “business, deeds, and activities” (πρᾶξις). This is the only place in the discourse where the terms σοφία and σοφίζω appear together in the same block of material. Through the rest of the text, σοφία and σοφίζω are each associated with different groups of people, different types of activity and within different lexical constellations. The two balanced assertions of the opening verse already anticipate

²⁹⁰Jan Liesen notes that there seems to be a problem with the Greek of this text. The opening hemistich of 38:24 has no explicit verb and ordinarily a verbal form of “to be” must be supplied by the reader. According to Liesen, this makes no good sense. Most English translations use a verb meaning “to depend on” or “to result from” to create a meaningful syntactic unit. Liesen suggests that the Greek text is an interpretation and not a translation. This is all the more likely when it is noted that both εὐκαιρία and σχολή are single occurrences in the Greek text. Liesen, *Full of Praise*, 50, n.30.

²⁹¹The expression σοφία γραμματέως appears nowhere else in biblical or extant Greek texts. The term γραμματεὺς appears only twice in *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*. (Sir 38:24; 10:5).

²⁹²Σχολή is also implicit, by its absence, in the lives of those engaged in ἔργον, especially in their limitations from the responsibilities, opportunities, and concerns that require “leisure” (Sir 38:33-34).

tensions and contrasts between σοφία and σοφίζω and between σχολή and πράξις that will emerge as the text moves forward.

Sirach 38:25 poses a rhetorical question, which opens a six-verse strophic arrangement (vv. 25-31) probing the work experiences and activities of skilled workers and artisans.²⁹³ The arrangement begins with the interrogative pronoun τί and the verb σοφισθήσεται (“How can one become wise...?”) and it is summarized in Sir 38:31 with the statement πάντες οὗτοι εἰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ἐνεπίστευσαν καὶ ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ σοφίζεται (“all these rely on their hands, and all are skillful (being made wise) in their own work”). The final word of the summary is σοφίζεται.

The verses bracketed by the references to σοφίζω present a distinctive lexical cluster with multiple repetitions of ἔργον, καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει, ἀγρυπνία, συντέλει, arranged within a strophic structure marked by the anaphora οὕτως.

38:25-26:	τί	...καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει ...καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία
38:27:	οὕτως	...καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει ...καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία
38:28:	οὕτως	...καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει ...καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία
38:29-30:	οὕτως	...αὐτοῦ καρδίαν ἐπιδώσει ...καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία

The phrase καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει (“will give over his heart”) is repeated three times (Sir 38:26, 27, 28) before an emphatic fourth repetition αὐτοῦ καρδίαν ἐπιδώσει (Sir 38:30).²⁹⁴ Each occurrence of the expression is preceded by τί (Sir 38:25) or the anaphora οὕτως (Sir 38:27, 28, 29) and each is followed by an epistrophic ἡ ἀγρυπνία (“sleeplessness, anxiety”) (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30). The idea that “hearts” are “given” or “surrendered” suggests a willing embrace of the ἔργον, perhaps even a seeking of the

²⁹³A strophic structure is recognized by almost every modern commentator, but there is significant difference of opinion concerning the precise subdivisions of the text. O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 178–79; Josef Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach*, 179–80. Haspecker suggests a pattern of strophes comprised of: a) the designation of a trade, b) a description of the work, c) a declaration of the all consuming nature of the occupation. Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 450–53; Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, 119.

²⁹⁴The emphatic expression τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει recurs for a second time later in the discourse (39:5) but in a context which replaces ἡ ἀγρυπνία with the infinitive aorist active verb ὀρθρῖσαι (“to get up early”). This will be dealt with more fully when considering progressive texture.

opportunity and prosperity associated with a life in the skilled trades. The repetition and the emphasis of the final ἐπιδώσει (Sir 38:30) suggests that the advantages associated with life as an artisan or master artisan may have been more commonly sought than the intellectual life of a sage scholar or scribe.²⁹⁵

Within the strophic structure and its summary there are seven references to ἔργον (“work, deed”) (Sir 38:25, 27, 28 x 2, 29 x 2, 31) and one reference to ἐργασία (“trade, business, practice”) (Sir 38:29, 34).²⁹⁶ Together with a sensory-aesthetic texture which focuses on body parts and the manipulation of external objects, these verses create a powerful image of artisans who have dedicated their lives to skilled work but also experience an anxiety or restlessness (ἀγρυπνία) about the quality and completion of their products (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30).

The repetition of ἀγρυπνία, which points to a sense of restlessness or an external circumstance preventing normal sleep, is even further accentuated by the repetition of συντέλεια (“completion; consummation; fulfillment”) (Sir 38:28 x 2) and συντελέω (“to complete, to bring to an end, to fulfill”) (Sir 38:30).²⁹⁷ Each repetition is connected with a concrete example of physical labour and careful attention to productive excellence that Sirach wants to associate with all artisans and master artisans (Sir 38:27). Prosperity and reputation in the trades depend on such quality and completion.

²⁹⁵The multiple examples of those who “will give over” their hearts to work (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30) compared with the one who will “give over his heart” to rising early to seek the Lord who made him (Sir 39:5) rhetorically shows a perceived preference for a life in the trades rather than life as a learned and pious scholar. Such a view is supported even further in the final verse of the discourse, which declares that the learned and renowned scholar who achieves wisdom “will leave a name greater than a thousand” (Sir 39:11).

²⁹⁶The use of ἐργασία in 38:34 functions as part of a retrospective summary of the entire reflection on the skilled trades.

²⁹⁷Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Rondal B. Smith and Karen A. Munson (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), 23.73. ἀγρυπνία, *as f*: the state of remaining awake because of not being able to go to sleep, whether from anxiety or because of external circumstances—‘sleeplessness.’

The strophic structure is summarized with a statement recognizing the reliance of the workers on their own hands and on the cleverness or skill in their own work (ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ σοφίζεται) (Sir 38:31). The rhetorical question of Sir 38:25 is answered by assigning to the artisans a measure of wisdom restricted to their individual craft skills.

In Sir 38:32-34, the arrangement of the discourse shifts. The lexical repetitions and structure of the previous verses stop. The third person singular verb forms are now replaced by generalizing third person plural forms.²⁹⁸ A new consideration begins by acknowledging that without skilled workers a city would not be inhabitable and there would be no settling or travelling (Sir 38:32). Then, immediately, an adversative ἀλλά redirects audience attention to a series of negatives that repeatedly signal a dissociation of skilled workers from social, cultural, juridical, and political involvement. These verses are constructed using a quick succession of negatives (οὐ, οὐκ, οὐχ, οὐδέ, οὐδὲ μὴ) and two adversative conjunctions (ἀλλά) that must have had a strong auditory impact on the audience:

ἄνευ αὐτῶν οὐκ οἰκισθήσεται πόλις καὶ οὐ παροικήσουσιν οὐδὲ περιπατήσουσιν ἀλλ' εἰς βουλήν λαοῦ οὐ ζητηθήσονται καὶ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ οὐχ ὑπεραλοῦνται ἐπὶ δίφρον δικαστοῦ οὐ καθιοῦνται καὶ διαθήκην κρίματος οὐ διανοηθήσονται οὐδὲ μὴ ἐκφάνωσιν παιδείαν καὶ κρίμα καὶ ἐν παραβολαῖς οὐχ εὗρεθήσονται ἀλλὰ κτίσμα αἰῶνος στηρίσουσιν καὶ ἡ δέησις αὐτῶν ἐν ἐργασίᾳ τέχνης

The workers are not sought out for the βουλή (Sir 38:33); they have no eminence in the public assembly (ἐκκλησία) (Sir 38: 33); they do not serve on seats of judgement (ἐπὶ δίφρον δικάστου) (Sir 38:33); they do not ponder or weigh “court decisions” (διαθήκην κρίματος) (Sir 38:33); they exhibit neither culture (παιδεία) (Sir 38:34) nor judgement (κρίμα) (Sir 38:34) and they are not found among “the rulers” (Sir 38:34).²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸In 38:32 οἰκισθήσεται is a generalizing future passive third person singular, but the usage and the translation reflect the generalization of the third person plural verbs that follow it (παροικήσουσιν, περιπατήσουσιν, ζητηθήσονται, καθιοῦνται, διανοηθήσονται).

²⁹⁹The text is difficult: ἐν παραβολαῖς οὐχ εὗρεθήσονται (Sir 38:33). Literally translated as, “they are not found among parables,” it can also be found to mean “they are not found among rulers.” Presuming a Hebrew source text, R. A. F. MacKenzie suggests that the translator has made a comical mistake with the Hebrew מִלְּשָׁנָם which may be read either as “parables, proverbs, wise sayings” or as

Another ἀλλά (Sir 38:34^c) draws audience attention to the comment κτίσμα αἰῶνος στηρίσουσιν (“they support the fabric of the world”) and then the verse concludes with the observation ἡ δέησις αὐτῶν ἐν ἐργασίᾳ τέχνης (“their prayer of entreaty is for the practice of a trade”) (Sir 38:34^d).³⁰⁰

The conjunctive preposition πλὴν in Sir 39:1 signals another shift in the progress of the discourse. References to σοφίζω, the material and manual concerns of the skilled workers, the *lexis* of ἔργον, the “handing over of the heart” to work, references to ἀγρυπνία, and the list of social limitations (Sir 38:32-34) end. The structural arrangement of Sir 39:1-3 uses two coordinated participles ἐπιδιδόντος and διανοομένου (Sir 39:1) and six coordinated finite clauses, each ending in a future indicative verb form: ἐκζητήσει (“he will seek out”) (Sir 39:1), ἀσχοληθήσεται (“he will engage”) (Sir 39:1), συντηρήσει (“he will preserve”) (Sir 39:2), συνεισελεύσεται (“he will enter with”) (Sir 39:2), ἐκζητήσει (“he will seek out”) (Sir 39:3) and ἀναστραφήσεται (“he will overturn, probe”) (Sir 39:3). Together, these clauses catalogue a new set of activities that involve the interior world of the mind (ψυχή) (Sir 39:1): reflection, discovery, and study. The objects of concern are the law of the Most High, the wisdom of the ancestors, prophecies, and sayings of the notable including proverbs and parables. A new cluster of repetitions is introduced : διανοέομαι (“consider, ponder, meditate”) (Sir 39:1, 7), νόμος (“law”) (Sir 39:1, 8), ἐκζητέω (“seek out”) (Sir 39:1, 3), διήγησις (“narrative; account; saying”) (Sir 39:2, 10) and ὄνομα (“name”) (Sir 39:2, 9, 11). The world of the mind imaged in these verses stands in sharp contrast with the world of the artisans pictured in the previous sections.

“rulers.” *Sirach, Old Testament Message* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1983), 146. Cf. Alexander Di Lella, “Shall not Be Found in Parables,” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 40–41.

³⁰⁰The noun κτίσμα is translated as “world” but it refers to “that which is created (by God).” See Walter Bauer and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 3872, p. 114.

The work of the artisans and tradesmen described in Sir 38:25-30 was valued for its essential contribution to the πόλις (Sir 38:32) and for its place in the maintenance of the fabric of the world (Sir 38:34). Despite the value of their work, however, the artisans and tradesmen met with civic and social limitations that restricted their opportunities to participate in roles of judgement and leadership. In Sir 39:4 the situation is different. The one handing his mind over to learning, searching, and pondering will serve (ὕπηρετέω) among the great, will be seen (ὁράω) before rulers (ἔναντι ἡγουμένων) (Sir 38: 34; 39:4), will travel (διελεύσεται) in foreign lands, and will test (πειράζω) moral discernment. These indicators of social and civic inclusion and success stand in obvious contrast with the limits and exclusions faced by the skilled workers (Sir 38:33-34).

Leaving behind the world of learned scholarship and its successes, a new cluster of *lexica* emerges in Sirach 39:5-8: κύριος (“Lord”) (Sir 39:5, 6 x 2, 8), προσευχή (“prayer, place of prayer”) (Sir 39:5, 6), δέομαι (“to petition, to beg”) (Sir 39:5 x 2), and σύνεσις (“understanding”) (Sir 39:6, 9). For the first time the discourse speaks explicitly of the Lord, the Creator, rather than the material works of creation (Sir 38:34) or of the intellectual and sapiential traditions that recall and reflect on the wisdom and order of creation (Sir 39: 1-4).

The expression τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει (Sir 39:5) recalls the “surrender of heart” by the artisans (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30) but, in contrast with the many artisans who surrendered their hearts to work (Sir 38:25-30), the learned scholar surrenders his heart to rising early to seek the Lord who made him. The focus on the Creator contrasts with the artisans of Sir 38:34 whose concern was with maintaining the κτίσμα αἰῶνος (that which was created, the fabric of the world) rather than with the very source of that world. The artisan’s prayer of petition (δέησις) (Sir 38:34) is focused on their own individual productive expertise rather than on establishing a right relationship with the Lord in prayer and seeking forgiveness for sins (Sir 39:5).

Sirach 39:6 opens with the conditional phrase *ἐὰν κύριος ὁ μέγας θελήσῃ* (“if the great Lord is willing,” Sir 39:6), that is, “if God chooses....” The conditional opening is followed by three occurrences of *αὐτός* (Sir 39:6^c, 7^a, 8^a). This arrangement suggests the presence of another repetitive strophic structure similar to that found in Sir 38:25, 27, 28, and 29.³⁰¹

Sirach 39:6	<i>ἐὰν κύριος...<u>αὐτὸς</u> ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ...</i>
Sirach 39:7	<i><u>αὐτὸς</u> κατευθυνεῖ βουλήν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμην...</i>
Sirach 39:8	<i><u>αὐτὸς</u> ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ...</i>

This strophic arrangement begins with the great Lord’s bestowal of the *πνεῦμα συνέσεως* (“spirit of understanding”) on the learned and pious scholar who will be filled up, satisfied, and satiated (*ἐμπίπλημι*) by the divine gift (*πνεῦμα συνέσεως*, spirit of understanding, spirit of flowing together) and will pour forth (*ἀνομβρέω*) words of wisdom of his own, prayerful gratitude, counsel, and knowledge inspired by the Lord (Sir 39:7). The “filling,” “flowing,” “pouring” water imagery of this verse is notable and evokes images of creation and creation wisdom flowing in a revealing gift of the spirit. In this language creation wisdom and revelation flow together (*σύνεσις*) as a gift to the learned and pious scholar. The repetitive strophic construction helps to emphasize the piling up of the effects and direct consequences that flow out of the divine bestowal. The scholar has become a voice of wisdom; divine guidance of his counsel and knowledge transforms the study and service of the earlier verses (Sir 39:1-4); continued reflection on “his mysteries” (*ἐν τοῖς ἀποκρύφοις αὐτοῦ διανοηθήσεται*) (Sir. 39:7) signals a continued engagement with learning as in Sir 39:3. The inspired wisdom will be manifest (*ἐκφαίνω*) (Sir 39:8) in the *παιδεία* of his instruction and in his glorying (*καυχάομαι*) in the law of the Lord’s covenant. The manifestation of wisdom in the scholar’s teaching contrasts with the lack of *παιδεία* among the artisans (Sir 38: 34) and it highlights the absence of any prayerful submission to the divine in their prayers of petition focused on

³⁰¹Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, 184.

their own skills. The flowing together of creation wisdom and the wisdom learned in election and covenant revelation is to be seen in the continued teaching and faithful reflection of the scribe.

The verses of Sir 39:9-10, offer epideictic words and expressions of wide-ranging praise and of a lasting memory. In verse 9 “many” (πολλοί) “will praise” (αἰνέσουσιν) his “understanding” (σύνεσις) (Sir 39:2, 6, 9); the memory of him will not be erased or withdrawn (ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται οὐκ ἀποστήσεται τὸ μνημόσυον αὐτοῦ); and his name will live from generation to generation (τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ζήσεται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν). The inspired scribe will have a “name” and perhaps be as noted as those in Sir 39:2 whose sayings are remembered. In Sir 39:10, it is, first, the nations (ἔθνη) (Sir 39:4, 10) who will speak of his wisdom, and, then, his praise (ἔπαινος rather than a simple αἰνέω) will be proclaimed (ἐξαγγέλλω) in the community, ἐκκλησία (Sir 38:33; 39:10). Sirach emphasizes the sources of the recognition and praise: πολλοί, ἔθνη, ἐκκλησία (Jew and Gentile alike) and its duration, ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται οὐκ ἀποστήσεται τὸ μνημόσυον αὐτοῦ. A final conditional ἐάν...ἐάν construction in verse eleven draws the discourse to a satisfied and restful closure: if the scribe lives long he will leave a name in a thousand (equated with high renown and honour) and if he dies, he will find a satisfying rest (ἀναπαύω).³⁰²

3.4 Sensory–Aesthetic Texture and Pattern

Sensory-aesthetic texture probes the range of senses and sense-related activities which a text embodies or evokes (i.e. thoughts, feelings, emotions, sights, sounds, touch, smells, activity, etc.) and the manner in which it evokes or embodies them (reason, intuition, imagination, humour, repetition, etc.).³⁰³ This texture provides colour and tone to a discourse and it can support or strengthen other textures, especially the argumentative

³⁰²In part because the scholar has secured for himself a name that will live (Sir 39:9^b).

³⁰³Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 29–30.

texture, by recalling and appealing to the lived experiences of the readers/listeners to heighten and emphasize the “presence” of particular *topoi*.

The Sirach text begins with references to “wisdom of the scribe,” “leisure,” and “little activity.” The idea of “scribal wisdom,” which may be read as “scribal arts” or “scribal profession,” suggests recognizable and purposeful activities undertaken by one identified as a scribe (e.g. the preparation of writing materials, copying, composing, reciting, teaching, assuming administrative duties, wielding political influence, etc.).³⁰⁴ Linking “the wisdom of the scribe” with an opportunity for “leisure” (σχολή) evokes images and expectations of what such an association may look and feel like. A second statement, “the one having little business will be made wise,” links the reduction of *πρᾶξις* (physical work, busyness) with the very possibility of becoming wise. The opening phrases of the discourse already evoke dynamic and contrasting images of those who work at physical deeds (*πρᾶξις*) that are to be lessened and those whose activities may be more closely aligned with a lifestyle associated with σχολή (leisure). In the midst of that tension, the text proposes that σοφία γραμματέως depends on an opportunity for σχολή and, therein, already establishes a vivid contrast, which will remain present throughout the entire discourse.

The tension anticipated by the opening verse is followed in Sir 38:25 by a rhetorical question, τί σοφισθήσεται... (“how can one become wise who...?”), and then by a reflection on the relationship between the work of those engaged in skilled trades and the process of “becoming wise” (Sir 38:25-31). This block of seven verses, as we have seen, is constructed as a repetitive strophic and lexical pattern using ἔργον, ἐργασία, καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει, ἀγρυπνία and συντέλεια. The same verses are topically focused on a series of tactile, physical, purposeful actions: grasping a plough, driving oxen, tending cattle (Sir 38:25-26), engraving seals, producing lifelike images (Sir 38:27), sitting at

³⁰⁴Hurowitz, “Literary Observations,” 50. Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 445, 447.

work, feeling heat, hammering iron (Sir 38:28), molding clay, glazing pots, and tending kilns (Sir 38:29-30). The repeated use of participles in verses 25, 27, 28, and 29 support the feeling of the continuous nature of the work. The descriptions of these physical activities are strengthened even further by multiple references to body parts: heart (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30), flesh (Sir 38:28), ear (Sir 38:28), eye (Sir 38:28), feet (Sir 38:29, 30), arm (Sir 38:30), and hands (Sir 38:31). The same verses identify sensory experiences: tiredness (Sir 38:27), sleeplessness (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30), melting flesh (Sir 38:28), scorching heat (Sir 38:28), deafening noise (Sir 38:28), fixed eyes (Sir 38:28), softening (Sir 38:30), molding (Sir 38:29), spinning (Sir 38:29), cleaning (Sir 38:30) and a concern with completion of the work (Sir 38:28, 30). The activities of these verses involve the manipulation of external material objects: plough, furrows, goad, ox, cattle (Sir 38:25-26), seals, lifelike impressions (Sir 38:27), anvil, iron, fire, heat, hammer, design (Sir 38:28), wheel, clay, glaze, and kiln (Sir 38:29-30). The actions are said to be characteristic of all workmen and artisans (Sir 38:27), indeed, the workers surrender their hearts, the centre of their understanding, wisdom, knowledge, and rational thought, to their work, which produces a sleepless, restless anxiety (*ἀγρυπνία*) for the quality and completion of their products.³⁰⁵

With Sir 38:32-34 the discourse turns to a consideration of the contributions and limitations of those engaged in the trades. Verse 32 points to the indispensable role of the workers in the establishment of cities and human settlement, then, immediately the adversative *ἀλλά* initiates a quick series of limits and social exclusions facing the same workers. A rapid succession of negatives and adversatives emphasizes the limits of the “becoming wise” of the artisans. Just as quickly, another *ἀλλά* turns audience attention

³⁰⁵“Heart” is to be seen as much more than a physical or biological pump. It is rather the seat of physical, spiritual, and moral strength, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, and rational thought. In these passages, the heart is given over (*δίδωμι*, *ἐπιδίδωμι*) to work in material creation. See the comments on heart in section 5.2.3 when considering bodily goods.

toward the role of the artisans in maintaining the material fabric of the created world (κτίσμα αἰῶνος στηρίσουσιν) (Sir 38:34). The section concludes with the comment that their concern (prayer of entreaty) is for the exercise of a trade (ἡ δέησις αὐτῶν ἐν ἐργασίᾳ τέχνης) (Sir 38:34). In all of this, the sensory-aesthetic texture vacillates between an acknowledgement of their significant material contribution to the community and, at the same time, a recognition of the social limits and particular exclusions that accompany a life given over to the skilled trades.

With Sir 39:1 the sensory-aesthetic texture turns again. References to the external and tactile activities of the previous verses are discontinued and the text now points to the thoughtful and self-expressive experiences of one who gives over his “mind” (ψυχή) to “meditating/pondering/studying” the law of the Most High. These actions include: seeking out knowledge and tradition, engaging parables, preserving discourses of the notable, turning over proverbs, sayings, and enigmas, serving the great, being seen with rulers, travelling, and discerning good and evil in the human lot. The tone and feelings evoked by these verses are those associated with the discipline (παιδεία) of education, with maintaining and repeating intellectual and social traditions, and possibly with the skills, privileges, and influence of administrative service in support of a patron or government official. The feelings and images of exclusion and limitation evoked by the earlier verses are replaced with images of inclusion and access to the traditional repositories of wisdom and judgement. The feelings of success, personal respectability, and comfortable well-being do not project the level of anxiety that was repeatedly mentioned in Sir 38:25-30.

In Sir 39:5, the sensory-aesthetic texture shifts again. Moving beyond the material concerns of the workers, the mindful probings of the scholar, and their respective experiences of social limitation or social success, the text now portrays a learned scholar giving over his heart to early rising to seek the Lord who made him. A new lexical cluster evokes a sense of an appropriate piety seeking a right relationship with the

Creator. The combination of early rising, prayer, and seeking the forgiveness of sins can, for a faithful Jew, evoke images or memories of *shacharit*, prayer, temple sacrifice and/or torah piety. The scholar's prayer for the forgiveness of sins suggests a humble awareness of his ordered place before the great Lord and an awareness of his dependence on the Creator. The only bodily associations mentioned in Sir 39:1-9 are heart (Sir 39:5), and mouth (Sir 39:5), which Malina associates with emotion-fused thought and self-expressive speech.³⁰⁶ The physical labour of the tradesmen to support the material fabric of the world has, in the mindful scholar, become an openness to the creativity of the Lord who "made him" (κύριον τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτόν, Sir 39:5) and to restoring a right relationship with the source of all wisdom.

If willing, the great Lord may fill the learned and pious scholar with "the spirit of understanding" so that he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own and praise the Lord (Sir 39:6). Here the text evokes a deep sense of dependence on the divine who may bestow on the pious and learned scholar "the spirit of understanding." For the faithful Jewish scholar, the text evokes a sense of already having been chosen by God in the election and covenant experiences of Israel. The "spirit of understanding" may be seen as a conjoining (a confluence) of creation wisdom learned in the intellectual traditions of the world and the wisdom of Israel's own election tradition expressed in the law of the Lord's covenant. The intellectual search for creation wisdom, service to the community, a personal surrender to the Creator, seeking a right relationship through prayer, forgiveness of sins, expressions of grateful praise, and an openness to the Lord's direction in knowledge and counsel all culminate in a manifestation of wisdom in the παιδεία of his teaching and in his glorying in the law of the Lord's covenant (Sir 39:7-8).

³⁰⁶Malina, *New Testament World*, 73–77.

The discourse ends with three verses evoking a sense of wide praise, the celebration of a name, lasting approval, and, having secured for himself a name, a satisfied rest.

αἰνέσουσιν τὴν σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ πολλοί καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται οὐκ ἀποστήσεται τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ζήσεται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ διηγῶνται ἔθνη καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον αὐτοῦ ἐξαγγελεῖ ἐκκλησία ἔαν ἐμμεῖνῃ ὄνομα καταλείψει ἢ χίλιοι καὶ ἔαν ἀναπαύσῃται ἐκποιεῖ αὐτῷ (Sirach 39:9-11)

The sensory-aesthetic texture of the discourse emphasizes an obvious contrast between the physical and material activities and concerns of Sir 38:25-34 with the mindful and interior concerns of the verses following the *πλήν* of 39:1. This contrast of sensory-aesthetic textures supports and reinforces the lexical and thematic shifts noted when considering the repetitive and progressive textures.

3.5 Opening–Middle–Closing Texture and Pattern

Sirach 38:24–39:11 begins with the proposition “the wisdom of a scribe (is) in an opportunity of leisure” (σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς) followed immediately by the conjunction *καὶ* and then by a balanced, but generalized, “(only) the one who has little business can become wise” (ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται) (Sir 38:24^b). Together these two statements comprise the opening of the entire discourse. A closing for the discourse is apparent in an extended declaration of “praise” (Sir 39:9-11) for the one who achieves the “wisdom” referred to in the opening proposition. Such a “scribe,” if he lives long, enjoys a celebrated “name” and, if he dies, rests in satisfaction while his name lives on in memory. The verses between the opening and the closing (Sir 38:25–39:8) are thematically, structurally, and lexically divided at 39:1 by the preposition *πλήν* (Sir 39:1), which suggests a structured comparison of what comes before with what comes after. The reviews of repetitive, progressive, and sensory-aesthetic textures and patterns have pointed to a major lexical and thematic shift marked by the word *πλήν* in Sir 39:1. The verses preceding *πλήν* are focused on the productive activity of artisans and

master artisans who pursue their manual trades with great care and achieve a wisdom in their own crafts but experience limitations in areas of life requiring a broader set of skills. The verses following Sir 39:1 are concerned with one who commits his mind to study and reflection and finds a place in the very services and roles from which the artisans were restricted. The artisans surrendered their hearts to their work; the one devoted to study surrenders his heart to seeking the Lord who made him. The former group maintains the fabric of creation; the scholar seeks the Creator. The language of work, body, materials, and senses dominate the early verses; the language of interior, intellectual, interpretive activities characterize the later verses. The effect is to create a discourse middle, which can be divided into two contrasting sections. See the diagram on the next page.

Lexical patterns, grammatical and syntactical choices, and topical foci already considered in other textures and patterns show that the verses of Middle A are clearly structured in two parts: Sir 38:25-31 and Sir 38:32-34. The first part of Middle A (Sir 38:25-31) opens with a rhetorical question and proceeds with a highly repetitive, lexically distinctive, strophically organized reflection on the activities of skilled artisans and their surrender of heart to work. Verse 31 offers a summary with the general comment: πάντες οὗτοι εἰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ἐνεπίστευσαν καὶ ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ σοφίζεται (“all these rely on their hands, and all are skillful in their own work”). The verb σοφίζω brackets the entire section (Sir 38:25, 31) as an answer to the opening rhetorical question “how can one become wise who...?” surrenders his heart to work.

The second part of Middle A (Sir 38:31-34) discontinues the repetitions of the previous verses and verbs are changed to generalizing third person plural forms. The clustering of adversatives and negatives highlight the indispensable material contributions of the artisans to their communities but also emphasize their limitations in arenas that

require a wisdom beyond the work of their hands and the expertise of their trades.³⁰⁷

The preposition *πλὴν* followed by the genitive case (Sir 39:1) functions adverbially to end the first collection of material (Middle A) and to steer audience attention in a different direction (Middle B). Beginning in 39:1 the text lays out a series of activities and engagements that contrast with the activities of the skilled workers presented in the earlier verses. The discourse catalogues a list of mindful activities (*ἐκζητέω, ἀσχολέω, συντηρέω, συνεισέρχομαι, ἀναστρέφω*) linked by a complex syntax of coordinated clauses. The effect is to unify Sir 39:1-3 as a description of “giving over his mind” by engaging in the range of thoughtful and mindful activities set out in each of the clauses. The immaterial, interior, thoughtful concerns of the scholar clearly contrast with the bodily, material, and exterior world of the workers. The contributions and success of committing to the mindful activities set out in Sir 39:1-3 are actualized in the public services described in Sir 39:4.

In 39:5 the scholar who “surrendered his mind” to reflection and learning now surrenders his heart” to rising early to seek the Lord who made him. From hearts given over to work (Sir 38:25-31) the focus has shifted from supporting the fabric of creation to establishing an appropriate relationship with the Creator, as the source of wisdom itself.

In Sir 39:6 the discourse notes the possibility that, if the great Lord is willing, the learned and pious scholar may be filled with “the spirit of understanding” (*πνεύματι συνέσεως*), which empowers the “pouring forth of wise words” (*ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ*) and elicits a response of prayerful gratitude. (*ἐν προσευχῇ ἐξομολογήσεται κυρίῳ*). The “inspired” scribe, who is now counseled by the Lord, meditates on God’s mysteries (Sir 39:7) and manifests both the *παιδεία* of his teaching and his glory/pride (*καυχάομαι*) in the law of the Lord’s covenant (Sir 39:8). The

³⁰⁷ A final reference to *ἐργασία* in Sirach 38:34 serves to close the section by linking the last words of the reflection to the experiences described in verses 25–31.

discourse is brought to a close with two verses of epideictic praise and a final expression of restful satisfaction with a name that last beyond his death (Sir 39:9-11).

Table of Opening-Middle-Closing Texture

Opening		38:24	Opening statement: proposition and premise
Middle A	Opening 1	38:25-26	Rhetorical question
	Middle 1	38:27-30	“Surrender of heart” to work
	Closing 1	38:31	Summary: a measure of wisdom
	Opening 2	38:32 ^{ab}	Contribution of the artisans
	Middle 2	38: 32 ^c -34 ^b	Limitations of artisan wisdom
	Closing 2	38:34 ^{cd}	Support for the fabric of creation but concern is for their own trade
Middle B	Opening 3	39:1	“Surrender of mind”
	Middle 3	39:1-3	Activities and concerns of scholars
	Closing 3	39:4	Actualization in service
	Opening 4	39:5	“Surrender of heart” to the Creator
	Middle 4	39:6-7	Possible bestowal and effects of “spirit of understanding”
	Closing 4	39:8	Manifestation of inspired wisdom
Closing		39:9-11	Epideictic praise for the wisdom Satisfied and restful ending

3.6 Argumentative Texture and Pattern

Argumentation is never a simple objective description of reality, but, rather, a complex signification construct. The argumentative texture of a discourse is the style of reasoning intended to lead the audience toward accepting a particular proposition as true. Such rhetorical reasoning may use quasi-logical approaches that appeal to accepted truths to establish the reliability of a particular proposal (enthymeme) or it may use examples of life experience to show an audience that the proposal may be reliably accepted as true (paradigm). This section will show that the text of Sirach employs a rich combination of both enthymeme (rhetology) and paradigm (rhetography).

Sirach 38:24 begins with a simple proposition: σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρία σχολῆς (“the wisdom of the scribe (is) in an opportunity of leisure”). The five-word assertion announces the intention to convince the audience that σοφία γραμματέως depends on an opportunity for σχολή. The opening proposition is immediately conjoined with a general reflection: ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται (“(only) the one who has little business can become wise”). In this, the rhetor is already appealing to a broader contention: that one who lessens (ἐλαττώω) business or practical deeds (πράξεις) can become wise. This statement functions as an opening premise for successive enthymemes in the stages of the argument that follow.

After the propositions of the opening verse, the first argument (Sir 38:25-31) begins with a rhetorical question:

“How can one become wise (τί σοφισθήσεται) who handles the plow, and who glories in the shaft of a goad, who drives oxen and is occupied with their work, and whose talk is about bulls?” (Sir 38:25).

The question invites a consideration of how one might attain wisdom if physically and mentally preoccupied by the demands of much work. Verses 25-31 are constructed presenting multiple rhetographic images of workers as they engage in the physical, material, and manual concerns of their trades. Repeatedly each artisan is associated with a giving over of his heart (καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει) to work and, in each instance, the result is presented as a restless anxiety, ἀγρυπνία. Verse 31 summarizes the reflection on skilled workers with the statement πάντες οὗτοι εἰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ἐνεπίστευσαν καὶ ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ σοφίζεται (“all these rely on their hands, and each one is becoming wise in his own work.”). The rhetorical question of verse 25 is answered by ascribing to each artisan a measure of wisdom according to individual work skills.

Beginning with the general premise “one with little business can become wise,” then observing that the artisans and skilled workers “give over their hearts” to the concerns of their trades, the first enthymeme concludes that ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ σοφίζεται (“each is becoming wise in his own work”) (Sir 38:31). In effect the first

argument of the discourse contends that the commitment of the artisans to physical work has impaired the achievement of any wisdom that is not measured by their particular expertise. The “becoming wise” (σοφίζω) of the artisans is aligned exclusively with their individual work skills.

In the second stage of the argumentative flow (Sir 38: 32-34) the measure of wisdom recognized in the skills of the artisans is shown to be limited in scope. Using an extended chain of nine negatives and two adversatives, the argument begins by noting that without the skilled workers no city would be habitable and there would be no settlement or travelling (καὶ οὐ παροικήσουσιν οὐδὲ περιπατήσουσιν, Sir 38:32). Immediately the adversative ἀλλά launches a quick list of places and situations where the wisdom of the artisan is not recognized: they are not sought out for the council of the people, they are not prominent in the assembly, they have no seat at the judge’s bench, they do not understand court decisions, they do not manifest culture, discipline, or voice legal decrees, and they are not present among rulers. The repeated negatives serve to emphasize the limits of the skill-focused wisdom of the artisans. Another adversative and audience attention is redirected to the fact that the artisans play a role in “maintaining the material fabric of the created world” but, in the end, their concern is centred on the exercise of their trades.

The original response to the rhetorical question that pointed to a measure of wisdom in the skilled workers is now further qualified by suggesting that, while the wisdom of the skilled workers is valuable in its own material domain, it is limited in its scope and finds no application in places and situations requiring a set of skills broader than the one required by their trades.

A third stage of the argumentative texture begins with the contrastive πλὴν in Sir 39:1. The discourse turns to a consideration of the one who surrenders his mind to contemplating the law of the Most High, seeking out the wisdom of all the ancients, having a concern with prophecies, preserving the sayings of the famous, exploring

proverbs, and probing the hidden meaning of parables. In these verses the images of seeking out, pondering, turning over, and reflecting set a different tone from the activities that preceded. The interior and immaterial world of thought and reflection stands in complete contrast with the external material world of the artisans and workers. Practical applications of the new concerns are set out in the engagements of Sir 39:4 and include service among the great, being seen with rulers, traveling through foreign lands, and discerning good and evil in the human community. A surrender of the mind to study and contemplation has prepared the learned scholar for a wider understanding of wisdom and its exercise. The argumentative texture offers a paradigmatic comparison of the activities and concerns of those who “surrender their minds” to learning with those who “surrender their hearts” to physical labour. Such a comparison invites another implied enthymeme: since “the one lessening business (πραξις) can become wise” and since the learned scholar has been presented as engaging in little physical business (πραξις), it should follow that the scholar has a better chance of becoming wise in a way different from the artisans. That, indeed, seems to be affirmed by the inclusion of the scholar in arenas of participation and responsibility from which the artisans were excluded (Sir 39:4).

With Sir 39:5 the argument turns again. The learned scholar, who has already surrendered his mind to study, is presented as surrendering his heart (τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει) to rising early to seek the Lord who made him. In contrast with the artisans who “give their hearts” to work and, therein, support the fabric of the created world, the learned scholar seeks the Lord who made the world. In contrast with the artisan’s prayer focused on the exercise of their trades (Sir 38:34) the scholar prays for the forgiveness of sins and thus seeks to establish a right relationship with the Lord. If the great Lord is willing, the learned and pious scholar may be filled with the “spirit of understanding” (πνεῦμα συνέσεως) so that he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own (αὐτὸς ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ) and give thanks to the Lord in prayer (ἐν προσευχῇ ἐξομολογήσεται κυρίῳ, Sir 39:6). The Lord will direct his knowledge and counsel as he

ponders the Lord's hidden mysteries (ἐν τοῖς ἀποκρύφοις αὐτοῦ διανοηθήσεται, Sir 39:7). The pious and learned scholar, inspired and informed by the spirit of understanding, will manifest his wisdom in the *παιδεία* of his teaching (αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ, Sir 39:8) and in his glorying in the law of the Lord's covenant (ἐν νόμῳ διαθήκης κυρίου καυχῆσεται, Sir 39:8).³⁰⁸

In these four verses the argumentative texture continues to contrast images of scholarly and prayerful leisure with the previous surrender to physical work. Giving over his heart to establishing an appropriate relationship with his Creator, the learned scholar is fully open to being filled with “the spirit of understanding.” The freely bestowed gift results in an outpouring of wise words, divinely informed counsel and knowledge, and an inspired manifestation of wisdom. In the end σοφία γραμματέως, is understood as a divinely inspired wisdom uttered by a learned scholar who embodies a dynamic correlation of his learning with piety enough to accept the wisdom poured out by God in creation and in revelation.

Two verses of epideictic speech (39:9-10) serve to rhetorically amplify the description of the inspired scribe in 39:1-8 and to reinforce an audience acceptance of the argument that has been proposed in the discourse. The text concludes with a conditional ἐάν...ἐάν construction offering a final acknowledgement of an honoured name for the sage scribe who lives, or a satisfied rest for the one who dies (39:11).

In summary, the discourse sets out to show that the wisdom of the scribe requires an opportunity of σχολή. Beginning with the premise that “the one lessening business (πρᾶξις) will be made wise” and then, by a use of implicit enthymemes and contrastive paradigms, shows that the work and business (ἔργον/ἐργασία) of the artisans restrict their embodiment of wisdom to a proficient exercise of trades while the leisured study of the

³⁰⁸The argument here has been described as a differentiation between two types of wisdom using the concepts of *Weisheit-von-unten und Weisheit-von-oben*. Liesen, *Full of Praise*, 48, fn. 20 citing Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, 127–128.

scholar in the human repositories of learning and wisdom leads to a broader service of the human community. Beyond that a humble and prayerful leisure before the Creator disposes the learned and pious scholar, God willing, to the gift of an inspired wisdom that will be manifest in the continued teaching and obedience to the law of the Lord's covenant. It is this learned, pious, and inspired scholar that Sirach identifies with his wise scribe.

3.7 Foregrounded Elements in Sirach 38:24–39:11

The innertexture and patterns of Sir 38:24–39:11 foreground (implicitly or explicitly) the presence of specific ideas, beliefs, or assumptions that hopefully provide a secure base or point of departure for the argumentative schema that will persuasively support the intended conclusions of the discourse. By examining lexical clusters and patterns of association and dissociation of persons, places, ideas, and beliefs within the text itself, the essential rhetorical building blocks of the discourse and their textual relationships within the argumentative matrix become apparent.

First, underlying the entire argumentative process is the belief that God, the Creator, is the source of all wisdom and order in the universe. That foundational assumption is foregrounded in the skill-based wisdom of the artisans who “support the fabric of the created world” (Sir 38:34); it is implied in their prayers of petition seeking trade skills (38:34); it is prominently placed within the repositories of wisdom to be considered by the one surrendering his mind to study and contemplation (Sir 39:1-3); it is in the surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him (Sir 39:5); and it is explicit in the possible bestowal of wisdom by the great Lord on the pious and prayerful scholar (Sir 39:5-6). In as much as the audience embraces the belief that God is the source of all wisdom and order, it can serve as a sure starting point for the argument moving toward an elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως. A consideration of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture will set out an embodied understanding of commonplace beliefs concerning

the source of wisdom and order in the Jewish-Egyptian diaspora community of the second century BCE.

Second, the opening verse of the discourse claims *ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται* (“the one lessening *πρᾶξις* will be made wise,” 38:24^b). This statement serves as the premise of an enthymeme, which is repeatedly applied and contrastively illustrated throughout the discourse. The handiwork of the artisans, the studies of the scholar and the prayer of the pious each represent an example of a decreasing *πρᾶξις* and an increased opportunity for becoming wise. The artisans who surrender their hearts to their expertise are recognized for a wisdom related to those skills. The scholar who surrenders his mind to study and contemplation finds an actualization of that traditional wisdom in the arenas of civic and social responsibility. The pious scholar who surrenders his heart in humble prayer to seeking the Lord who made him, finds the very source of wisdom. In as much as the audience shares the idea that a decrease of *πρᾶξις* allows for an increase of wisdom, the premise of Sir 38:24^b, provides a fundamental building block for the argument that the scholar who lessens manual labour and surrenders to study may then enter into a prayerful relationship with the source of all wisdom. A closer examination of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of the relationship between “a lessening of *πρᾶξις*” and an increased possibility of wisdom will configure the terms of the premise and enrich the understanding of what is being proposed for *σοφία γραμματέως*. Here the research will examine an oral-scribal connection with Egyptian school texts and a *σχολή/ἔργον topos* with a long history in Hellenic and Hellenistic philosophy and literature.

Third, the word *σχολή* appears in the discourse only once (Sir 38:24^a) yet it is implicitly foregrounded in the unfolding of the text. The argument schema of the discourse places “the wisdom” of those with an opportunity for study and contemplation in contrast with the “becoming wise” of the skilled workers who are presented as having achieved a measure of wisdom, but who remain preoccupied with the *πρᾶξις* of their

trades. The Hellenistic notion of σχολή commonly implies a freedom from such manual labour and the possibility of engagement in study and contemplation (ἐλευθέριος παιδεία) free from the πρᾶξις required by trade expertise. The catalogue of intellectual activities and civic engagements presented in Sir 39:1-4, as well as the list of the limitations faced by the artisans in Sir 38:33-34, serve to implicitly foreground the presence of σχολή. A consideration of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of σχολή, its privileges, opportunities, and ἀρετή will help to configure the essential place of “leisure” within Sirach’s elaboration of scribal wisdom.

Fourth, explicit identification of γραμματεὺς is made only in Sir 38:24^a, in the proposition σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρία σχολῆς. The syncritical comparison of the lives and work of skilled artisans with the life and concerns of the one who surrenders his mind to study and reflection is never explicitly or directly applied to the scribe. Sirach leaves the aptness of the connexion and the application of his conclusions up to the audience. A consideration of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of γραμματεὺς in the long-term schematic knowledge of the Jewish-Egyptian-Hellenistic social milieu will highlight commonly held understandings and expectations of the superiority of scribal culture. When the common expectations of scribal culture are aligned with the wisdom-seeking activities and concerns of the “leisured” scholar, the argument is complete. The wisdom of the scribe is shown to depend on an opportunity of leisure.

In presenting these particular ideas, beliefs, relationships, and assumptions, Sirach establishes the essential rhetorical building blocks supporting his elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως. By opening up the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of these four essential elements each element will be richly configured so that when the elements are reintegrated within the argumentative matrix of the discourse a full-bodied understanding of the various *topoi* will permit a better insight into the ideological movement sought by the rhetor.

3.8 Conclusion Regarding Innertexture

Analyzing the innertexture of Sir 38:24–39:11 through the lens of a socio-rhetorical interpretive analytics has served to establish a discrete and coherent rhetorical unit and to examine the lexical patterns, structural elements, sensory-aesthetic qualities, and argumentative matrix with which the discourse has been constructed. Focusing on the innertexture and patterns of the text itself has allowed for an identification of elements that have been foregrounded (“deliberately made present”) and which, hopefully, reflect enough common agreement that these shared ideas, beliefs, and assumptions set a firm foundation to support and advance the proposition of the discourse. The foregrounded elements include: 1) God as the source of all wisdom and order; 2) the possibility of becoming wise is a result of lessening *πραΐσις*; 3) an opportunity for *σχολή* leads to wisdom; and 4) the superior wisdom sought by the “leisured” scholar is associated with activities and concerns of a learned and superior scribe. The configuration of these essential building blocks are the concern of chapter four.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIO-CULTURAL TEXTURES AND INTERTEXTURE: CONFIGURING THE *TOPOI*

4.1 Introduction

Beginning with the premise that human subjects are embodied in social and cultural environments and that human meaning production is understandable only in relation to that embodiment, critical attention turns toward the interplay of specific *topoi* with various outside texts, objects, historical events, customs, values, social roles, cultural institutions, and traditions which form the broad networks of meaning and meaning effects within which and out of which texts are produced.³⁰⁹ Together, these clusters of associations dynamically support or reconfigure one another to create webs of rhetorical reality, mental landscapes, or rhetorical environments within which arguments are to be played out. Together these relationships are termed “intertexture” and “socio-cultural texture.”

In its early programmatic formulation, the SRI approach to intertexture involved a systematic analysis of various textural relationships (oral-scribal intertexture, historical intertexture, social intertexture, cultural intertexture, and sacred intertexture), which was subsequently followed by a separate consideration of the social and cultural textures.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹Here SRI comes into conversation with modern cognitive science and theories of meaning construction (conceptual integration theory) to make sense of ancient documents. G. Fauconnier, for example, argues that “discourse configurations are highly organized and complex within wider social and cultural contexts, and the *raison d’être* of grammatical constructions and words within them is to provide us with (imperfect) clues as to what discourse configurations to set up.” Gilles Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought and Language* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5.

³¹⁰Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996); *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretations* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

With the movement from a textural analytics toward a *topos*-centred analytics there also arises a need for a somewhat more integrated and dynamic approach to dealing with textural interrelatedness. As discussed above, the idea of *topos* involves an ability to interconnect continually with other elements and to form constellations of elements that dynamically shade and texture meaning(s). Indeed, a *topos* is itself already understood as a constellation of elements which is situated within an even broader network of elements.³¹¹ Such inter-connectivity naturally involves multiple, often over-lapping, textures which imply a simultaneous rather than a linear development. As a result, the approach to social and cultural textures and intertexture compresses into a complex nexus of materials which may, at first, seem quite disorganized, repetitive, unrelated, or even contradictory. The full significance of many such liaisons may only become apparent after they are placed within a consideration of the argumentative texture, which will be the focus of the next chapter. Here the concern will be limited first to an exploration of the common “progymnastic” patterns of deliberative syncrisis and, then, to a social, cultural, and intertextual configuration of the major building blocks of the argument.

4.2 Rhetorical Patterns Evident in Sirach 38:24–39:11

The innertexture of Sir 38:24–39:11 presents a compositional arrangement that employs several common rhetorical forms including proposition (thesis), enthymemes, paradigmatic examples, syncritical comparison and epideictic praise.³¹² Such an arrangement may be identified as deliberative syncrisis and is characterized by two

³¹¹L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Paul’s Inclusive Language: The Ideological Texture of Romans.” Pages 165–93 in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

³¹²All of these forms may be found in the four surviving rhetorical progymnasmata (The Exercises of Aelius Theon of Alexandria, Pseudo-Hermogenes of Tarsus, Aphthonius of Antioch and Nicolaus of Myra) and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. These resources all derive from a period later than the composition of *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*, but the rhetorical templates and forms they teach derive from classical Greek literature no later than the early Hellenistic period. George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 10 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), xi.

essential traits. As deliberative rhetoric, its aim is to show the merit (or lack thereof) of a proposed course of action or understanding of a particular idea.³¹³ As syncritical rhetoric, it takes one of three logical forms: a comparison to the greater, a comparison to the lesser, or a comparison to the equal.³¹⁴ The text of Sirach is deliberative in its advancement of the proposition that “the wisdom of the scribe (is) in an opportunity for leisure.”

Enthymemes based on the premise “the one with little business can become wise” offer implicit arguments intended to persuade an audience to embrace σχολή as a reliable path toward scribal wisdom. As syncrisis, the text also employs a comparison of the one who commits his heart to “work” (Sir 38:25) with the one who devotes his mind to intellectual pursuits and who has more or less of an opportunity for σχολή.³¹⁵ The concerns and preoccupations of skilled artisans with their crafts and products are contrasted with the concerns of one who dedicates his mind to study, reflection, and contemplation.

Appealing to such a comparison Sirach hopes to convince his audience that those with an opportunity of leisure may ultimately embody a deeper level of wisdom than those who are preoccupied with external activities (πραξις).

Traditional textbooks of composition and rhetoric, progymnasmata, rehearsed students in the use of basic literary forms considered to be foundational not only to declamation but also to written composition. Each of the four extant progymnasmata contain exercises dedicated to learning the art of syncrisis.³¹⁶ According to Aelius Theon,

³¹³In ancient Greek rhetoric merit was construed strictly in terms of the potential advantage to the listener. Aristotle describes this when he states: “The deliberative orator aims at establishing the expediency or the harmfulness of a proposed course of action; if he urges its acceptance, he does so on the ground that it will do good; if he urges its rejection, he does so on the ground that it will do harm; and all other points, such as whether the proposal is just or unjust, honourable or dishonourable, he brings in as subsidiary and relative to this main consideration.” “Rhetoric,” 1358b.

³¹⁴Aristotle also provides a statement surveying topics of syncritical arguments he prescribes for use in all three species of rhetoric. He arrives at the topics for eulogy or invective from examples of the more and the less and illustrates three forms of this argument: syncrisis with the greater, syncrisis with the lesser, and syncrisis with the equal. “Rhetoric,” 1396b20–1397a19.

³¹⁵Syncrisis could be employed in service of any of the species of rhetoric: judicial, epideictic, or deliberative. Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, “Choosing What is Advantageous: The Relationship Between Epideictic and Deliberative Syncrisis in Hebrews,” *NTS* 58 (2012): 379, 382–383.

Syncrisis (synkrisis) is the language setting the better or the worse side by side. There are syncrises of both persons and things. An example involving persons is a comparison of Ajax and Odysseus, of things a comparison of wisdom and bravery. Since, however, we give preference to one of the persons by looking at their actions, and at anything else about them that is good, the method would be the same in both cases.”³¹⁷

Included with the exercises are rules that were to be applied in creating effective comparisons. Several of these rules offer insights helpful in examining Sirach’s construction and use of syncrisis in this discourse. The applicable rules include the following:

1) Comparisons are not to be conducted whole to whole but part to part.

Aphthonius advises that a comparison by parts is more persuasive than a generality: “it is not necessary in making comparison to contrast a whole with a whole, for that is flat and not argumentative, but compare a heading to a heading; this at least is argumentative.”³¹⁸

On this matter all four progymnastic theorists agree. Thus, as a matter of practice, one does not simply state that a scholar is superior to a skilled worker, for such a flat declarative statement does not argue for what it claims. Rather, one must select topics from the lives of the scholars and the lives of the workers to compare in order to demonstrate which group is superior.

2) Because the comparisons were intended to demonstrate that one person or position was better than or superior to another, the exercises each offer clear directions regarding which topics are to be used in constructing an effective contrast. Each one of the four extant progymnasmata offers a list of topics (encomiastic topics) that could be

³¹⁶Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 52–55, 83–84, 113–115, 162–164.

³¹⁷Alieus Theon, “Exercises” in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 52–53.

³¹⁸Aphthonius, “The Preliminary Exercises,” in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 114.

considered when structuring a comparison.³¹⁹ A perusal of the four lists reveals a sufficient number of commonalities and differences to conclude that the exact number and order of the topics was not a matter of wide agreement. Some theorists were inclined to an expanded list of topics; others preferred brevity. In each case, students were advised to use the lists flexibly and to tailor them so that only those topics that served the writer's purpose were featured in particular comparisons.³²⁰ Moreover, the theorists clearly envision occasions in which comparison by a single topic would be enough for an effective syncrisis. In Sirach's syncrisis, as will be seen, the topics of comparison include: official positions, reputation, relationships, goods of the mind (information, knowledge, understanding, piety, moral discernment and wisdom), and, possibly, a good (satisfied) death because the scholar will live on in his good name.

3) The lists of encomiastic topics of comparison are chronologically arranged to serve as a general compositional outline for structuring the syncrisis.³²¹ Again, flexibility was advised in some of the exercises and was freely employed by authors in limiting the number and sequence of topics explored.³²² The result was that for some authors comparisons were explicit, but for others, they took the form of examples and implicit comparisons that were drawn by the audience confronted with contrasting images.

Sirach's use of syncrisis seems closer to Quintilian's use of *exempla* than to a

³¹⁹Comparative lists of these topics may be found in Michael Martin, 'Progymnastic Topics List' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and are published in Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, "The Encomiastic Topics of Syncrisis as the Key to the Structure and Argument of Hebrews" *NTS* 57 (2011): 421–422. The lists include Theon's 'Arrangement by Goods': 1. External goods (origin, upbringing, city, tribe, ancestors, relatives, education, friendship, reputation, official position, wealth, good children, good death); 2. Bodily goods; 3. Goods of the mind (virtues) and actions referred to as virtues.

³²⁰Aelius Theon, "Exercises" in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata* 51–52; Nicolaus, "Preliminary Exercises," in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 156, 163.

³²¹Ps. Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus required students to follow their lists of topics chronologically as a template for constructing their syncrises. Theon arranges his topics in a traditional Platonic manner according to the goods of personhood: goods of the mind, goods of the body, and goods external to the person. Martin and Whitlark, "The Encomiastic Topics of Syncrisis," 420.

³²²Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 52–54; 156–157; 163–164. Cf. also Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, "The Encomiastic Topics of Syncrisis, 422.

mechanically sequenced comparison of topics as set out in the progymnastic exercises.³²³ The rhetographic images of bodily labour in the external work of the artisans (Sir 38:25-31) are contrasted with an internal mindfulness of the scholar (Sir 39:1-3). It will also be noted when examining ancient school text syncrisis that Egyptian rhetoric generally taught by multiple, concrete examples rather than by abstractions and generalities.³²⁴ The limitations and exclusion of the skilled workers from roles of leadership in assemblies, counsel, and decision making (Sir 38:33-34) are countered by service among the great, being seen with rulers, travel, and moral discernment (Sir 39:4). In Egyptian rhetoric, such limitations and inclusions offer accurate examples of the conservative and hierarchical nature of Egyptian society.³²⁵

4) A comparison of things employs topics analogous to the topics used in comparing persons. The practice advised by Theon and others, possibly dating back to Aristotle, is to treat things as if persons or as if embodied by persons.³²⁶ A good example is found in Aphthonius's 'An Encomion of Wisdom' in which σοφία is manifest in the gods and then personified in human actions.³²⁷

These four common rules of syncrisis will be useful in probing Sirach's contrast of the wisdom to be found in the skills of the artisans with the wisdom sought by the

³²³ Martin and Whitlark, "Choosing What is Advantageous," 384. See the comments on Quintilian's use of *exempla* in syncritical comparisons. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921) 5.11.8–10.

³²⁴ Michael V. Fox, "Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric," *Rhetorica* 1 (1983):19.

³²⁵ David Hutton, "Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric in the Old and Middle Kingdom," *Rhetorica* 20 (2002): 226–227. Egypt was a very conservative culture. Innovation was not welcome, rather things were to be repeated just as they were received. This was intended to preserve and maintain cultural traditions. Exact repetition was highly valued as good speech. Egyptian rhetoric tended to focus on the social status of the audience. Miriam Lichtheim identified three social classes derived from the *Instruction of Ptahhotep*: "a powerful man, superior to you," "your equal, on your level," "a poor man, not your equal." *AEL*, vol.1, 64.

³²⁶ Aelius Theon, "Exercises" in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 52–53; Martin and Whitlark, "The Encomiastic Topics of Syncrisis," 423; Aristotle, "Rhetoric," 1361a. Aristotle talks of the state of the Lacedaemonians based on the goods of body associated with its men and women.

³²⁷ Aphthonius, "The Preliminary Exercises" in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 110–111.

mindful scholar in his devotion to study and his surrender of heart to the Lord who made him.

4.3 Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertextures Associated with Σοφία and Σοφίζω

In the Mediterranean world of the late Hellenistic period the term σοφία was very “slippery.” Many quite different ideas, mental spaces, and organizing frames were easily activated by a simple use of the word.³²⁸ Philo of Alexandria, in his first-century CE commentary on the relationship of the material and immaterial sense of wisdom, warned:

We must also not be ignorant that wisdom, being the art of arts, appears to vary according to its different materials, but it shows its true species without alteration to those who have acute sight, and who are not carried away by the burden of the body with which they are surrounded: but who see the impression which is stamped upon it by art itself ... And the power which exists in the wise man will show the same result: for when it is occupied with the affairs of the living God it is called piety and holiness: but when it employs itself upon the heaven, and the things in heaven, it is natural philosophy; and when it devotes itself to the investigation of the air, and of the different circumstances attending its variations and changes, whether taking place in the uniform yearly revolutions of the seasons, or in the partial periods of months and days, it is then called meteorology. It is called moral philosophy when it busies itself about the rectification of human morals; and this moral philosophy is divided into several subordinate species; that namely of politics, when occupied about state affairs; economy, when applied to the management of a household; when it is devoted to the subject of banquets and entertainments, it is then convivial philosophy. Again, that power which concerns itself about the government of men, is royal; that which is conversant with commands and prohibitions, is legislative.³²⁹

During the last two centuries BCE, the time when the Sirach materials were developing, multiple perceptions of σοφία were at play within the Hellenistic-Jewish communities of Egypt and Judea. Wisdom was variously envisaged, as mastery in the performance of a skill, art, or craft, as a gift from God at creation, as the source of cosmic and social order, as revealed to the chosen of Israel, as an expression of piety toward the Creator, as the administration of justice, as insightful and effective governance, as

³²⁸Christopher Lyle Johnstone, *Listening to the Logos: Speech and the Coming of Wisdom in Ancient Greece* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009).

³²⁹Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, “On Drunkenness” in vol. 3 of *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Wittaker. LCL 247 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 1:88, 91.

obedience to covenant law, as philosophical knowledge acquired through discipline and study, as the secret knowledge accessible only to sectarian groups, and so on. The fact that Sirach identifies and then elaborates the term σοφία γραμματέως already signals a perceived need for at least some clarification of the meaning and exercise of scribal wisdom within this “slippery” context. While a full survey of all the mental spaces and frames evoked by the use of the term σοφία in Hellenistic-Jewish Egypt extends far beyond the scope of this work, nevertheless, careful attention must be directed to the mental spaces and frames that seem to be at play within this specific discourse.

The repetitions and associations of σοφία and σοφίζω in the text of Sirach 38:24–39:11 collectively foreground the assumption that God, the Creator, is the source of all wisdom and order. Probing the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of this assumption will help to clarify whether or not an appeal to the divine origin of wisdom was an already accepted commonplace with enough social purchase in the long-term knowledge of the audience to provide a firm base for the arguments that Sirach builds upon it.

4.3.1 Wisdom as Cosmic and Social Order Established by the Creator

The idea that “wisdom” originates with God and the act of creation is commonplace in wisdom materials from Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel. In the Akkadian creation narrative, *Enuma Elish*, Marduk defeats the sea-monster Tiamat, symbol of chaos, and from her decaying carcass constructs an ordered world.³³⁰ The Ugaritic creation myth presents Baal’s defeat of the sea monster Yamm as the victory of order over chaos.³³¹ In the Babylonian tradition, Ea (Sumerian: Enki) possesses wisdom which he gave to seven antediluvian sages (*apkallu*) and to postdiluvian sages (*ummanu*) who taught it to

³³⁰Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of the Creation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 42–43; James Bennett Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 62–72.

³³¹Pritchard, *ANET*, 129–142; John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth of the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

scholars in the tablet house (*edubba*).³³² In this view, wisdom is created by God and mediated through a chain of tradition connected with the activities of the *edubba*.³³³

In the Egyptian tradition, the gods also implant order in the universe.³³⁴ The *Instruction of Merikare* associates creation with the control of chaos: “He [the god] made sky and earth for their sake ... he subdued the water monster.”³³⁵ The newly established order was embodied in the goddess Ma’at who came into being together with the other gods and continues to be upheld by them.³³⁶ Sages studied society and nature in order to discover the principles of justice, order, and truth and expressed their search for wisdom and order in collections of sententious sayings, maxims, and proverbs. Instruction and wisdom (*seboyet*) were closely attached to the “House of Life,” a school-type setting situated near a temple, where students learned sacred traditions.³³⁷ Knowledge and the sacred are joined.

Hebrew literature uses similar imagery of creation as “order over chaos.” Pss 74:12-17 and 89:8-12 associate Yahweh’s defeat of sea monsters (Leviathan, Rahab) with ensuing acts of creation. Even the comparatively demythologized creation text of Gen

³³²Amar Annus, “On the Origin of Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions,” *JSP* 19 (2010): 281–291.

³³³James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 5–6.

³³⁴Wisdom (*seboyet*) was not seen to be a profession or even an art. Rather it was regarded as something some people could grow into as a result of obeying the natural, correct laws which regulated life. The conceptualization of these laws, although metaphorical, visual, and pluriform, show that a constant appreciation of truth, justice, and integrity stood at the heart of it. These higher human values were at work in the cosmos (in things as they are) and in human cultures (in things as they ought to be). Pharaoh was the best of the good examples. Wim van den Dungen, *The Scales of the Balance of Wisdom in Ancient Egyptian Sapiential Literature*. www.sofiatopia.org/maat/saa2.htm.

³³⁵“The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare,” in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, vol.1 The Old and Middle Kingdom* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), II. 284, 286, p. 106.

³³⁶Miriam Lichtheim, *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies*, OBO (Freiburg, Switzerland: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 16–19. While the word *ma’at* translates readily into “right/rightness,” “truth,” and “justice,” Egyptian thinking about *ma’at* resulted in formulating the systematized attitudes which in modern languages are called ethics and morality. Humans did or performed *ma’at* because it was considered good and because the god desired it.

³³⁷John Baines, *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45.

1:1–2:4^a (with no mention of sea-monsters) speaks of the establishment of order out of chaos rather than of a creation *ex nihilo*. Such an order is clearly set out in the differentiation and naming of light and darkness, day and night, above and below, seas and dry land, vegetation, animals, humans, good and evil, life and death, and so on.³³⁸

The classical civilization of Greece also assumed the existence of a divinely established universal order. For example, the first Greek cosmogony, Hesiod's *Theogony*, is a large-scale synthesis of many different local stories concerning the gods, organized into a single narrative that tells how the gods came to be and how they eventually established permanent control over the cosmos.³³⁹ The initial state of the universe was vague chaos, a dark indefinite void considered as a divine primordial condition from which all plenitude emerged.

In truth at first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundation of all the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus, and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth, and Eros Love, fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them.³⁴⁰

The word κόσμος itself implies a sense of order, an apt and harmonious arrangement which, in the minds of many Greeks, underlies beauty.³⁴¹ Even with the advent of naturalistic cosmology in the work of the Thales, the idea persists that all things are rooted in the gods. The natural world was seen to be infused with a divine element. The traditional language of myth was stretched to embrace more abstract ideas. “The whole

³³⁸These ideas are well explored in Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, Vol. 1, Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Series, (Blandford Forum, Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009), 134–150.

³³⁹Hesiod, “Theogony” in *Hesiod I*, ed. and trans. Glen W. Most. LCL 57 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2–85. “Hesiod recognizes behind the elements of human experience the workings of powers that always are, that may give or withhold unpredictably, that function independently of men, and that therefore may properly be considered divine. Everywhere he looks, Hesiod discovers the effects of these powers—as Thales will say about a century later, “all things are full of gods The values that these gods embody are not independent of one another, but form patterns of objective meaningfulness: hence the gods themselves must form part of a system, which, given their anthropomorphism, cannot but take a genealogical form.” xxx–xxxi.

³⁴⁰Hesiod, “Theogony,” ll. 116–122, p.13.

³⁴¹Doran, Robert. *Birth of a Worldview: Early Christianity in its Jewish and Pagan Context* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), 33.

world is somehow alive and animated” or “all things in sum ... [are] interpenetrated by some kind of life-principle.”³⁴² “Hence Thales, rejecting the anthropomorphic deities of popular religion, retained its language to the extent of saying that, in a special sense, the whole world is filled with gods.”³⁴³ The immortality of the gods, their unlimited power (their life-force) and their control of animate and inanimate realms, though divorced from anthropomorphic deities, remained central to Greek thought.³⁴⁴

The “order” of creation was not limited simply to the physical and material dimensions of the world, which represented but one aspect of a much broader understanding of a *primordium* grounding the entire universe and every expression of human society. All aspects of human life and behaviour (religious, social, and moral) were understood to be manifestations of the same fundamental order which had been dynamically present from the first moment of creation. No aspect of human life could be excluded. All human beings were born into a world where the structures of meaning and meaningfulness were already clearly and firmly established and ordained from the beginning. As a result, any individual search for success or fulfillment in life required one to embrace, and live in accordance with, the already established order of creation. The one who knew this order and lived by it was regarded as wise; the one who did not was foolish.³⁴⁵ This universal wisdom, rooted in creation, was an important concern of parents, teachers, sages, and scribes who reflected on and shared their understanding of an ordered and productive life.

³⁴²G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, M. Schofield. *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 95, 97.

³⁴³W. K. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*. vol. 1, *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 68.

³⁴⁴Christopher Johnstone, *Listening to the Logos*, 44–45.

³⁴⁵Michael L. Barré, “‘Fear of God’ and the World View of Wisdom,” *BTB* 11 (1981): 41–43; Goering, *Wisdom’s Root*, 21. See also Michael V. Fox, “Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric,” 18. In Egyptian thought social order was considered divinely ordained and ideally static. The individual was expected to bring himself into harmony with that order and not to change it. One important aim of Egyptian rhetoric was to maintain social harmony.

From the earliest stages of mythopoetic wisdom, human understanding was thought to be derived from the all-seeing, all-knowing, all-wise gods who apprehended true justice and gave mortals their share of good and evil.³⁴⁶ The wisdom of those regarded as the wisest—the poet, the oracle, the seer, the soothsayer—consisted in their abilities to recount the histories and genealogies of the gods, in apprehending what was pleasing to them, and in discerning from divine signs what human behaviours and undertakings the gods might favour. All this knowledge derived from the gods themselves through inspiration, revelation, omens, and signs:

Muses of Helicon, let us begin our song with them,
who hold the great and holy mountain of Helicon...
The Muses once taught Hesiod beautiful song
while he was shepherding sheep at the foot of holy Helicon.³⁴⁷

Wisdom was always seen to be a divine gift. Its recipients were selected according to the predispositions and preferences of the gods and there was nothing that an individual could do to increase the likelihood of being the one chosen to bear their gift.³⁴⁸ The complete dependence of human beings on the gods was a frequent theme of the Greek poet Theognis: “no man is himself the cause of loss and gain ... the Gods are the givers of them both;”³⁴⁹ “no man living is rich or poor, bad or good, without fortune;”³⁵⁰ “‘tis certain that without the Gods man getteth neither good nor ill.”³⁵¹ Man is not seen to

³⁴⁶Hesiod, “Works and Days,” in *Hesiod I*, ed. and trans. Glen W. Most, LCL 57 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), ll. 230-239; “Theogony,” ll. 886-907.

³⁴⁷Hesiod, “Theogony,” ll.1-2, 22-23.

³⁴⁸There were certain religious practices often associated with cult worship (e.g. The Elysian Mysteries, Dionysian frenzy, the practice of Orphic groups) that invited divine revelation to break down the barrier between immortal and mortal so that humans might have access to insights as the gods may have chosen to bestow. Nothing, however, compelled the gods to bestow wisdom, insight, or understanding on any particular person. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), chapter 6.

³⁴⁹Theognis, *Elegy and Iambus I*, trans. J. M. Edmonds (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), l.134.

³⁵⁰Theognis, *Elegy and Iambus*, l.165.

³⁵¹Theognis, *Elegy and Iambus*, l.171.

be the master of his own destiny; nor do moral decisions seem to make any difference on rewards or punishments in life:

How then is it, Son of Cronus, that Thy mind can bear to hold the wicked and the righteous in the same esteem, whether a man's mind be turned to temperateness, or ... to wanton outrage? ... Yet the wicked enjoy untroubled prosperity, whereas such as keep their hearts from base deeds, nevertheless, for all they may love what is righteous, receive Penury.³⁵²

The gods treat the evil and the righteous alike; they may even bestow prosperity on the former and adversity on the latter. In Sir 39:6 the great Lord's bestowal of the spirit of understanding is not earned or merited—it is purely a gift given at God's will.

In Hebrew wisdom discourse both wisdom (חָכְמָה) and order are rooted in God and God's creative acts. At a speculative level,³⁵³ Prov 8:22-31 sets out wisdom's origin:

The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil. When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race. (Prov 8:22-31)

Similarly, the poem of Job 28 asserts that wisdom belongs to God who alone knows where she is to be found. No human knows where to find her (Job 28:13), but God knows the path (דֶּרֶךְ) to her and with her he established the lineaments of creation (Job 28:23).

At a didactic level wisdom is also concerned with a materially and morally productive life. At the heart of Israelite wisdom tradition was a deeply practical concern

³⁵²Theognis, *Elegy and Iambus*, 1.177.

³⁵³Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, volume 1, 124–125. Hebrew biblical wisdom has been described as a combination of didactic and speculative wisdom. Didactic wisdom was concerned with proverbs and aphorisms probing the conduct of daily life. Speculative wisdom probed outside of that which was experienced in the created world. It was concerned with the creation of wisdom and the life of wisdom with God prior to and during the time of creation.

for the human condition and the best ways in which the challenges of life could be negotiated. Both Proverbs and Qoheleth focus on circumstances closely associated with human existence and offer recommendations for a way of life in accord with wisdom that would result in true happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction. This didactic advice, while in some sense religious and fully assuming that the God of Israel was the ultimate source of all wisdom, tended to emphasize practical instructions for human thriving and in that it reflected a broadly humanistic outlook.

Looking to the Sirach corpus within which the text of Sir 38:24–39:11 has been preserved there is a full alignment with a traditional Jewish understanding of wisdom: “all wisdom is from the Lord, and with him it remains forever” (πᾶσα σοφία παρὰ κυρίου καὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἔστιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, Sir 1:1).³⁵⁴ “Wisdom was created before all other things” (Sir 1:4). God is seen to be the origin and possessor of all wisdom and he dispenses wisdom upon all creation (Sir 1:9-10).

Connections among Mediterranean mythopoetic and naturalistic cosmogonies, Greek poetic reflections, and Jewish religious tradition combine to illustrate that the long-term schematic knowledge of Sirach’s audience would plausibly have included, as a commonly known and accepted premise, that God, the Creator, is the source of all wisdom and order. That assumption provides a relatively secure starting point for Sirach’s elaboration of scribal wisdom. At the same time, it also creates a conflict. If God is the source of all wisdom and order, how can Israel maintain a unique election tradition? The discourse will set about dealing with that issue.

4.3.2 Wisdom and Skilled Work

In classical Greek literature the term τέχνη represents the material and practical aspects of

³⁵⁴The literary context within which Sirach 38:24–39:11 has been embedded and preserved is treated in this research as intertextual material. That the discourse would be placed within this particular context suggests at least some shared insights and common concerns within the Sirach corpus even if the exact place of the discourse within an overall literary structure has not been unanimously agreed upon.

wisdom. The word itself is derived from the early Indo-European root “*tek*” which, according to Julius Pokorny, means “to fit together the woodwork of a woven house.”³⁵⁵ Eventually the term came to apply to masterful knowledge of a specific activity (art, craft, skill, expertise, profession, or science) that produced a useful result, could be taught to others, was recognized (certified), and offered a rewarded livelihood.³⁵⁶ According to Sextus Empiricus (writing around 200 CE) “every *techne* [*sic*] is a body [σύστημα] consisting of items of knowledge which are mutually cohesive [ἐκ καταλέψεων συγγεγυμνασμένων] and having reference to one of the ends which are useful in life.”³⁵⁷ Τέχνη is always active and concrete in its exercise. It is concerned with the kind of knowledge associated with people who were bound to life’s necessities. As such, it was chiefly operative in the domestic sphere, in farming and slavery, and not in the free realm of the Greek πόλις.³⁵⁸ The one who practiced τέχνη came to be known as a τέκτων or, in the case of high accomplishment, ἀρχιτέκτων (craftsman, master craftsman) as in Sirach 38:27.

At the beginning of Greek literature, Homer presents an attitude to work and craftsmanship which seems to be one of positive approval. Craftsmen are presented as δημιουργοί, (δῆμος+ἔργον) “ones who worked for the people” either as artisans or professionals.³⁵⁹ Their crafts were taught and patronized by the gods Athena and Hephaestus.³⁶⁰ Doctors were trained by Paeëon, singers by the Muses and seers by

³⁵⁵Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Francke, 1967), s.v. “τέχνη.”

³⁵⁶David Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato’s Understanding of Techne* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 1.

³⁵⁷Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* trans R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 5. This definition has been identified as Stoic but it can also be found in other ancient works.

³⁵⁸Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 71–72, 171–178.

³⁵⁹The term occurs twice in the *Odyssey* 17:383, where it refers to a man of skill, and 19:135 where it refers to a magistrate.

³⁶⁰Maurice Balme, “Attitudes to Work and Leisure in Ancient Greece,” *GR XXXI* (1984): 142.

Apollo.³⁶¹ Evidence of Homer's admiration for craftsmen is seen in texts such as this:

When a man overlays silver with gold, a cunning workman whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught all manner of craft, and full of grace is the work he produces, even so the goddess [Athene] shed grace upon his [Odysseus] head and shoulders.³⁶²

Indeed, Homer saw such craftsmanship as σοφία: "but as the carpenter's line maketh straight a ship's timber in the hands of a cunning [σοφίης] workman, that is well skilled in all manner of craft by the promptings of Athene ..."³⁶³

Hesiod, an archetypal peasant himself, extols the virtues of labour and considers idleness to be the only disgrace.

Both gods and men are angry with a man who lives idle, for in nature he is like the stingless drones who waste the labor of the bees, eating without working; but let it be your care to order your work properly, that in the right season your barns may be full of victual.³⁶⁴

The importance of craftsmen and skilled labour for the development of civilized society is established in *The Hymn to Hephaestus*, a poetic celebration of the divine smith:

Sing, clear-voiced Muse, of Hephaestus famed for skilled works, who with bright eyed Athena taught splendid crafts to men upon the earth, men who before used to dwell in caves in the mountains, just like wild beasts. But now that they have learned crafts through Hephaestus the famed artist, they easily live tranquil lives in their own homes the whole year round. Be gracious, Hephaestus, and grant me success [ἀρετή] and prosperity.³⁶⁵

These texts from the earliest Greek literature show an attitude which embraced work as a virtuous necessity and which regarded craftsmen with esteem.³⁶⁶ This positive attitude toward work and workers seems to have persisted in the succeeding years. According to

³⁶¹Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. A.T. Murray, LCL 107, 108 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1919), 4.220–231; 24.60; 8.405; 15.250.

³⁶²Homer, *Odyssey* 6.232–35.

³⁶³Homer, *Iliad*, trans. A.T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 15.410–413.

³⁶⁴Balme, "Attitudes to Work and Leisure," 141. Hesiod, "Works and Days" in *Hesiod I*, ed. and trans. Glen W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), ll. 303–307.

³⁶⁵Anonymous, "Hymn to Hephaestus" in *The Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 20.1–7.

³⁶⁶Balme, "Attitudes to Work and Leisure," 143.

Plutarch, one of Solon's early laws required fathers to teach their sons a trade. He therefore encouraged the Athenians to turn to the crafts and made a law that no son was obliged to support his father unless he had first been taught a trade.³⁶⁷ When compared with Solon's own poetry, Plutarch seems to offer an accurate portrayal of this ruler's attitude toward the trades and those who practiced them:

One who has learnt the works of Athena and Hephaistos skilled in many crafts
Brings in his livelihood with his hands,
Another through being taught the gifts of the Olympian Muses,
And who knows full measure of lovely wisdom;
Another person Lord Apollo the Far-shooter has made a seer,
He knows the evil that comes to a man from afar,
For on him the gods attend; but what is destined
No bird (omen) or sacrifices will in any way ward off.
Others have the work of Paian (the gods' healer), who knows many drugs,
Doctors: but they have no efficacy
For often from a small ache comes great pain,
And no one can relieve it by giving soothing drugs;
Although he can touch a man disordered by dreadful diseases
And with his hands suddenly make him well.
Fate brings both evil and good to mortal men,
And the gifts of the immortal gods cannot be avoided.³⁶⁸

Popular Greek plays also provide an indication of public attitudes toward skilled trades and crafts. In Sophocles's *Antigone* the chorus sings praise to the arts and crafts that people used to help themselves, calling "clever beyond all dreams the inventive craft that he has."³⁶⁹ Aeschylus, in the tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, has the hero declare, as he hands over to human beings the fire he stole from Zeus, "from it they shall learn many crafts."³⁷⁰ The gift of the trades made it possible for humanity to create their πόλεις and their civilizations (as in Sir 38:32). Through these popular plays, the untold contributions of the artisans to society were publicly declared and legitimated.

³⁶⁷Plutarch, "Life of Solon" in vol.1 of *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 22.

³⁶⁸Solon's verses have survived in fragmentary quotations by other ancient authors such as Plutarch and Demosthenes who used them to illustrate their own arguments. Solon 13, ll. 49–64.

³⁶⁹Sophocles, "Antigone," in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1, trans. Elizabeth Wyckoff, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), ll. 362–363.

³⁷⁰Aeschylus, "Prometheus Bound," in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1, l. 254.

The voices of the populace, who were largely illiterate, are mostly unheard. Only a few sources provide a brief insight into the attitudes of craftsmen themselves to their own work. Several of the more accomplished artisans left evidence of a deep pride in their achievements. A good example is the seventh century BCE sculptor who dedicated a monument to Apollo with the inscription “Euthykarides the Naxian made and dedicated me.”³⁷¹ Skill competitions were sometimes celebrated among craftsmen from various city states. The epitaph of a fourth-century BCE potter, Bakchios, reads:

in the competition which the city staged, of those who combine earth and fire [i.e. make pottery], Greece judged Bakchios the first in both character and in achievement. He took all the crowns.³⁷²

An anonymous craftsman dedicated his work as an offering to Athena, the patron of arts and crafts in Athens, with the inscription: “It is good for the skilled to exercise their skill according to their craft; for he who has craft has a better life.”³⁷³ An intriguing piece of evidence appears in Andocides’s *On the Mysteries*. Andocides was an aristocrat who was accused in 399 BCE of profaning a religious cult and of mutilating stone images of Hermes. When he was on trial for his life, he addressed the jury, which probably included ordinary citizens and democratic supporters. In his speech Andocides said:

think, furthermore, what a citizen you will have in me, if you give me your protection. I was once, as you know, a man of great wealth. Then to begin with, through no fault of my own, but through the disasters which overtook Athens, I was plunged into utter penury and want. I then started life afresh, a life of honest toil, with my brains and my hands to help me.³⁷⁴

Here, an aristocratic victim of fate admits to a jury that he has laboured with his mind and hands to alleviate his poverty. Such a rhetorical statement would, almost certainly, have depended on a positive view of labour among the jurors.

³⁷¹D. Buford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 11.

³⁷²Buford, *Craftsmen*, 209.

³⁷³Matthew Dillon and Lynda Garland, *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates (c. 800–399 BC)* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 341.

³⁷⁴Andocides, “On the Mysteries,” in *Minor Attic Orators*, vol. 1, trans. K. J. Maidment (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 144.

Greek philosophical tradition also regarded τέχνη as wisdom. In Plato's *Apology*, for example, Socrates, a stone-mason by trade, showing interest in all τέχνη, visited craftsmen in their shops and questioned them about their work. He found that in the things in which they were expert, they were wiser (σοφώτεροι) than he.

At last I went to the artisans, for I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets;—because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom; and therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was.³⁷⁵

Despite the criticism of an over-extended sense of their own “wisdom,” the language of this text expresses strong approval for the work of craftsmen (δημιουργοί) and of their skills as an expression of wisdom (σοφία). Among craftsmen there were artists of distinction and renown; potters and painters who signed their splendid works (ἔργα), like the architect Ictinus and the artist Pheidias.³⁷⁶ In a sense, all craftsmen were artists, each one striving toward σοφία; each one struggling for excellence (ἀρετή) in the materials of their own trade.

Aristotle also used the word σοφία to differentiate levels of mastery in artistic work. Some he considered wiser than others because they knew the theory and the causes of excellence in a truer sense:

We suppose artists to be wiser than men of experience (which implies that wisdom depends in all cases rather on knowledge); and this because the former know the cause, but the latter do not. For men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why, while the others know the ‘why’ and the cause. Hence we think that the master-workers in each craft are more honourable and know in a truer sense and are wiser than the manual workers, because they know the causes

³⁷⁵Plato, “Apology” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 22c-22d.

³⁷⁶The ancient Greek contemporaries Ictinus, Callicrates, and Pheidias, are jointly credited in the creation of the Parthenon, in Athens, during the rule of Pericles, c. 440 BCE. See Plutarch, “Pericles” in *Plutarch's Lives*, vol. 3, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 13.4, 9, pp. 41, 49.

of the things that are done (we think the manual workers are like certain lifeless things which act indeed, but act without knowing what they do, as fire burns,—but while the lifeless things perform each of their functions by a natural tendency, the labourers perform them through habit); thus we view them as being wiser not in virtue of being able to act, but of having the theory for themselves and knowing the causes. And in general it is a sign of the man who knows, that he can teach, and therefore we think art more truly knowledge than experience is; for artists can teach, and men of mere experience cannot.³⁷⁷

Aristotle also introduced a distinction between wisdom as artistic excellence in the performance of a particular craft, that is a domain-specific wisdom, and a non-particular, general wisdom that included a broader comprehension and knowledge of first principles:

Wisdom in the arts we ascribe to their most finished exponents, e.g. to Phidias as a sculptor and to Polyclitus as a maker of statues, and here we mean nothing by wisdom except excellence in art; but we think that some people are wise in general, not in some particular field or in any other limited respect, as Homer says in the *Margites*,

*Him did the gods make neither a digger nor yet a ploughman
Nor wise in anything else.*

Therefore wisdom must plainly be the most finished of the forms of knowledge. It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore wisdom must be comprehension combined with knowledge—knowledge of the highest objects which has received as it were its proper completion.³⁷⁸

This distinction is not dissimilar to Sirach's use of the verb σοφίζω applied to the work of the skilled trades and his application of σοφία to tradition and the results of “the spirit of understanding.”

Israel's Exodus tradition associates excellence in the crafts with a divinely bestowed wisdom (Exod 28:3; 31:1-5; 35:26, 31, 33, 35; 36:1, 2, 8; 1 Chr 22:15; 2 Chr 2:7, 13, 14; Prov 24:3). In specific texts the word “wisdom” has itself been used to imply “ability” in the crafts as in Exod 28:3:

הָאֵלֹהִים יִבְרָא אֶת־כָּל־חֻמְמֵי־לֵב אֲשֶׁר מְלֵאֲתָיו רוּחַ חָכְמָה וְעָשׂוּ אֶת־בְּגָדֵי אֹהֶל־קֹדֶשׁ לְכַהֲנֹתָיִם:

³⁷⁷Aristotle, “Metaphysics” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, trans. W. D. Ross (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 981b11-13.

³⁷⁸Aristotle, “Nichomachean Ethics” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, trans. W. D. Ross (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 1141a20-33.

καὶ σὺ λάλησον πᾶσι τοῖς σοφοῖς τῇ διανοίᾳ οὗς ἐνέπλησα πνεύματος αἰσθήσεως καὶ ποιήσουσιν τὴν στολὴν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἀαρὼν εἰς τὸ ἅγιον ἐν ᾧ ἱερατεύσει μοι

And you shall speak to all who have ability, whom I have endowed with skill, that they make Aaron's vestments to consecrate him for my priesthood.

The Hebrew expression בְּלִיָּה (literally “wisdom of the heart”) is translated into Greek as τοῖς σοφοῖς referring to those who have the ability to ply their trades. A similar construction in Exod 35:35 identifies the “wise of heart” as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers, weavers, workmen, and skilled designers. Moreover, the Hebrew text of Exod 28:3 goes on to speak of רוּחַ חָכְמָה (literally “spirit of wisdom”) translated as πνεύματος αἰσθήσεως (literally “spirit of discernment,” i.e. to see and create what is needed). In these texts, “trade skills” and “wisdom” have been used interchangeably.

Exod 31:1-5 associates divine spirit (πνεῦμα θεῖον), wisdom (σοφία), understanding (σύνεσις), and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) with an excellent performance of every craft:

The Lord spoke to Moses: See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah and I have filled him with divine spirit [πνεῦμα θεῖον], with ability [σοφίας], intelligence [συνέσεως], and knowledge [ἐπιστήμης] in every kind of craft [ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ], to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.

The exact same terms (πνεῦμα, σοφία, σύνεσις, and ἐπιστήμη) which Exodus uses to describe the excellent performance of a craft are the words used in Sir 39:6-7 to describe the effect of the great Lord's gift on the learned and pious scholar: receiving the spirit equates with ability, intelligence, and knowledge that will be manifest in παιδεία and glorying in the law of the Lord's covenant.

The crafts identified in Sir 38:25-31 represent common crafts of the ancient world. In an Egyptian context agriculture was central to the economy. The annual Nile inundation and the soft soil left Black Egypt (the Nile delta) a particularly fertile area for the growth of grain. Egyptian religion held as sacred the forces of nature that assured the annual harvest and it urged people to cooperate with such forces. The system and

regularity of the world was an attribute of Ma'at, the goddess of wisdom. Pharaohs, priests and farmers were expected to act in accord with her principles so that she was recognized as the basis of Egyptian civilization. Farmers who cared for the earth carried on long-established traditions aligned with the wisdom of Ma'at. Hoeing and ploughing, done according to tradition, were considered to be acts of veneration of the Earth-God. These sacred traditions led Egypt to become the ancient world's most reliable food supply, exporting wheat and barley.³⁷⁹ Skilled craftsmen, while placed near the bottom of the Egyptian social hierarchy, often prospered because of a growing demand for their products. The ancient Egyptian village of Deir El-Medina was home to many skilled workers who fashioned tombs for the pharaoh and his family. The jobs were dirty, strenuous and dangerous but the workers were treated very well and the jobs were passed on through families. Engravers, metal smiths and potters learned their trades from masters who taught them traditional methods and styles of work that were to be replicated without variation. Such workers, especially if they gained a reputation for excellent work, could look forward to a life of prosperity and high regard in their communities.

In summary, classical Greek literature understood crafts and the skilled trades to be gifts taught by the gods to humanity as a wisdom that afforded the establishment of civilized society (Sir 38:32). Excellence in the skilled trades provided a good life for diligent workers and, for some, the honour of a good name and high reputation. Greek philosophical tradition held both the arts and artisans in high regard. Their work was seen to be an expression of wisdom rooted in knowledge of theory and the first causes of excellence in their respective crafts. Jewish tradition speaks of skills and crafts as a divine wisdom imparting the ability, knowledge and intelligence to achieve excellence in the performance and products of a trade. Σοφία itself and even God were portrayed in

³⁷⁹J. Donald Hughes, "Sustainable Agriculture in Ancient Egypt," *Agricultural History* 66 (1992): 14–21.

wisdom texts as being like a “craftsman” (חָכָם, τεχνίτης) in the creation of the world (Prov 8:30; Wis 7:21, 8:6, 14:2).³⁸⁰ The wisdom associated with the crafts and skilled trades was accepted as a domain-specific gift from the gods for the betterment of the human community. Rooted in the long-term knowledge of the community, such an insight seems well enough accepted to provide another agreed upon starting-point for rhetorical argumentation.

4.3.3 Wisdom As Knowledge Passed On Through Tradition

Sirach 39:1-3 introduces the one who surrenders his mind (ψυχή) to study and reflection. In these verses, Sirach presents a scholar seeking wisdom among collections of material that served as repositories for wisdom and tradition. Each repository (divine law, ancient tradition, prophecy, sayings of the notable, proverbs, and parables) presents a record of experiences, reflections, interpretations, revelations, and applications of intellectual and religious tradition that point toward achieving an ordered and successful life in the world. Unlike the “becoming wise” of the artisans, which is domain-specific and manifests in a particular product, this mindful approach to wisdom is broad, immaterial, and seeks a knowledge of deeper meanings. The scholar is open to universal wisdom that was “poured out” at creation and is accessible to all, as well as to the particular wisdom that was revealed to Israel.

Sociologist Edward Shils describes tradition as any “precipitate” or “filament” of past practice or past belief that is transmitted (“handed down”) by a parent, teacher, or authority, and which is learned and reenacted (or rethought) by agents through at least three consecutive generations.³⁸¹ For Shils, “tradition” is a transferring of patterns of belief and images or models of conduct from “the past into the present” in which these

³⁸⁰Victor Avid Hurowitz, “Nursling, Advisor, Architect? חָכָם and the Role of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-31,” *Bib* 80 (1999): 391–400.

³⁸¹Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), vii.

are respectively rethought and embodied in actions, to be taken and observed in the future.³⁸² The idea of “tradition,” derives from the Latin term *traditio*, which signifies a method of “transferring the ownership of private property in Roman law.”³⁸³ The concepts of tradition and traditional values are frequently used in political and religious discourse to establish the legitimacy of a particular point of view, a specific identity, or a way of acting.³⁸⁴ Gerald O’Collins, for example, notes that tradition secures a society’s continuity, identity, and unity.

In receiving, changing, and handing on its tradition, a social group acts as the collective subject, interpreter, and administrator of the tradition. This collective subject experiences and hands on something that goes beyond the mere sum total of individual experiences: namely, its cumulative experience.³⁸⁵

International didactic sapiential tradition passed on (and often reinterpreted) the accumulated insights and practices of previous generations on how best to live one’s life in a variety of formal and informal ways.³⁸⁶ In Hellenistic culture such traditions were passed on in the context of socialization and, more formally, in the processes of *παιδεία* which encouraged and supported an appropriation and rehearsal of traditional values and practices by the young for the purpose of establishing and maintaining “Greek” identity into the future.³⁸⁷ In the Alexandrian world, the *γυμνάσιον* (gymnastic school) and ephebate became important centres in the passing on and the social rehearsal of Hellenistic culture.³⁸⁸ Often such learning involved a strict physical and intellectual

³⁸²Shils, *Tradition*, 187.

³⁸³Shils, *Tradition*, 16.

³⁸⁴Simon J. Bronner, “Tradition,” *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vol. 8, 2nd ed., ed. William A. Darity (Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2008), 420–22.

³⁸⁵Gerald O’Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 194.

³⁸⁶F. S. Naiden, “Recent Study of Greek Religion in the Archaic Through Hellenistic Periods,” *CurBR* 11 (2013): 411–15.

³⁸⁷Henri-Irénée Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb, Wisconsin Studies in Classics (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 140–144.

³⁸⁸Marrou, *A History of Education*, 143.

discipline. “Thoth has placed the stick on earth in order to teach the fool by it.”³⁸⁹ “If I beat you, my son, you will not die; but if I leave you alone, [you will not live].”³⁹⁰

In the cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel the transmission of traditional knowledge occurred through families, elders, teachers, sages, and scribes.³⁹¹ Wisdom was frequently formulated into sayings, proverbs, or parables. Sometimes this material was gathered into collections like those of *Papyrus Insinger*, *The Instructions of Amenomope*, *The Instruction of Ankhsheshonq*, *The Instruction Any* or the *Book of Proverbs*. Such discourse, written or oral, was intended to hand on the knowledge, practices, behaviours, attitudes, social customs, rituals of interaction, core beliefs, administrative practices, and protocols from one generation to the next.³⁹²

In Egypt, “texts” were gathered into archives to serve as an instrument for “the preservation and transmission of collective wisdom.”³⁹³ This was necessary, in part, to reaffirm the continuation of ma’at, the balance and order of the universe.³⁹⁴ F. M. Haikal regarded these collections as “institutions concerned with the management and preservation of written documents for the purpose of their transmission” for legal or liturgical purposes.³⁹⁵ The main role of those employed within these collections or

³⁸⁹*Papyrus Insinger* 9.6 cited by Matthew J. Goff, “Hellenistic Instruction in Palestine and Egypt: Ben Sira and Papyrus Insinger,” *JSJ* 36 (2005): 156. The verb “to instruct,” images a man holding a stick.

³⁹⁰“Ahiqar” in Pritchard, *ANET*, I. vi, p. 80.

³⁹¹Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature offer clear and concrete evidence for the existence of formal institutions that served as schools for scribal training. There is no clear evidence for the existence of such formal schools in Israel and the debate continues. James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998); André Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l’Ancien Israël*, OBO (Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions Universitaires, 1981); E.W. Heaton, *The School Tradition of the Old Testament: The Bampton Lectures for 1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 96–104.

³⁹²Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs*, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2000), 4–8.

³⁹³S. G. Quirke, “Archive,” *CW* 105 (1996): 379; K. Zinn, “Libraries and Archives: The Organization of Collective Wisdom in Ancient Egypt,” in *Current Research in Egyptology 2006: Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Symposium, University of Oxford 2006*, ed. Maria Cannata and Christina Adams (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 175.

³⁹⁴K. Zinn, “Libraries and Archives,” 172.

³⁹⁵F.M. Haikal, “Private Collections and Temple Libraries in Ancient Egypt,” in *What Happened*

libraries was to serve the gods and not to serve the populace as in modern collections.³⁹⁶ Egypt's institutional libraries and archives conserved collections of texts gathered together for the service of the gods and the pharaoh. Only those concerned with maintaining important religious and social functions, such as priests, sages, and scribes, would have had any access to their contents.³⁹⁷

In Israel, wisdom was commonly transmitted by listening to and learning from the ancestors and elders. That such a sharing of wisdom may be considered part of Sirach's social experience is demonstrated by various texts with which the discourse of Sir 38:24–39:11 has been preserved:

Listen to me your father, O children; act accordingly, that you may be kept in safety. For the Lord honors a father above his children, and he confirms a mother's right over her children. Those who honor their father atone for sins, and those who respect their mother are like those who lay up treasure. Those who honor their father will have joy in their own children, and when they pray they will be heard. Those who respect their father will have long life, and those who honor their mother obey the Lord; they will serve their parents as their masters (Sir 3:1-7).

Listen to me, my child, and acquire knowledge, and pay close attention to my words. I will impart discipline precisely and declare knowledge accurately. When the Lord created his works from the beginning, and, in making them, determined their boundaries, he arranged his works in an eternal order, and their dominion for all generations (Sir 16:24-27).

Listen to me, my child, and do not disregard me, and in the end you will appreciate my words (Sir 31:22).

There are also references to a more disciplined and formal approach to learning wisdom traditions: discussing the law of the Most High, listening to ancestors, becoming familiar with proverbs and maxims, and attending to an appropriate piety.

If you are willing, my child, you can be disciplined, and if you apply yourself you will become clever. If you love to listen you will gain knowledge, and if you pay attention you will become wise. Stand in the company of the elders. Who is wise? Attach yourself to such a one. Be ready to listen to every godly discourse, and let

to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?, ed. Moustafa El-Abbadi and Omnia Mournir Fathallah (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 40.

³⁹⁶Haikal, "Private Collections and Temple Libraries in Ancient Egypt," 53.

³⁹⁷Kerry Webb, "'The House of Books': Libraries and Archives in Ancient Egypt," *Libri* 63 (2013): 22.

no wise proverbs escape you. If you see an intelligent person, rise early to visit him; let your foot wear out his doorstep (Sir 6:32-36).

Do not slight the discourse of the sages, but busy yourself with their maxims; because from them you will learn discipline and how to serve princes. Do not ignore the discourse of the aged, for they themselves learned from their parents; from them you learn how to understand and to give an answer when the need arises (Sir 8:8-9).

As much as you can, aim to know your neighbors, and consult with the wise. Let your conversation be with intelligent people, and let all your discussion be about the law of the Most High. Let the righteous be your dinner companions, and let your glory be in the fear of the Lord (Sir 9:14-16).

The diaspora Jews of Egypt would certainly have experienced different ways of passing on traditional knowledge. Without doubt the family and the Jewish community would have been primary in preserving social customs and cultural knowledge but, at the same time, life within a dominantly Hellenistic culture would also have exposed the traditional Jewish community to the formal Hellenistic modes of enculturation, social opportunity in attending the gymnasium and the ephebate, and having access to the approved literary resources of the collected libraries. Negotiating the relationship of Jewish and Hellenistic society in quotidian life and in the benefits afforded by social opportunity would have created a significant social dynamic in the lives of Egyptian Jews, especially Jewish scribes.

Sirach places the one devoting his mind to intellectual activities among the social repositories of traditional knowledge and wisdom. The intellectual traditions listed in these verses embrace the universal wisdom poured out at creation as well as the particular wisdom revealed to Israel in its unique covenant history.

4.3.3.1 Wisdom, tradition and νόμος ὑψίστου, “law of the Most High”. The expression νόμος ὑψίστου appears eight times in the Sirach corpus of materials (9:15; 19:17; 23:23; 39:1; 41:8; 42:2; 44:20; 49:4) in contexts associating it with covenant and law.³⁹⁸ The specific connection of wisdom with “the book of the covenant of the Most

³⁹⁸The Greek forms of the expression differ: ἐν νόμῳ ὑψίστου (Sir 9:15; 23:23; 39:1); νόμος

High God” in Sir 24:23 draws attention to an entire constellation of texts, meanings, and practices associated with “the law of the Lord’s covenant” (Sir 39:8). Benjamin Wright and Jessie Rogers have both argued that Sirach must have been in possession of some repository or collection of law, yet a fuller examination of the intertexture associated with νόμος ὑψίστου raises some important notes of caution about an over emphasis on textual specificity in describing the study of “the law of the Most High.”³⁹⁹

The Septuagint, Jewish pseudepigrapha, and several Jewish intertestamental authors use the title ὑψιστος to denote Israel’s God, Yahweh.⁴⁰⁰ The divine name ὑψιστος appears 47 times in the corpus of Sirach materials (twice in Sirach 39), second only to κύριος (Lord) which appears 189 times. The term, however, is also common in other Mediterranean literature and pagan inscriptions to designate the supreme God, the ruler of the universe and the ultimate authority above all local and lesser deities.⁴⁰¹

The use of the title ὑψιστος originated in Canaan where it was used for El, the ruler of the council of gods. The “assembly of the Most High” (ἐκκλησία ὑψίστου) was the divine council, the heavenly court, consisting of god and other heavenly creatures

ὑψίστου (Sir 19:17); νόμον θεοῦ ὑψίστου (Sir 41:8); νόμου ὑψίστου (Sir 42:2); νόμον ὑψίστου (Sir 44:20); τὸν νόμον τοῦ ὑψίστου (Sir 49:4). Outside of Sirach the expression occurs only in 1 Esdras 8:19 (τοῦ νόμου τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου) and 4 Esdras 7:81. On the relationship between wisdom and law in Sirach see Jessie Rogers, “It Overflows Like the Euphrates with Understanding,” 117–120. Law and wisdom are closely correlated in Sirach but they are not interchangeable.

³⁹⁹Benjamin G. Wright III, “Conflicted Boundaries: Ben Sira Sage and Seer,” in *Congress Volume, Helsinki 2010*, ed. Matti Nissinen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 232; Jessie Rogers, “Wisdom in Sirach,” *JNSL* 30 (2004): 71–74.

⁴⁰⁰In *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the term ὑψιστος is used when speaking with Gentiles or Gentiles are speaking to a Jew about Israel’s God. Paul Trebilco, “Paul and Silas - ‘Servants of the Most High God’ (Acts 16:16–18),” *JSNT* 39 (1989): 53–54. “Υψιστος occurs about 139 times in the LXX, especially in the Psalms. It is generally used as a translation of עֶלְיוֹן or עֶלְיֹן (E.g. Ps 83:18). The same equivalency prevails between the Greek and surviving Hebrew of Ben Sira. See Emanuel Tov and Frank Polak, *CATSS* (Jerusalem, Philadelphia, 2005).

⁴⁰¹Arthur Bernard Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*. vol.2, part 2, *Zeus, God of the Dark Sky (Thunder and Lightning)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 868–90.

possessing a variety of functions.⁴⁰² The same usage appears in Sirach 24:2 where Wisdom speaks of her glory in the assembly of the Most High (ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ὑψίστου).

Paul Trebilco cites evidence showing that the title was used of Zeus, the most exalted God of Olympus, who is described as Ζεὺς ὑψιστος or Θεὸς ὑψιστος or simply as ὑψιστος.⁴⁰³ The same epithet also refers to other exalted deities. In Syria, Θεὸς ὑψιστος was Baal; in Lydia, the local goddess was called Θεὰ ὑψιστη; and in Egypt, ὑψιστης was Isis.⁴⁰⁴ “Υψιστος often occurs in Jewish writings of the “intertestamental period” in situations where Gentiles are being addressed or when speaking about Israel’s god to non-Jews.⁴⁰⁵

An ancient oratory (προσευχή) constructed at Alexandria in the second century BCE bore the inscription [θε]ωι υψιστωι.⁴⁰⁶ The same wording was inscribed on a first-century BCE structure at Athribis in Egypt and probably also on a third at Leontopolis.⁴⁰⁷ Because of this wide usage, the term ὑψιστος can be quite misleading. It was not necessarily a univocal reference to the Israelite god, Yahweh, unless it was clearly being

⁴⁰²Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 243.

⁴⁰³According to Homer, Zeus dwelt on Mount Olympus in Thessaly, which was believed to penetrate heaven itself (*Iliad* i. 221, 354, 609, xxi. 438). He was called the father of gods and men (*Iliad* i. 514, v. 33; Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes*, 512), the Most High and powerful among the immortals, whom all others obeyed (*Iliad* xix. 258; viii. 10). Zeus was the highest ruler, who with his counsel managed everything (*Iliad* i. 175; viii. 22), the founder of all kingly power, of law and of order. Thus Dice, Themis, and Nemesis are his assistants (*Iliad* i. 238; ii. 205; ix. 99; xvi. 387; Hesoid, *Works and Days*. 36; Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*, 79). Trebilco, “Paul and Silas,” 52. A list of inscriptions identifying Zeus as ὑψιστος or θεὸς ὑψιστος is available in Arthur Bernard Cook, *Zeus II ii*, 876–90. An abbreviated list can be found in A. D. Nock, C. Roberts, and T. C. Skeats, “The Gild of Zeus Hypsistos,” *HTR* 29 (1936): 56–59.

⁴⁰⁴Others designated as “most high” are Sabazios, Men, Attis, Poseidon, Eshmun, Eshmun-Malkert and perhaps Helios. Margarita Tacheva-Hitova, *Eastern Cults in Moesia Inferior and Thracia: 5th Century BC–4th Century AD*, EPRO (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 212–215.

⁴⁰⁵Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of Their Text, Composition and Origin*. (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 140; T. Simeon 2.5; 6.7; T. Asher 5.4; T. Levi 3.10; 4.1, 2; 5.1, 7; 16.3; 18.7; T. Judah 24.4; T. Issacar 2.5. See also *Joseph and Aseneth* 8.2; Philo. *Legum allegoriarum* 3.82; *In Flaccum* 1.46; Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews* 16:163.

⁴⁰⁶Victor Tcherikover, A. Fuks, and M. Stern, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (Cambridge: Magnes Press Hebrew University, 1957), III, no. 1433.

⁴⁰⁷Tcherikover, Fuks, and Stern, CPJ, III, no.1443; .E. Bernard, “Au Dieu Très Haut,” in *Hommages à Jean Cousin, Annales littéraires de l’Université de Besançon* 273 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1983), 107–111.

used in a specifically Jewish context. In the ancient Mediterranean world, there were many highest gods and a Gentile hearer may have understood the term as referring to the deity he or she considered to be supreme. In other words, the hearer of ὑψιστος would not necessarily think of “Yahweh,” but of the deity which was considered to be the highest god—Zeus, Isis, Baal, or some other divinity.⁴⁰⁸ In point of fact, the term itself does not even necessarily imply monotheism. It simply suggests the pinnacle of a hierarchy within any particular pantheon of gods.

References to “divine law” were also common across the ancient Mediterranean world. In classical Greek literature, νόμος was seen as an expression of the truths passed on from ancient wisdom.⁴⁰⁹ “Law” was something to be believed in, practiced, and held to be right (from νομίζω, “to be ordered and governed after old laws and customs, beliefs”).⁴¹⁰ As long as there was a connection between νόμος and the divine as in Hesiod, for whom Zeus laid down the law of justice for all men, and in Heraclitus, for whom human laws are sustained by divine laws, legislation could be held as universally valid for all people.⁴¹¹ Plato, for example, invokes divine law in his description of the ideal state, *Magnesia*, which was originally run by gods rather than by humans:

Cronos, then lord of the world, knew that no mortal nature could endure the temptations of power, and therefore he appointed demons or demi-gods, who are of a superior race, to have dominion over man, as man has dominion over the animals. They took care of us with great ease and pleasure to themselves, and no less to us; and the tradition says that only when God, and not man, is the ruler, can the human race cease from ill. This was the manner of life which prevailed under

⁴⁰⁸Trebilco, “Paul and Silas,” 60.

⁴⁰⁹Peter van Nuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period*, Greek Culture in the Roman World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17.

⁴¹⁰Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti, Tr., Rev. and Enl.* (New York: American Book Company, 1889), s.v. νομίζω. Electronic edition generated and owned by International Bible Translators (IBT), Inc., 1998-2000. Greek formatting modifications and improvements made by Michael S. Bushell, 2001, 3635.

⁴¹¹Hesiod, “Theogony” in *Hesiod I*, ed. and trans. Glen W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), ll. 886-900. “Works and Days,” in *Hesiod I*, ed. and trans. G. W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 267. *The Fragments of Heraclitus*, trans. John Burnet (London: Penguin, 1987) DK B114. <http://www.heraclitusfragments.com/files/en.html>. The introductory dialogue of *The Laws* names the gods Zeus and Apollo as the origin of local law codes. Plato, “Laws” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 4, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953), 624a–624b, p. 16.

Cronos, and which we must strive to follow so far as the principle of immortality still abides in us and we live according to law and the dictates of right reason.⁴¹²

For Plato, law and justice were divine gifts; happiness and harmony may be enjoyed only when good laws, ultimately derived from the immortal spark, are given the highest authority.

Records of Egyptian court proceedings from the New Kingdom and later Ptolemaic documents also make references to divine law and judgement.⁴¹³ The notion of *ma'at* referred to cosmic and social order, truth, and justice in which the gods dispensed blessings on the obedient and curses on the trespassers.⁴¹⁴ A number of early Egyptian documents refer to “the Tribunal of the Great God” in which judgements are made that surpass the jurisdiction of the local courts.⁴¹⁵

Even texts from the Sirach corpus, as they explore the creation of humanity (Sir 17:1-24), refer to knowledge and the “law of life” (νόμος ζωῆς, Sir 17:11) as being among the divine gifts bestowed on the first humans. This divine “law of life” given at creation precedes any rehearsal of themes concerning the establishment of a particular covenant with Israel or divine decrees and commandments related exclusively to the chosen people (Sir 17:12-14).⁴¹⁶ An awareness of this very broad intertexture opens up the realization that νόμος ὑψίστου, as it is used in Sirach 39:1, refers to the particularity of “the law of the Lord’s covenant” (Sir 39:8) but, at the same time, it also embraces a broader transcultural scribal concern with the study of “divine law” associated with creation and with other “creator gods” bearing the title ὑψίστος. Thus, the concern of a faithful Jewish scholar with the study of νόμος ὑψίστου (understood to be “the law of the

⁴¹²Plato, “The Laws”, 713c-e, p. 47–48.

⁴¹³Safik Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, Urkunden zum Rechtsleben im alten Ägypten (Tübingen: self-published under editor’s imprint in Tübingen, 1973), no. 21.

⁴¹⁴Jan Assmann, “When Justice Fails: Jurisdiction and Imprecation in Ancient Egypt and the Near East,” *JEA* 78 (1992): 151.

⁴¹⁵Assmann, “When Justice Fails,” 152. Citing the textual work of E. Edel.

⁴¹⁶Walter Vogels, *God’s Universal Covenant: A Biblical Study* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979), 36–38.

Lord's covenant") is identified with the same type of task that preoccupied the sages of the nations charged with studying "divine law." In other words, devotion to the study of "the law of the Most High" may apply equally to an Egyptian–Hellenistic student as it does to a Jewish student of "the law of the Lord's covenant." The expression νόμος ὑψίστου carries a broad transcultural denotation capable of embracing the concerns of all scribal students including those of Israel. In all cases, the student is deeply concerned with learning and understanding the wisdom of first principles, which ground the laws of society and govern human behaviour. Applied in this text, the one devoting his mind to study the law of the Most High may be devoted to the study of the full breadth of Egyptian law, international law, and religious law as well as to the law of Israel's covenant tradition.

4.3.3.2 *Tradition and σοφία πάντων ἀρχαίων*, "the wisdom of all the ancients".

From the first recitations of Hesiod's myth of the races of man and of the Cronian age Greeks were intrigued with stories that detailed the peculiar happiness of the first human generation.⁴¹⁷

First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils.⁴¹⁸

During the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, Greek philosophers began to argue that the happiness of the first generation resided in a perfect human nature created by a providential god. It then followed that, if the first humans were happy by nature, then everyone has the ability to be so and the unhappiness of later generations must somehow be the fault of humans. Hesiod's myth of the races was reconfigured as a history of the

⁴¹⁷Hesiod, "Works and Days" in *Hesiod I*, ed. and trans. Glen W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), ll. 95-105. According to the myth of the races, the first generation of man was created as 'the golden race', superior to the silver, bronze and iron races which followed.

⁴¹⁸Hesiod, "Works and Days", ll. 109-120.

human moral condition.⁴¹⁹ Presupposing that the first generations of humanity were happy, the Cynics and Plato both contended that the happiness must have been rooted in the purity of their outlook on the world. Here was the first inkling that human happiness might be restored by recovering and reconstructing the wisdom of the earliest human community.⁴²⁰ “The wisdom of the ancients” became an important piece of tradition and a significant topic in Greek thought and literature. Plato spoke of:

a revelation of the order of the world, which some Prometheus first made known to our ancestors; and they, who were better men and nearer the gods than we are, have handed it down to us.⁴²¹

The third kind is the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses; which taking hold of a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyrical and all other numbers; with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity.⁴²²

For Israel, the recollection of the narratives of God’s dealings with the people in the patriarchs, Moses, the judges, the kings, and the prophets and sages become anchors for identity and guides for right living. The *Praise of the Ancestors*, beginning in Sirach 44, opens with the descriptor:

There were those who ruled in their kingdoms, and made a name for themselves by their valor; those who gave counsel because they were intelligent; those who spoke in prophetic oracles; those who led the people by their counsels and by their knowledge of the people's lore; they were wise in their words of instruction; those who composed musical tunes, or put verses in writing; rich men endowed with resources, living peacefully in their homes—all these were honored in their generations, and were the pride of their times. (Sir 44:3-7).

⁴¹⁹Dicaearchus, for example, used the myth as evidence for a three staged account of human history: the utopian golden age (life with the gods, no killing of animate life, plant growth was automatic, no skills were necessary, leisure prevailed), life on the range (νοματικὸς βίος) (acquisition of property, handling animals, war, competition, ownership, harm, ambition) and the life of the settled farmer. One hundred and fifty verses of Dicaearchus’ work Ἀναγραφή τῆς Ἑλλάδος, and two fragments of Βίος Ἑλλάδος have been preserved in Varro’s *De re rustica* and in Porphyry’s *De abstinentia*. Ian J. McNiven and Lynette Russell, *Appropriated Pasts: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonial Culture of Archaeology*, Archaeology in Society Series (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2005), 16–17.

⁴²⁰George R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7–11.

⁴²¹Socrates responding to Protarchus in Plato, “Philebus” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 3, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953), 16c, p. 548.

⁴²²Plato, “Phaedrus” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 3, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953), 245b.

“The wisdom of the ancestors,” like “the law of the Most High,” may be understood as a common focus for the students and sages of Israel as well as those of the nations.

Nothing here is uniquely Israelite and nothing here excludes the concerns of Israelite tradition. Again, the devotion to mindful study and thought in search of wisdom is broad and encompasses the wisdom of creation as well as the wisdom of Israel’s ancestors.

4.3.3.3 *Wisdom, tradition and προφητεῖαι, “prophecies”*. Prophecy and divination were commonly practiced across the ancient world as a means of discovering divine will and intention.⁴²³ If evil or punishment was predicted or threatened, it could hopefully be averted by appropriate actions. Babylonians, Hittites, and Assyrians showed considerable interest in acquiring divine knowledge to shape appropriate decisions and responses to assure human well-being.⁴²⁴ The *Mari Prophecies* or texts from the archive of the Kititum Temple in Ischali demanding piety on the part of the king in exchange for support of particular causes, evidence the link of wisdom and prophecy.⁴²⁵

Greek literature frequently refers to oracles, seers, and prophets (the Oracle of Delphi [Pythia], the Oracle of Dodona [Dione], Tiresias, Cassandra, Manto, Melampus, and so on) as portals of divine revelation, speaking for the gods, uttering wisdom for an often confused humanity. Greek drama and recitations would certainly have exposed students to many such characters, their wise sayings, and their views on life. In the recitation of Lucian’s *Necyomantia* listeners would have encountered the blind prophet Tiresias offering direction to Menippus on how he should live his life.⁴²⁶ In *Eumenides*,

⁴²³Definitions of prophecy and divination have been undertaken and disputed by many scholars. See Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, Writings from the Ancient World, ed. Peter Machinist (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2003); Maria DeJong Ellis, “Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations,” *JCS* 41 (1989): 127–186. The concern here is necessarily limited to showing a connection with wisdom.

⁴²⁴Leo A. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 207.

⁴²⁵DeJong Ellis, “Observations.”

⁴²⁶Lucian of Samosata, “Necyomantiae,” in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, trans. W. H. Fowler (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1905), 21.

Aeschylus opens his play with a well-spoken, thoughtful, and respected Pythian priestess reciting a dignified prayer and dedicating herself to mediating Apollo's word to those seeking direction.⁴²⁷ Through such speeches, poetry, and prophecy, divine wisdom becomes known to the non-literate and those without the vision of a seer.⁴²⁸

Egyptologists have applied the designation prophecy to a rare genre of texts that contain predictions of future events. These texts, however, are unlike the materials designated as prophecy in Israel and Greece. The individuals to whom the prophecy is attributed do not claim to be intermediaries, nor do they identify their messages as coming from the gods.⁴²⁹ The Egyptian prophecies are better understood as rooted in a high level of perceptiveness and the wisdom of the speakers. *King Cheops and the Magicians*, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, and *The Prophecy of Neferti* are three examples of this prophetic material which served in the maintenance of political and social order.⁴³⁰

For Israel, prophecy was ultimately about discerning the right action (wisdom) in individual, social, and political life in accordance with justice, Mosaic tradition, and a levelling of social distinctions before God.⁴³¹ Memories of such prophecies were used by leaders and teachers as a compass for wise and successful living. Failure to embrace the prophecies was seen to be unwise.

Thus says the LORD: Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth;²⁴ but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in

⁴²⁷Aeschylus, "Eumenides," in *Aeschylus II*, trans. H. W. Smyth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963) ll. 1-81, pp. 273-277.

⁴²⁸Johnstone, *Listening to the Logos*, 14.

⁴²⁹Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 125-128.

⁴³⁰William Kelly Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry*, trans. R.O. Faulkner et al (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 15-30; Alan Henderson Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1909); Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 7-8, 234-240.

⁴³¹Hans Walter Wolff, "Prophecy from the Eighth Through Fifth Century," in *Interpreting the Prophets*, ed. James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 16-17.

these things I delight, says the LORD. (Jer 9:23-24)

The *Praise of the Ancestors* celebrates the prophetic office in several important figures of Israel's history: Moses (Sir 44:23–45:5); Joshua (Sir 46:1-10); Samuel (Sir 46:18-20); Nathan (Sir 47:1); Elijah (Sir 48:1-11); Elisha (Sir 48:12-16); and Isaiah (Sir 48:23-25). Labouring for all those who seek wisdom, the sage pledges that he “will again pour out teaching like prophecy and leave it for all future generations” (Sir 24:35).

Sirach 39:1 includes this broad base of prophetic utterance among the repositories of information for the study and reflection of a committed scholar. Again, the concerns of the Jewish scholar, while focused on the prophecies of Israelite tradition, are not unlike the efforts of any learned scholar focused on the prophetic traditions associated with their own social and religious contexts.

4.3.3.4 *Wisdom, tradition and διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν συντηρήσει.* Ancient wisdom was passed on orally from mouth to ear, from father to son, from sage to student.⁴³² Only later was wisdom gathered into written collections of sayings, authorized by important and influential sources. These collections were regularly enlarged as later generations added new sayings. Two ancient Egyptian collections of sayings were the Osirian *Book of the Dead* and the *Proverbs of Ptah-Hetep*. *The Book of the Dead* is an expanded collection of sayings given by Ra, the father in heaven, to his son Horus for the instruction of the living on earth. The *Proverbs of Ptah-Hetep* gathers good sayings, precepts, and proverbs from ancient wisdom, words of those who have heard the counsels of former days, and the instructions of the gods. Such collections were used in the instruction of the living community.⁴³³

⁴³²The verb συντηρέω may be translated as “preserve,” “hold in mind,” “remember.” In this sense it implies “don’t forget what you have heard.”

⁴³³Gerald Massey, *Ancient Egypt, the Light of the World: A Work of Reclamation and Restitution in Twelve Books* (Mokelumne Hill, CA: Health Research, 1988), 404–405.

When discussing the sages of ancient Greece, Plato names seven individuals of special note and comments on their wise sayings, which were both educated and memorable:

Many of our own age and of former ages have noted that the true laconizer is bound to love philosophy far more than gymnastics; they are conscious that only a perfectly educated man is capable of uttering such apophthegms. Such were Thales of Miletus, and Pittacus of Mitylene, and Bias of Priene, and our own Solon, and Cleobulus the Lindian, and Myson the Chenian; and seventh in the catalogue of wise men was the Lacedaemonian Chilo. All these were lovers and emulators and disciples of the culture of the Lacedaemonians, and anyone may perceive that their wisdom was of this character; consisting of short memorable sentences, which they severally uttered. And they met together and dedicated to Apollo in his temple at Delphi, as the first-fruits of their wisdom, the far-famed inscriptions, which are in all men's mouths,—'Know thyself', and 'Nothing too much'.⁴³⁴

In Israel, the *Book of Proverbs* provides an example of collected “sayings” projected onto King Solomon, as an archetypal model of wisdom, Agur son of Jakeh (Proverbs 30), and King Lemuel’s mother (Prov 31:1-9). “Sayings” are also preserved in prophetic texts such as “The words of Amos ...” (Amos 1:1), “The vision of Isaiah ...” (Isa 1:1) or “The word of Yahweh that came to Hosea” (Hos 1:1). These sayings almost always have a precise historical function, which was to steer Israel wisely through important historical changes.⁴³⁵

The association of the mindful scholar with “the sayings of the notable” (Sir 39:2) extends the quest into another acknowledged repository of international wisdom, the words of sage experience. Open to wisdom wherever it is to be found, the scholar listens, remembers, and reflects.

4.3.3.5 Wisdom, tradition, παραβολαί (parables), and παροιμίες (proverbs).

Parables (παραβολαί) included stories (e.g. 1 Sam 12:1-5), analogies (e.g. Ezek 17:3-10), comparisons, and riddles (e.g. Prov 30:15, 18, 24) that required thought and

⁴³⁴Plato, “Protagoras,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 343a-343c, p.169-170.

⁴³⁵Wolff, “Prophecy from the Eighth Through Fifth Century,” 16–17.

interpretation. Such stories and puzzles, intended for instruction, were common teaching tools that elicited various wise reflections on life and its paradoxes.⁴³⁶ Similarly, proverbs (παροιμίες), succinct, memorable expressions that encapsulate the folk wisdom of a culture, offered reflections on handling life's various predicaments. Sometimes proverbs framed reality by casting adverse circumstances in a positive light or by providing helpful warnings about difficult situations. Anthologies of proverbs provided a common medium for sharing wisdom across Near Eastern cultures. Collections of proverbs are offered in the Egyptian *Instructions of Amenemope*,⁴³⁷ the Sumerian Proverbs from Tell Abū Salābikh,⁴³⁸ the Babylonian proverbs from the library of Ashurbanipal,⁴³⁹ the Hebrew Proverbs of Solomon,⁴⁴⁰ Aristotle's collected proverbs,⁴⁴¹ and Theophrastus's proverbs of *Ahiqar*.⁴⁴²

During the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods, proverbs and parables were used by rhetoricians and poets to embellish their works, as is obvious in the work of Theocritus (*Idyll* 5.3, 5.25-26, 7.25, 10.11, 11.75 et al.), Callimachus (*Epigrams* 31.5-6, *Iambi* 193.39, 195.1-2, *Aetia* 75.9, 178.9)⁴⁴³ and later confirmed in the work of Lucian of Samosata,⁴⁴⁴ and Libanius.⁴⁴⁵ Collections were made by Aristophanes of Byzantium

⁴³⁶Robert B. Y. Scott, "Parables" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2008. www.jewishvirtual-library.org/jsourc/judaica/ejud_0002_0015_0_15400.html.

⁴³⁷Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume 2: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

⁴³⁸Bendt Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer: The World's Earliest Proverb Collection* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), xvii, 40–75.

⁴³⁹Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

⁴⁴⁰Crenshaw, *Wisdom*, 43–44.

⁴⁴¹See a collection of Aristotle's proverbs in *Proverbia*. <http://en.proverbia.net/citas-autor.asp?autor=10254>. Diogenes Laertius, a historian of philosophy who lived during the 3rd century CE, claims that Aristotle had written a work under the title Παροιμίες (Proverbs).

⁴⁴²James M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983). According to Diogenes Laërtius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 5.50, Theophrastus, a pupil of Aristotle, wrote a work named after Ahiqar [Ἀκίχαρος α].

⁴⁴³Rudolphus Pfeiffer, ed., *Callimachus* (New York, NY: Arnos, 1979).

⁴⁴⁴Lucian of Samosata, *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, trans. H. W. Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905).

⁴⁴⁵Libanius, *Selected Orations*, vol. 1, trans. A. F. Norman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

(257–180 BCE) who compiled four books of proverbs (two in verse and two in prose) and undertook their correct recording and interpretation.⁴⁴⁶ Other collectors of proverbs were Didymus Chalcenterus, a Greek philologist born about 80 BCE, whose collection extended to thirteen books and Lucius of Tarra, Crete, who compiled three volumes of proverbs and riddles that now survive only as part of a later collection of proverbs by Zenobius.⁴⁴⁷

The Book of Proverbs is a major biblical collection of παραβολαί and παροιμιαί. In general, the collection lacks any ethnic or national particularity. Although the deity recognized in *Proverbs* is Yahweh, the God of Israel, there is nothing particularly Israelite or Jewish which distinguished the collection. The tenets of election and covenant are absent and the teaching referred to as *tôrah* is not the revealed Law of Sinai but the ordinary instructions of parents or teachers to their children or students.⁴⁴⁸ *Proverbs* is a fertile field for foreign influence and the borrowing of wisdom materials. The “Words of the Wise” (Prov 22:17–24:22) shares a literary structure, as well as several specific instructions and linguistic features, with the Egyptian wisdom.⁴⁴⁹ There are also affinities with a wide range of other ancient Near Eastern compositions: the teachings of *Ahiqar*,⁴⁵⁰ the Akkadian *Counsels of Wisdom*, and even the Sumerian *Instructions of Shurupak*.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁶Nial W. Slater, *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

⁴⁴⁷Ernst Ludwig von Leutsch and Friedrich Wilhelm Schneidewin. *Corpus paroemiographorum graecorum. Tomus 1, Zenobius, Diogenianus, Plutarchus, Gregorius Cyprius, Cum Appendice Proverbiorum* (Göttingen: Olms, 1958). The earliest edition of the proverbs of Zenobius and Didymus appeared in print in Florence in 1487 under the title *Epitome proverbiorum Lucii Tarrhaei et Didymi Alexandrini secundum ordinem alphabeticum graece*. Editions published by Aldus Manutius appeared in Venice in 1505, followed by editions in the Hague in 1535 and in Antwerp in 1612. A more recent edition, *Paroemiographi graeci*, by T. Gaisdorf appeared in Oxford in 1836. It is believed that the work of Zenobius is based on the proverbs which appeared in the *Corpus paroemiographorum graecorum*.

⁴⁴⁸J. Cook, “The Law of Moses in Septuagint Proverbs,” *VT* 49 (1999): 1.

⁴⁴⁹Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 23–24.

⁴⁵⁰Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 158–159.

⁴⁵¹Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 154.

When taken together Sir 39:1-3 presents a very broad search for wisdom among the intellectual traditions of the world. Unlike the artisans who were associated with a very narrow wisdom, the one devoting his mind to study and reflection is associated with vast reservoirs of knowledge and insight that encompass the wisdom of all creation as well as the wisdom of Israelite religious tradition. That such an association is highly valued by Sirach is immediately demonstrated by his placing of the learned scholar in the forum of public service, influence, opportunity, and judgement, the very places from which the artisans were excluded (Sir 39:4).

4.3.4 Service Among the Great and Being Seen with Rulers

Wisdom was commonly attributed to kings, rulers, administrators, and other law-givers responsible for a prosperous and just administration of the state.⁴⁵² Wise leaders embodied the law for their subjects and exercised an unlimited power which was to be used to do what was morally right.⁴⁵³ Royal ideologies often placed kings themselves among those who best embodied these skills and abilities. In Babylon, Šugli and Assurbanipal both declare themselves to be highly educated and wise.⁴⁵⁴ Egyptian royal ideology highlighted the reputed wisdom of the Ptolemies with titles like Soter (“Saviour”), Philopater (“Lover of the Father”), and Euergetes (“Benefactor”). Each ruler was seen to embody and reenact the power of the Egyptian gods. In the Israelite tradition, Solomon was declared by God to be the wisest of kings (1 Kgs 3:12).

Images of the learned scholar engaged in the service of the great and being seen with rulers (Sir 39:4) presents an important counter image to the limitations experienced

⁴⁵²Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 29–30.

⁴⁵³Peter van Neuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁴⁵⁴“Šulgi Hymn B” in Åke W. Sjöberg, “The Old Babylonian Eduba,” in Stephen B. Lieberman, ed., *Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen on his Seventieth Birthday, June 7, 1974* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), ll. 13-20, pp.172–173. Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh’s*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916).

by the artisans (Sir 38:33-34). The implication of placing the learned scholar among the social elite and with the political leaders points to his high-level achievement and the important roles to be filled by those who have an opportunity for a broad education. The skill and ability to read, write, cite directives, repeat utterances and edicts, document business transactions, remember details and protocols, codify law, refer to social traditions, render good judgements, mediate agreements, implement decisions, and function in multiple languages were all common tasks required to support national order, international stability, and good government.⁴⁵⁵ By placing the scholar within these arenas of activity that by their nature require a demonstrated skill and wisdom, Sirach highlights the social standing and rewards associated with the efforts of study and learning.

By associating the one devoted to study and reflection with the human repositories of sapiential and intellectual tradition, Sirach creates an image of a sage scholar seeking the wisdom that was poured out at creation as well as the particular wisdom revealed in specific religious traditions. Nothing in these verses (Sir 39:1-4) is uniquely Jewish but neither is there anything that excludes Jewish faith and tradition. These verses remain fully open to the broad intellectual traditions of the world and a scholar's place among them. What is important is the breadth of the wisdom being sought and the places where it is being applied. God is the source of all wisdom and in the end, as the text will show, all wisdom leads to God.

4.3.5 Wisdom and Travels in Foreign Lands

At a literal level, “travel in foreign lands” may refer to official positions as international ambassadors or business envoys concerned with trade or finance. Many of the school

⁴⁵⁵A specific description of some services performed by those holding official positions may be found in Arthur Verhoogt, *Regailing Officials in Ptolemaic Egypt: A Dramatic Reading of Official Accounts from the Menches Papers* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 3–68.

texts used in training scribes allude to travel, errands, and missions.⁴⁵⁶ The *Amarna Letters*, for example, an archive of diplomatic correspondence written in Akkadian, show connections between Egypt and foreign representatives in Canaan and Amurru.⁴⁵⁷ Fragments from the international correspondence of pharaohs with other nations shows the significance of gift exchange. The king of Cyprus presents the king of Egypt with a gift of copper.⁴⁵⁸ The king of Egypt sent three thousand talents of gold to the king of Babylon.⁴⁵⁹ The king of Mitanni sent vast quantities of gifts along with a daughter who would become pharaoh's wife.⁴⁶⁰ Egyptian art, statuary, alabastra, and gold-encrusted furniture, have been excavated at Ebla, Ugarit, and Byblos. Maintaining these networks of relationships and managing the correspondence in the required languages was the work of trained scribes and messengers. Correspondence aside, international trade in ancient Egypt was always a royal monopoly and, if others also traded, it was controlled by royal permission and tracked by royal scribes.⁴⁶¹ Within Egypt royal administrators (τοπογραμματοῦς or βασιλικὸς γραμματεὺς) and their staffs moved through distant regions of the country checking production, land use, surveys, and royal revenues.⁴⁶²

In a figurative sense, Hellenic classical literature uses the “knowledge journey” as a quest for understanding life. Homer, for example, frames the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

⁴⁵⁶“The Satire of the Trades,” for example, talks of sending scribes on missions or as envoys. Lichtheim, *Ancient Eastern Literature, Volume 2: The New Kingdom*, 171, 189.

⁴⁵⁷Yuval Goren, Israel Finkelstein, and Nadav Na'aman, *Inscribed in Clay: Provenance Study of the Amarna Tablets and Other Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Monograph Series 23 (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2004). The el-Amarna letters are mainly diplomatic papers written in a space of about thirty-five years from about 1370 to 1335 BCE, from the end of the reign of Amenhotep III to the death of Tutankhamen. They were found in the city of Akhetaten, which served as an administrative capital of the Egyptian empire. See also Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

⁴⁵⁸*The Amarna Letters*, ed. and trans. William L. Mora (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), EA 35.

⁴⁵⁹*The Amarna Letters*, EA 3.

⁴⁶⁰*The Amarna Letters*, EA17, EA23, EA26.

⁴⁶¹David P. Silverman, ed., *Ancient Egypt* (London: Piatkus, 1997), 48–49.

⁴⁶²Verhoogt, *Regaling Officials in Ptolemaic Egypt*, 28–31

as a cyclic journey to self-understanding.⁴⁶³ Herodotus shows Croesus praising Solon for having wandered across many lands for observation's sake and in search of knowledge.⁴⁶⁴ Theophrastus admires Democritus because of the great knowledge he has gathered on his journey.⁴⁶⁵ Later Cicero will praise Pythagoras, Democritus, and Plato for their travel to foreign lands "on account of their desire to learn."⁴⁶⁶

Similarly, the Sirach corpus presents the movement toward wisdom as a quest "at first through winding ways" and then on straight paths.

For at first she will walk with them on tortuous paths; she will bring fear and dread upon them, and will torment them by her discipline until she trusts them, and she will test them with her ordinances. Then she will come straight back to them again and gladden them, and will reveal her secrets to them. (Sir 4:17-18)

Sirach materials also attest the importance of travel:

An inexperienced person knows few things, but he that has traveled acquires much cleverness. I have seen many things in my travels, and I understand more than I can express. I have often been in danger of death, but have escaped because of these experiences (Sir 34:10-13).

Whether "the travel through foreign lands" is read literally as an expression of an actual administrative role or figuratively as a "knowledge journey," it functions as a part of Sirach's syncretical comparison of the superior wisdom sought by the scholar with the "lesser" wisdom expressed in the products of the trades. Travel suggests both literally

⁴⁶³"Homer's *Odyssey* reflects one of the earliest forms of knowledge sharing through myth and narrative. Over time it has come to stand as a timeless reflection on humanity's voyage into the unknown. "The thirst for knowing was the force behind every vicissitude that beset Ulysses and his crew." Sylvia Gherardi, "Knowing as Desiring. Mythic Knowledge and the Knowledge Journey in Communities of Practitioners," *Journal of Workplace Learning* 15 (2003): 353. This is a much explored topic in texts such as Lord Raglan, *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956); Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Exploration of Myth* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

⁴⁶⁴Herodotus, *The Histories I*, trans. A. D. Godley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 30.1-2, p. 34-35.

⁴⁶⁵Theophrastus, 513, recorded in Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, trans. N. G. Wilson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 4.20.

⁴⁶⁶Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, trans. H. Rackham, 1914), 5.19. "Why should I speak of Pythagoras, or of Plato, or Democritus? For they, we are told, in their passion for learning travelled through the remotest parts of the earth!"

and figuratively an openness to looking beyond narrow intellectual boundaries at the full breadth and depth of divine wisdom which embraces the entire world and everything in it.

4.3.6 Wisdom and the Discernment of Good and Evil (ἀγαθὰ/κακά)

The merism ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά (“good and evil”) is a common topic in ancient literature and philosophy. In Homer, for example, Telemachus rebukes Ctesippus, “now I mark and understand all things, the good and the evil, whereas heretofore I was but a child.”⁴⁶⁷ In this text the term is used to refer to the loss of youthful innocence and an acquired experience of life. In the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle the choice of “good and evil” is integral to philosophical discussions of morality and wisdom:

It is from defect of knowledge that men err, when they do err, in their choice of pleasures and pains—that is, in the choice of good and evil ... no one who has knowledge or thought of other actions as better than those he is doing, and as possible, will do as he proposes if he is free to do the better ones; and this yielding to oneself is nothing but ignorance, and mastery of oneself is as certainly wisdom.⁴⁶⁸

It is clear that excellence and badness have to do with pleasures and pains; for they have to do with objects of choice, and choice has to do with the good and bad or what seems such, and pleasure and pain naturally seem such.⁴⁶⁹

The knowledge of good and evil is seen to be foundational for moral choice.

The pairing of ἀγαθὰ/κακά occurs six times in the Sirach corpus.⁴⁷⁰ In an account of the creation of humanity (Sir 17:1-14) Sirach has reconfigured primal human knowing to show that God created human beings (Sir 17:1), filled them with “knowledge and understanding” and revealed to them “good and evil” (ἐπιστήμην συνέσεως ἐνέπλησεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά ὑπέδειξεν αὐτοῖς) (Sir 17:7). For Sirach, the human ability to think (Sir 17:6) and choose was part of God’s plan from the beginning. Human wisdom is presented as a part of the original created order.⁴⁷¹ The testing of “good and evil” has a

⁴⁶⁷Homer, *Odyssey*, 20.309.

⁴⁶⁸Plato, “Protagoras,” 357d, 358b,c.

⁴⁶⁹Aristotle, “Eudemian Ethics” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle.*, vol. 2, trans. J. Solomon, ed, Johnathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 1227b, p.1944.

⁴⁷⁰Sir 11:14; 17:7; 18:8; 33:14; 37:18; 39:4.

particularly important place in the thought and pursuits of one seeking wisdom and the social roles that required such discernment. Again, Sirach is imaging the breadth of wisdom sought by a learned scholar.

4.3.7 Wisdom as Piety Toward the Creator

Humans were born into a world with a firmly established structure of relationships among the gods and rulers, their subjects, skilled trade workers, farmers, and the lower classes. The practical alignment of one's life with the established cosmic order meant coming to terms with one's place in the universe. At its most basic level "wisdom" meant recognizing and dealing constructively with these relationships as part of the order of things. Sirach 39:5 acknowledges that God made the scribe (κύριον τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτόν) and surrounds that acknowledgment with attitudes, dispositions, and acts of piety which shape the scribe's relationship with the Lord.

In ancient Near Eastern literature, the relationship between humans and the gods (God) was a crucial part of a meaningful life.⁴⁷² The gods created human life, controlled human destiny, and determined one's length of days. To ignore the gods and their high place, to refuse or neglect to worship them and observe their prescribed rites and laws was a foolish thing. Living with a proper deference to the order of creation meant "fearing the gods" by recognizing and respecting their awesome power.⁴⁷³

The Babylonian *Counsels of Wisdom* advises:

Reverence begets favour,
Sacrifice prolongs life,
And prayer atones for guilt.
He who fears the gods
is not slighted by [...]

⁴⁷¹Berg, "Ben Sira," 150–51.

⁴⁷²Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult: A Critical Analysis of the Views of Cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the Ancient Near East*, SBLDS (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977). Perdue offers an extensive study of the understanding of cult in Egyptian wisdom literature (28–64), Mesopotamian wisdom literature (95–119) and Israelite wisdom literature (142–225).

⁴⁷³Barré, "Fear of God," 41–42.

He who fears the Anunnaki extends (his days).⁴⁷⁴

The Demotic text of *Papyrus Insinger* advises, “It is god who gives heart to the wise man for the sake of having fear (or respect)” (23.23).⁴⁷⁵ A wise man is expected to show appropriate piety. In Egyptian literature, the expression “man of God” or “pious man” (*rmt ntr*) serves as a virtual synonym for “wise man.” The expression “impious man” is commonly invoked when portraying a fool.⁴⁷⁶ *The Instruction of Amenemope* teaches: “set your goodness before people ... you will find your place in the house of god, you will share in the offerings of your lord” (10.16, 11.2-3); “you cannot know the plans of God; you cannot perceive tomorrow. Sit yourself at the hands of God: your tranquility will cause them to open” (21:5-8), *The Instruction Any* counsels, “and kiss the ground in his name ... He who magnifies him is magnified” (Chapter 7).⁴⁷⁷

In a similar way, classical Greek texts also recognize a descending hierarchy of honour and obligation in which reverence for god is primary. As set out by Plutarch, reverence for the gods precedes all else.

For through philosophy and in company with philosophy it is possible to attain knowledge of what is honourable and what is shameful, what is just and what is unjust, what, in brief, is to be chosen and what to be avoided, how a man must bear himself in his relations with the gods, with his parents, with his elders, with the laws, with strangers, with those in authority, with friends, with women, with children, with servants; that one ought to reverence the gods, to honour one's parents, to respect one's elders, to be obedient to the laws, to yield to those in authority, to love one's friends, to be chaste with women, to be affectionate with children, and not to be overbearing with slaves.⁴⁷⁸

Indeed, other classical authors also recognize this priority of the gods (God) and the obligation to revere them. The first lines of the *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras repeat the convention that piety toward the gods precedes all else:

⁴⁷⁴Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 105.

⁴⁷⁵Goff, “Hellenistic Instruction,” 153.

⁴⁷⁶Goff, “Hellenistic Instruction,” 153–54.

⁴⁷⁷Pritchard, ANET, 423–424. Goff, “Hellenistic Instruction,” 154 fn. 36.

⁴⁷⁸Plutarch, “De libris educandis” in *Plutarch's Morals*, trans. by several hands, corrected and revised William W. Goodwin (Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson, 1874), 10.

Honor the immortal gods first, in the order appointed by custom, and revere your oath. Pay reverence next to the immortal heroes and the spirits of the dead by performing the prescribed rites.⁴⁷⁹

Pseudo-Isocrates begins the instructional section of *Ad Demonicum*:

First of all show devotion to the gods not merely by doing sacrifice, but also by keeping your vows ... Do honor to the divine power at all times, but especially on occasions of public worship; for thus you will have the reputation both of sacrificing to the gods and of abiding by the laws (13-14) ... Fear the gods, honor your parents, respect your friends, obey the laws (16).⁴⁸⁰

In *Works and Days*, Hesiod establishes his topic as being “work” (ll. 20-42) and his addressee as his shiftless brother, Perses. Before embarking on the actual instruction to Perses, however, he establishes reasons for the necessity of work (ll. 43-334). With line 335 he begins a series of short instructions by raising the issue of εὐσέβεια (piety toward God):

But do you turn your foolish heart altogether away from these things, and, as far as you are able, sacrifice to the deathless gods purely and cleanly, and burn rich meats also, and at other times propitiate them with libations and incense, both when you go to bed and when the holy light has come back, that they may be gracious to you in heart and spirit, and so you may buy another's holding and not another yours.⁴⁸¹

The sequence of topics in Plutarch's hierarchy of honour and obligation (god—parents—friends) is evident in the opening chapters of the *Wisdom of Sirach*.⁴⁸² After the inaugural hymn to Wisdom (Sir 1:1-10) Sirach turns immediately to a consideration of “fear of the Lord” (Sir 1:11–2:17) with a self-contained instruction (Sir 2:1-17) urging faithfulness to God. Then follows a consideration of honouring one's parents (Sir 3:1-16). The following section, a discussion of humility, is apposite to a context in which the

⁴⁷⁹Johan C. Thom, *The Pythagorean “Golden Verses” with Introduction and Commentary*, RGRW 123 (New York, NY: Brill, 1995), 64–65.

⁴⁸⁰Isocrates, “To Demonicus,” in *Isocrates I*, trans. and ed. George Norlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 13, 14, 16, pp. 10–13. Cited by Alan Kirk in “Some Compositional Conventions of Hellenistic Wisdom Texts and the Juxtaposition of 4:1-13; 6:20b-49; and 7:1-10 in Q,” *JBL* 116 (1997): 239.

⁴⁸¹Hesiod, *Works and Days*, l. 335.

⁴⁸²Alan Kirk, “Some Compositional Conventions of Hellenistic Wisdom Texts and the Juxtaposition of 4:1-13; 6:20b-49; and 7:1-10 in Q,” *JBL* 116 (1997): 237–44.

proper discharge of one's obligations toward those of a higher status (God, parents, superiors) is the main focus (Sir 3:17-29). The opening chapters of Sirach conclude in a discussion of compassionate behaviour toward the poor and the hungry (Sir 3:30–4:10).⁴⁸³

The obligation to revere God is implied in the Hebrew expression “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (הַיְיָ הַרְחֵם לְעַמּוּדָא) (Prov 1:7; 9:10; Ps. 111:10; Job 28:28; Sir 1:14, 24; 19:17).⁴⁸⁴ R.B.Y. Scott described such a deference in concrete terms as “belief in God ... to rely on him rather than on one's own unaided intelligence, to avoid wrongdoing and to accept misfortune as a God sent discipline.”⁴⁸⁵

A close association of “fear of the Lord” (φόβος κυρίου) with “wisdom” (ἀρχὴ σοφίας φοβεῖσθαι τὸν κύριον) (Sir 1:14), occurs thirteen times in the Sirach corpus.⁴⁸⁶ Sirach declares that wisdom is with God and beyond human reach (Sir 1:1-8). God created wisdom and poured it out over all his works, all the living and especially those who love him (Sir 1:9-10). God has made wisdom accessible as a gift to his creation. Then, in a series of metaphors, Sir 1:11-30 develops an understanding of “the fear of the Lord” as the beginning (Sir 1:14), the fullness (Sir 1:16), the crown (Sir 1:18) and the root (Sir 1:20) of wisdom. Those who fear the Lord live lives of patience, self-control, correct speech, sincerity, and humility (Sir 1:21-25). Sirach adds: ἐπιθυμήσας σοφίαν διατήρησον ἐντολάς καὶ κύριος χορηγήσει σοὶ αὐτήν (“If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will lavish her upon you.”) (Sir 1:26).

Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his words, and those who love him keep his ways. Those who fear the Lord seek to please him, and those who love him are filled with his law (Sir 2:15-16).

⁴⁸³This represents a deviation from the expected hierarchy which would conclude with friends.

⁴⁸⁴Barré, “Fear of God,” 41–42.

⁴⁸⁵R.B.Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, AB 10 (Garden City, Ny: Doubleday, 1965), 37.

⁴⁸⁶The expression “The fear of the Lord” occurs in Sirach 1:11, 12, 18, 21, 27, 28, 30; 10:22; 23:27; 25:6; 27:3; 40:26; 50:29. Add to these the expression οἱ φοβούμενοι κύριον (“Those who fear the Lord”) 2:7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17; 6:26; 10:19, 20. See Josef Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach: ihre religiöse Struktur und ihre literarische und doktrinaire Bedeutung*, Analecta Biblica, (Rome: Päpstliches Bibelinstitut, 1967).

The relationship between God-fearers and wisdom is often framed in the cultural language of persistent love. The youth is advised to search out and seek wisdom and “when you take hold of her, never let her go.” (Sir 6:27). He is to pursue her like a hunter, peer through her windows and listen at her doors (Sir 14:23). The seeker’s devotion will be matched by wisdom’s response:

Whoever fears the Lord will do this, and whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom. She will come to meet him like a mother, and like a young bride she will welcome him. She will feed him with the bread of learning, and give him the water of wisdom to drink. He will lean on her and not fall, and he will rely on her and not be put to shame. She will exalt him above his neighbors, and will open his mouth in the midst of the assembly. He will find gladness and a crown of rejoicing, and will inherit an everlasting name (Sir 15:1-6).

“Fear of the Lord” leads to wisdom which “inebriates” (μεθύσκω) and fills (ἐμπίπλημι) the God-fearer with choice goods (ἐπιθύμημα) (literally “objects of desire”), peace and health (εἰρήνη καὶ ὑγίεια), knowledge, discerning comprehension (ἐπιστήμη καὶ γνῶσις συνέσεως), glory (δόξα), and long life (μακροήμερευσις) (Sir 1:16-20). “Fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline ...” (σοφία γὰρ καὶ παιδεία φόβος κυρίου) (Sir 1:27). Wisdom is to be sought in prayer (Sir 51:13), in walking the straight path (Sir 51:15), and in much instruction (παιδεία) (Sir 51:17).

While the text of Sirach 38:24–39:11 does not employ the expression “fear of the Lord” it does describe just such an ordered relationship between the “scholar” of 39:1-4 and the “Lord who made him” (Sir 39:5). Just as he has handed over his mind (τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ) to “thinking about” the law of the Most High (τοῦ ἐπιδιδόντος τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ διανοομένου ἐν νόμῳ ὑψίστου) and to seeking out sacred tradition in the wisdom of all the ancients (σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων ἐκζητήσει) (Sir 39:1), he also rises early to hand over his heart to seeking the Lord who made him (τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει ὀρθρίσαι πρὸς κύριον τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτὸν) (Sir 39:5).

Rising early to seek the Lord who made him suggests priority of place for pursuing a relationship with the Creator. Socially, such rising may evoke images of retainers

gathering to greet their patron at a morning levée in the atrium of the patron's home.⁴⁸⁷

For pious Jews, it may even elicit images of *tamid shel shachar*, the traditional morning sacrifice at temple opening, which, in the diaspora, is marked by *shacharit* prayer often associated with Hosea 14:1-3 where words replace sacrificial offerings.

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. ² Take words with you and return to the LORD; say to him, "Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips. Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy."

Many of Israel's most significant figures are associated with early rising:

"Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD" (Gen 19:27); in order to set up an altar; "Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it" (Gen 28:18). Moses, in giving the law to the people, "wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel" (Ex 24:4). Later, when he received the commandments a second time, "Moses cut two tablets of stone like the former ones and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone" (Ex 34:4); "Early in the morning Joshua rose and set out from Shittim with all the Israelites, and they came to the Jordan" (Jos 3:1) and then to capture Jericho "Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD" (Jos 6:12); and to take Ai "Joshua rose up early in the morning" (Jos 8:10). During the time of the Judges, Gideon "rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water" (Judges 6:38). Hannah and Elkanah, when praying for a son (Samuel), "rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD" (1 Sam 1:19). Job rose early

⁴⁸⁷Such a morning *salutatio* is mentioned and briefly described by Abdera (166 BCE) in a decree honouring two Tean envoys to Rome, *Syllogae minores*, 656, cited by F.W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World*, Fontana History of the Ancient World (London: Fontana, 1992), 238.

to offer sacrifices (Job 1:5). David awakened early for prayer (Ps 119:147; Ps 57:8).

Hezekiah rose up early and gathered the rulers of the city and went up to the house of the Lord (2 Chron 29:20).

Hence the “rising early” in 39:5 brings to mind many images and memories of Israel’s historical relationship with God. Now it is the learned scholar who rises to meet his God. “The one who seeks God will accept his discipline, and those who rise early to seek (ὀρθρίζοντες) him will find favor” (Sir 32:14). Similarly, in the quest for wisdom, Sirach asserts: “Whoever loves her [wisdom] loves life, and those who seek her from early morning (ὀρθρίζοντες) are filled with joy” (Sir 4:12). While handing his mind over to study and learning, the scholar’s heart finds priority in seeking the Lord who made him.

Recognizing the order of creation and the necessity of humble piety before God, however, does not and cannot compel the presence of wisdom. In the end, it is only God who bestows wisdom (Sir 39:6) where God wills. Nothing that a human being can do, no humility, no study, no ritual, no prayer, no obedience requires the Creator to bestow wisdom on anyone or on any activity.

4.3.8 Wisdom and Πνεῦμα Συνέσεως

The expression πνεῦμα συνέσεως is not common in biblical literature.⁴⁸⁸ It is most often translated into English as “the spirit of understanding” (NRSV) or “the spirit of intelligence” (NJB). To understand the expression πνεῦμα συνέσεως it is important to know that the Hebrew word רוּחַ referred to “breath” or “wind” before it was used for “spirit.” “Breath” was understood to be the life-force in humans and animals. The “wind” in Palestine could gust with an unpredictable strength and violence. Such associations with the experiences of life and death and turmoil must have seemed

⁴⁸⁸The expression occurs as πνεύματι συνέσεως (Sir 39:6); πνεύματος συνέσεως (Deu 34:9); πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως (Isa 11:2); πνεῦμα συνέσεως (Sus 1:44).

mysterious, powerful, and terrifying. Just as Israel's poets anthropomorphically imaged other mighty forces as Yahweh's arm (Isa 40:15), hand (Exod 9:5), face (Gen 33:10), nostrils (Exod 15:8), or mouth (Ps 33:6), they imaged the wind as Yahweh's breath. With that expression they referred to God's vital power or spirit which was no less active or efficacious than God's presence. It is not surprising that the breath or spirit of Yahweh came to be identified with the mysterious extraordinary phenomena in humans and in nature which gave evidence of divine empowerment.

The spirit or breath of God was associated with a person's *ψυχή*. God's spirit was seen to be a power which, in particular individuals, produced extraordinary and wonderful but transitory phenomena of strength, courage, or prophetic utterance. God's spirit came to Samson and he acted with fierce power and strength (Jgs 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-20). The spirit came upon Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Saul and all these men performed extraordinary deeds of heroism and military leadership (Jgs 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam 11:6-11). The spirit of God empowered kings (1 Sam 16:13) and spoke through their mouths (2 Sam 23:2). The spirit rests on prophets who bring glad tidings (Isa 61:1) and harsh warnings to the people (Hos 9:7). The spirit of God is the organ which, through intermediaries, constantly delivers Yahweh's direction to his people. It is for this purpose that the spirit enters Israel's sages and learned scholars (Job 32:8, 18; Wis 7:7). It is for this reason that the spirit fills the learned and pious scholar of Sir 39:6 who pours forth words of wisdom. Indeed, wisdom has been described as coming forth from the mouth of the Most High (Sir 24:3). In Sir 39:6 it pours forth in the words of empowered scholar.

The word *σύνεσις* is used in the Septuagint to translate *חֵבְרוֹנָה* ("intelligence," "aptitude," "skill") and sometimes *חֵכְמָה* ("skill," "ability," "wisdom"). English translations most often use "understanding." Strictly the word *σύνεσις* implies "a sending together," "a union" or "a flowing together as in the confluence of rivers," but it is most commonly used to describe a quick comprehension, a shrewdness, or a revealed

insight.⁴⁸⁹ The idea of confluence is particularly apt in Sir 39:6 in a context where one “will be filled” with the spirit of understanding (πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται) and “will pour forth” (ἀνομβρήσει) words of wisdom. The verse suggests a joining of scholarly efforts (Sir 39:1-4) and pious submission (Sir 39:5) empowered by the divine spirit of understanding to become a voice of divine wisdom expressing an inspired counsel and knowledge (Sir 39:6-7). The spirit of understanding empowers an insight into the unity of divine wisdom which embraces both the wisdom poured out at creation and the wisdom of Israel’s election tradition.

4.3.9 Wisdom Manifest in Παιδεία, and the Law of the Lord’s Covenant

Sirach 39:8 announces the manifestation of wisdom in association with the παιδεία of learning/teaching and glorying in “the law of the Lord’s covenant.” The relationship between wisdom and παιδεία is based on the opportunity of formal discipline and study. This includes, but is not limited to, the catalogue of topics set out in Sir 39:1-3, which seem to presume abilities to read, write, and interpret at quite advanced levels. The absence of παιδεία in those practicing skilled trades (Sir 38:34) becomes another element of the syncretical comparison of the wisdom of the artisan with the wisdom sought by the one committed to study and reflection. The engagement of the learned scholar in activities among the great and with rulers serves to socially validate his learning. Sirach 39:8 identifies παιδεία as a manifestation of the wisdom freely given and inspired by the great Lord (Sir 39:6-7) and in that identification Sirach establishes that the scholar’s efforts and discipline in study are a valued preparation for a possible conferment of “the spirit of understanding” (Sir 39:6).

The relationship among wisdom, election, and “the law of the Lord’s covenant” is an equally important dimension of the elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως. From its

⁴⁸⁹Homer, *Odyssey*, 10, 515. Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), s.v.

earliest historical narratives, Israel seems to have been conscious of a unique self-identity as “the people of God.” Such a claim was immortalized in the name “Israel,” which, according to the biblical narrative, originated when Jacob wrested a special blessing from God: “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed” (Gen 32:28). Whatever the name may have meant originally, it has also been interpreted as “[the domain in which] God rules” (Deut 33:1-4).⁴⁹⁰

The Genesis narrative traces the roots of this special bond between God and Israel to promises made to Abram and his descendents (Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-21). These promises reached a dramatic fulfillment with the Exodus from Egypt and the encampment of the people at Sinai, where God enters into a solemn covenant (בְּרִית) with them and sets out specific instructions, statutes, and judgements (Exod 19-20).⁴⁹¹ The Book of Deuteronomy spells out the implications of that covenant: preaching and teaching for all future generations (Deut 5); Joshua marks the fulfillment of the promises to Israel with the renewal of the covenant in the promised land (Josh 24).⁴⁹²

The word διαθήκη (covenant) appears twenty-three times in Sirach. Of these, twelve occur in the *Praise of the Ancestors* as expressions of the unique relationship between God and the people, mediated by Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Phineas, and David. Five times the Sirach corpus uses διαθήκη in expressions of covenant with the Lord or with the Most High (17:12; 24:23; 28:7; 39:8; 42:2).

⁴⁹⁰David L. Liebner, “The Covenant and Election of Israel,” in *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, ed. by The Rabbinical Assembly, The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2001). www.adath-shalom.ca/brit.htm.

⁴⁹¹Vogels, *God’s Universal Covenant*, 1–7: “If we wish to speak about God, it is necessary to use images of human experience. When biblical writers wanted to explain the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, they chose familiar images: the husband–wife relationship; the father–son relationship; and the more frequent image of covenant: *b’rit*.”

⁴⁹²Liebner, “Covenant and Election.”

Of particular interest is the hymnic aretology of Sir 24, which hypostatizes wisdom as a member of the divine assembly, emanating from the mouth of the Most High (v. 3), traversing creation as appointed ruler of every people and nation, seeking a dwelling place (vv. 4-7), settling in Jacob (in my tent), inheriting Israel (in Jerusalem) (vv. 8-12) and flourishing there (vv. 13-22).⁴⁹³ In verse 23 Sirach equates “all this” with “the Book of the covenant of the Most High” (ταῦτα πάντα βιβλος διαθήκης θεοῦ ὑψίστου):

All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations 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. The first man did not know wisdom fully, nor will the last one fathom her. (Sir 24:23-28).

Immediately the text turns to images of wisdom as flowing water, the overflowing rivers of Israel’s universal creation narrative and the abundance and depth of the sea (Sir 24:25-29). In these verses, Sirach has artfully aligned the Most High, the breadth of creation wisdom, the election of Israel, the covenant tradition, the abundance and depth of universal wisdom, and his own role in the mediation of wisdom like prophecy. This alignment of the Most High, the source of all wisdom, with the particularity of Israel’s own self-understanding as an elected covenant partner of this universal God, raises an interesting theological dynamic: God has established a primitive universal covenant with all humanity and, at the same time, has also entered into a unique historical covenantal relationship with Israel.⁴⁹⁴ This same dynamic seems to be what is at play in Sir 39:8, where wisdom is manifest in both the universal παιδεία of the scholar’s learning and also in his glorying in the law of the Lord’s covenant. Israelite tradition in general, the texts with which Sir 38:24-39:11 has been preserved, and Sir 39:8 concur that wisdom is to be

⁴⁹³Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult*, 189–90.

⁴⁹⁴Vogels, *God’s Universal Covenant*, 15–16, 36–46, 149–50.

associated with creation, election, and covenant law. Such an association would not have been a surprise for a faithful Jewish community. On the contrary, it would have provided a firm and settled starting point for the reflection on the fullness of divine wisdom itself.

4.3.10 Conclusion of Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertextures Associated with Σοφία and Σοφίζω

The innertexture in Sir 38:24–39:11 foregrounded, as an essential building block of the argument schema, the assumption that God is the source of all wisdom and order in the universe. An examination of socio-cultural texture and intertexture shows that this assumption was a commonly held belief in the mythopoetic structures of Greek, Jewish, Egyptian, and other Near Eastern cosmologies. Human wisdom was seen to be a derivative of divine wisdom. Expertise in the arts and crafts is understood to be a domain-specific application of wisdom and skill, which was taught or given to humans by the gods. Sir 38:24, 25, 31 employ the verb σοφίζω (“to become wise,” “to be made wise”) to describe the activity of plying the skill of a trade to maintain the fabric of the created world.⁴⁹⁵ In that sense, the becoming wise of the artisans also has its source in God.

Sirach 39:1-3 describes a scholarly probing of important repositories of human intellectual tradition that record the law of the Most High, the traditions of the ancients (who were closer to the gods), prophecies (which give voice to divine wisdom), sayings of the famous (the wise), proverbs, and parables. The one committed to the study and consideration of these traditional repositories of wisdom also becomes involved with arenas of life that are informed by wisdom or claim divine direction: service among the great, being seen with rulers, travel to foreign lands as an emissary, and moral

⁴⁹⁵Similar usage may be found in Euripides. *The Tragedies of Euripides*, trans. T. A. Buckley. (London: Bohn, 1850), l. 200. “We mortals have no cleverness in the eyes of the gods. Our ancestral traditions, and those which we have held throughout our lives, no argument will overturn, not even if some craftiness should be discovered by the depths of our wits.”

discernment regarding good and evil in the human lot. At one level, this alignment of the pursuit of wisdom with service in civic and social arenas recognizes the excellence achieved by the committed scholar. At another level, it clearly demonstrates the continuity of wisdom contemplated with a wisdom which directs and guides life.

In Sir 39:5 wisdom is apparent in knowing one's place before the Creator. By acknowledging the Lord who made him and by assuming an appropriate disposition of prayer and seeking forgiveness of sins before God, the learned and pious scholar establishes a right relationship with the source of all wisdom. God willing, the humble and pious scholar may be filled with "the spirit of understanding" that will enable a pouring forth of words of wisdom of his own and a divinely-directed counsel and knowledge. For a learned Jewish scribe, the Creator and source of all wisdom is Yahweh, the God of Israel's covenant, and so the presence of such a wisdom is manifest in the παιδεία of his teaching and also in a glorying in the law of the Lord's covenant. In the end, the scholar, despite a commitment to learning and an achievement of high social success, does not and cannot *earn* a gift of divine wisdom. Instead, by maintaining a studied discipline and a prayerful contemplation of the Creator, the learned and pious scholar enters a humble relationship with the source of all wisdom.

4.4 Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Associated with "the one lessening πρᾶξις can become wise"

A second building block underlying the argument of the discourse is the general statement of 38:24^b: "the one lessening πρᾶξις can become wise" (ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται). Beginning with this statement as his premise, Sirach, using implied enthymemes and a syncritical paradigm, argues that lessening the engagement in exterior physical labour (ἔργον) and its attendant anxiety (ἀγρυπνία) opens up the possibility of reaching a deeper wisdom. The persuasive strength of his argument depends on how firmly the premise is embraced by the audience. Surveying the socio-

cultural texture and intertexture with which the argument has been constructed permits a fuller appreciation of the premise as a secure base for the conclusions that will follow. This survey begins by examining the intertexture of the premise with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* then turns to an exploration of a common leisure/work *topos* and class division apparent in classical Greek literature and philosophy.

4.4.1 Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture of Πρᾶξις

The statement that “the one lessening πρᾶξις can become wise” (ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται) is the foundational premise underlying the rhetology of Sirach's discourse on scribal wisdom. Of particular note in the premise is the use of the word πρᾶξις which is not defined by Sirach and which does not recur anywhere else in this discourse. Modern English versions of the discourse translate πράξει in Sirach 38:24^b as “toil” (NAB), “business” (RSV, NRSV), “commitments” (NJB), “busyness” (CEB), and “action” (DRA). While these translations attempt to capture a particular understanding of πρᾶξις, classical Greek philosophy represented in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, explores the term πρᾶξις in a way that may prove more useful in configuring its place within Sirach's argument.

In Aristotelian thought, πρᾶξις is presented as a moral action that operates as a kind of deliberation (βούλησις) in the movement toward the good life in its entirety.⁴⁹⁶

Moral action (praxis) is a kind of deliberation (boulēsis), namely the noble (kalōs) deliberation: it does not deliberate toward particularities but toward the good life in its entirety. In Aristotle's theory of action, deliberation is generally defined as “inquiry and analysis” (NE 1112b22) about “things that are conducive to ends” (NE1112b13-14) in the realm of things “that we bring about, and not always in the

⁴⁹⁶Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1094a. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that practical knowledge (*praxis*) is governed by *phronesis*, which is essentially the inclination to act according to ethical principles in a given context. As a kind of practical wisdom, *phronesis* involves moving between the particular and the general. Thus, *praxis* is not simply an action based on reflection; it is an action that embodies specific qualities. These qualities include a commitment to human well-being, a search for ethical principles and a sense of respect for others. Moreover, *praxis* is always risky because it requires that a person makes a wise and prudent practical judgment about how to act in each situation. W. Carr and S. Kimmins, *Becoming Critical. Education Knowledge and Action Research* (Washington: Falmer, 1986), 190.

same way” (NE 1112b3-4), which determines the subsequent rational choice (NE 1113a5).⁴⁹⁷

In his theory of action, Aristotle presents deliberation as an inquiry and analysis about things that are conducive to ends in the realm of actions or things that can be done by individual efforts but not always in the same way:

We deliberate about things that are in our power and can be done; and these are in fact what is left. For nature, necessity, and chance are thought to be causes, and also thought and everything that depends on man. Now every class of men deliberates about the things that can be done by their own efforts. And in the case of exact and self-contained sciences there is no deliberation, e.g. about the letters of the alphabet (for we have no doubt how they should be written); but the things that are brought about by our own efforts, but not always in the same way, are the things about which we deliberate.⁴⁹⁸

For Aristotle the aim of such deliberation is to find the good life which is happiness (εὐδαιμονία). What exactly constitutes the good life has been considered as different things by different people or groups:

all knowledge and choice aims at some good, what it is that we say political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness [εὐδαιμονία], and identify living well and faring well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise. For the former think it is some plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth, or honour; they differ, however, from one another—and often even the same man identifies it with different things, with health when he is ill, with wealth when he is poor ... Now some thought that apart from these many goods there is another which is good in itself and causes the goodness of all these as well.⁴⁹⁹

If πράξις deliberatively aims at achieving happiness (εὐδαιμονία), in whatever way that may be defined, and if that goal is not always arrived at in the same way, it must be admitted that deliberation is contingent on the fact that the world within which one acts is not entirely determined by unchanging first principles and so, on the basis of deliberation, it will be necessary to choose from among a number of alternatives. If, on

⁴⁹⁷David Machek, “The Doubleness of Craft: Motifs of Technical Action in Life Praxis according to Aristotle and Zhuangzi,” *Dao* 10 (2011): 519.

⁴⁹⁸Aristotle “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1112b22.

⁴⁹⁹Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1095a31.

the other hand, the happiness sought is goodness in itself and the cause of all goodness, the need for moral deliberation ($\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$) lessens because the alternatives are reduced.

Aristotle holds wisdom, which he defines as excellence in contemplation, to be the highest intellectual virtue.⁵⁰⁰ Contemplation is said to be the best, the most pleasant, and the most divine activity:

If happiness is activity in accordance with excellence, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest excellence; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be intellect or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper excellence will be complete happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said.⁵⁰¹

Wisdom pertains to unchanging and necessary things, “things that cannot be otherwise,” and crafts belong in the changeable realm of things that can be otherwise.⁵⁰² Wisdom “is not concerned with any process of coming-into-being” but only with the contemplation of unchanging things: it does not change or produce anything. In contrast, craft “is about coming-into-being” as it considers how to bring into being things that do not necessarily have to exist: it is the productive excellence of making ($\pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$).⁵⁰³ In other words, wisdom, because it is settled and unchanging, is removed from any need for deliberation concerning possible alternatives ($\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$). Thus, there is a correlation between the lessening of $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ and an increase of wisdom. The need for moral

⁵⁰⁰Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1141a.

⁵⁰¹Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1177a19. Aristotle depicts contemplation as “the life that actualizes the virtue of *sophia*. Although we all possess the potentiality of this kind of theoretical thinking, for we all have the theoretical element of the rational part of the soul, contemplation as a way of life (in contrast with the life of pleasure or the life of honor) is certainly not suitable for everybody. Only very few people have the intellectual capacity to lead such a life, because the inquiry into the most divine subject matter requires the highest degree of actualization of our *nous*, the highest intellectual faculty.” Wei Liu, “An All-inclusive Interpretation of Aristotle’s Contemplative Life,” *Sophia* (2011), 59.

⁵⁰²Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1140a1-2. According to Aristotle, wisdom and craft are faculties belonging to two different parts of the rational part of soul: the scientific part and the calculative part, distinguished by the nature of objects they aim at (“Nicomachean Ethics”, 1139a).

⁵⁰³Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1143b19-20, 1140a11.

deliberation lessens as one moves toward a contemplation of the necessary things of wisdom.

It is not the intention of this research to argue that Sirach's discourse is a Judeo-Egyptian articulation of Aristotelean philosophy, but it does claim that the intertextural world from which this discourse emerged was already concerned with the relationship between *πραξις* and "becoming wise" (*σοφίζω*). An understanding of that intertexture provides a useful heuristic tool for probing Sirach's argument. In fact, the *Nicomachean Ethics* also employs a clear and extended analogy to crafts and to trade skills, which it expands and applies to explore the human condition in general: "Every skill [*τεχνή*] and every inquiry, and similarly every action and rational choice, is thought to aim at some good."⁵⁰⁴ Progressing from the premise "the one lessening *πραξις* can become wise," Sirach presents arguments showing how freedom from the work associated with the skilled trades, an opportunity for study, and an increased stillness of contemplation places the scholar before his Creator, the unchanging first principle, the source of all wisdom.

4.4.2 A Social, Literary and Philosophical Division of *Σχολή* and *Ἔργον*

Sirach's elaboration of *σοφία γραμματεύς* has also been influenced by an accepted social division between those who engage in the banausic arts and those who enjoyed an aristocratic life.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁴Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," 1094a18. See especially Book II for many more examples of the analogy with crafts and craft workers.

⁵⁰⁵Andrea Wilson Nightingale offers a summary of the term *banausic* finding it to be highly derogatory in its usage by Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle. The most common translation of the term is "mechanical," but it is also translated as "materialistic" and "uncultured." The usages of the term in Greek philosophy are wide ranging. Banausic thought has to do with automated, rote "know-how" as distinct from philosophic thought. Banausic thought is that which is commodified, exchanged, bought and sold and no better than any other good for sale. Banausic is also used to describe any thought directed toward a particular outcome, that is, any thought which isn't wholly disinterested and detached from the mortal world. *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55–59.

Xenophon of Athens (historian, Athenian general, aristocrat), in his dialogue entitled *Oeconomicus*, places the following comment in the mouth of Socrates:

Very good, Critobulus; for, to be sure, the illiberal arts [βαναυσικαί], as they are called, are spoken against, and are, naturally enough, held in utter disdain in our states. For they spoil the bodies of the workmen and the foremen, forcing them to sit still and live indoors, and in some cases to spend the day at the fire. The softening of the body involves a serious weakening of the mind. Moreover, these so-called illiberal arts leave no spare time for attention to one's friends and city, so that those who follow them are reputed bad at dealing with friends and bad defenders of their country. In fact, in some of the states, and especially in those reputed warlike, it is not even lawful for any of the citizens to work at illiberal arts.⁵⁰⁶

While the authenticity of this statement and the exact nature of Socrates's attitude toward the banausic arts and leisure remain controversial, Xenophon's comments (dated sometime after 362 BCE) do accurately reflect a common view that received strong affirmation in the philosophical writings of both Plato and Aristotle.

Plato, in his *Symposium*, employs a rhetoric of banausia that expresses a common aristocratic contempt for manual or servile labour and those who engage in it.

For God mingles not with man; but through Love all the intercourse and converse of gods with men, whether they be awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual; all other wisdom, such as that of arts and handicrafts, is mean and vulgar.⁵⁰⁷

In the *Republic*, Plato offers a long reflection on the stratification of an ideal society which finds a partial summation in this brief text:

These brothers and sisters have different natures, and some of them God framed to rule, whom he fashioned of gold; others he made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again to be husbandmen and craftsmen, and these were formed by him of brass and iron.⁵⁰⁸

Plato maintains that humanity's goal is to discover truth and to live in conformity with

⁵⁰⁶Xenophon, "Oeconomicus," vol. 4 in *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 4.2.3.

⁵⁰⁷Plato, "Symposium" in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1. trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 203a.

⁵⁰⁸Plato, "Republic" in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 2, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 415a.

it.⁵⁰⁹ This truth and genuine knowledge is accessible only to an elite group of intellectuals who should be charged with the task of organizing and governing society according to their understanding of true moral principles.⁵¹⁰ Such a group of intellectuals, called “guardians” (φύλακοι) and/or “philosopher kings,” (οἱ φιλόσοφοι βασιλεύουσιν) would constitute the highest class of citizens.⁵¹¹ All other citizens would be hierarchically ordered in a division of social labour corresponding to the goodness of their souls. “Auxiliaries,” the warriors, would assist and support the “philosopher kings.” The lowest class would consist of those citizens who performed the labour that supplied the goods and services needed by society. Thus, the ideal state, described by Plato, operated as an organic structure in which specialists performed the functions for which they were suited by nature and by training. While all citizens contributed in their special capacity to the welfare and excellence of the state, only the philosophers were capable of achieving the virtues of knowledge and civic leadership. As such, Plato argues in the *Laws* that the best citizens must not practice arts or crafts because:

a citizen’s vocation, which demands a great deal of practice and study, is to establish and maintain good order in the community, and this is not a job for part-timers. Following two trades or callings efficiently—or even following one and supervising a worker in another—is almost always too difficult for human nature.⁵¹²

Responding to such a high calling required an opportunity for σχολή which relieved the—individual from the necessity of labouring for the necessities of life. Indeed, common

⁵⁰⁹Plato, “Phaedo” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 66b-d.

⁵¹⁰For Socrates (Plato) an ideal society consists of three main classes of people—labourers and producers (craftsmen, farmers, artisans, etc.), auxiliaries (warriors), and guardians (rulers). A society is just when relations among these three classes are right. Each group must perform its appropriate functions and only those functions. Each must be in the right position of power in relation to the others. Rulers must rule, auxiliaries must uphold rulers’ convictions, and producers must limit themselves to exercising whatever skills nature granted them (farming, blacksmithing, painting, etc.) Justice is a principle of specialization: a principle that requires that each person fulfill the societal role to which nature fitted him and not interfere in any other business. Plato, “Republic,” 369b–444a.

⁵¹¹Plato, “Republic,” 473d.

⁵¹²Plato, *The Laws*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin, 1970), 349.

labourers had an important role in Plato's social theory; they made it possible for a minority of citizens to avoid the necessity of labouring, which in turn permitted them the leisure to engage in the pursuit of philosophy and politics. Thus, even though Plato valued labour, it was not valued on the same moral plane as the activities associated with σχολή. Manual labourers and tradesmen were instrumental in providing the good life for the few, but, because they had neither the capacity nor the leisure required for the morally superior life, they could not share in it.⁵¹³

In *Theaetetus*, Plato describes two “characters” or types of people. An inferior type, who were prepared for a life of hard work, and a superior type, who were the philosophers, nursed in “freedom and leisure,” allowing them to live “the true life of gods and blessed men.”

Such are the two characters, Theodorus: the one of the freeman, who has been trained in liberty and leisure, whom you call the philosopher,—him we cannot blame because he appears simple and of no account when he has to perform some menial task, such as packing up bed-clothes, or flavouring a sauce or fawning speech; the other character is that of the man who is able to do all this kind of service smartly and neatly, but knows not how to wear his cloak like a gentleman; still less with the music of discourse can he rightly hymn that life which is lived by immortals or men blessed of heaven.⁵¹⁴

In the *Republic*, Plato admonishes any who might imagine themselves capable of doing philosophy and of achieving the truth.

For, although philosophy be in this evil case, still there remains a dignity about her which is not to be found in the arts. And this is an attraction to many whose natures are imperfect and whose souls are cramped and maimed by their meannesses, as their bodies are by their trades and crafts.⁵¹⁵

Individuals who work with their hands were deemed incapable of attaining moral excellence because they were naturally inferior to begin with and their work damaged them even further.

⁵¹³Charles Sylvester, “The Classical Idea of Leisure: Cultural Ideal or Class Prejudice?” *Leisure Sciences* 21 (1999): 7–11.

⁵¹⁴Plato, “Theaetetus” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 3, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 175d–176a.

⁵¹⁵Plato, “Republic,” 495d.

Aristotle, like Plato, also held a special place for the relationship between work and leisure in his social, political, and moral reflections. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he declares that happiness is thought to depend on leisure; we work (ἀσχολούμεθα) in order to enjoy leisure (σχολή), just as we make war in order to enjoy peace.⁵¹⁶ In point of fact, it was really many others who had to be busy, because labour, according to Aristotle, is inimical to happiness; no man can practice excellence (ἀρετή) who is living the life of a – mechanic or labourer.⁵¹⁷ In all of this, Aristotle assumes the existence of a natural organic hierarchy of excellence (ἀρετή) in which everything has a place according to its degree of reason and freedom. At the pinnacle stands god, completely independent and perpetually engaged in pure thought (contemplation). Contemplation is said to be the best, the most pleasant, and the most divine activity.

The activity of intellect, ..., in so far as it involves contemplation, seems superior in its seriousness, to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its own proper pleasure, which augments the activity ... If the intellect, then, is something divine compared with the human being, the life in accordance with it will also be divine compared with the human life.⁵¹⁸

For Aristotle, wisdom pertains to unchanging and necessary things, “things that cannot be otherwise.” They may be contemplated but never changed. Skilled trades and the arts engage themselves with the changeable realm of things that can possibly be otherwise.⁵¹⁹ Wisdom and craft are faculties belonging to two different parts of the of the human soul. Any interconnection between wisdom and craft work, even superior work, is seen to be domain-specific and therefore limited:.

Wisdom in skills we attribute to their most exacting practitioners; for example, we call Pheidias a wise sculptor and Polycleitus a wise maker of statues, meaning nothing by wisdom other than virtue in a skill. But some people we think are wise in general, not in some domain-specific sphere.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁶Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1177b 6.

⁵¹⁷Aristotle, “Politics” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes and trans. W. D. Ross (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1278a36.

⁵¹⁸Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1177b.

⁵¹⁹Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1140a1-2.

⁵²⁰Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1141a.

As it turns out, leisure and labour were seen to be important factors differentiating the excellence (ἀρετή) among human beings. Accordingly, it is a sign of a greater excellence not to practice any sordid craft, since it is the mark of a freeman not to live at another's beck and call.⁵²¹ This freedom from the necessity to labour describes a required precondition of leisure. Therefore, just as nature has produced a hierarchy of plants, animals, slaves, and labourers according to specific functions, it has also created a genus of noblemen distinguished from others by their capacity for reason and the freedom for contemplation.⁵²²

Such a separation between those engaged in banausic crafts and those with an opportunity for leisure with all of its opportunities was commonly known and experienced in the ancient Mediterranean world. An observation by the Greek historian Herodotus highlights the presence of a strict caste system in Egypt and the wide extent of its influence across his world:

The Egyptians were divided into seven classes, severally entitled priests, warriors, cowherds, swineherds, hucksters, interpreters, and pilots. So many classes there are, each named after its vocation Now whether this separation, like other customs, has come to Greece from Egypt, I cannot exactly judge. I know that in Thrace and Scythia and Persia and Lydia and nearly all foreign countries those who learn trades and their descendants are held in less esteem than the rest of the people, and those who have nothing to do with artisan's work, especially men who are free to practice the art of war, are highly honoured. This much is certain: that this opinion which is held by all Greeks and chiefly by the Lacedaemonians, is of foreign origin. It is in Corinth that artisans are held in least contempt.⁵²³

The class separation dividing those engaged in the banausic arts from those who enjoyed the opportunities and privileges associated with σχολή represents a long-standing Mediterranean social commonplace. While this division was the product of a biased aristocratic world view and while many skilled trades provided a good living for those who practiced them, conservative social policies remained tied to the traditional division

⁵²¹Aristotle, "Rhetoric" 1367b9.

⁵²²Charles Sylvester, "The Classical Idea of Leisure," 9–10.

⁵²³Herodotus, *The Histories I*, 2.164, 167.

of social classes. Such a social hierarchy continued to dominate in Egyptian culture and the division finds expression in traditional modes of Egyptian discourse.⁵²⁴ The school text traditions, for example, emphatically dissociate scribes from the trades that involve a physically strenuous, non-literate labour. That separation is maintained even into the texts of the Late Egyptian Miscellanies.⁵²⁵ Sirach's recognition of the contributions of the skilled workers in Sirach 38:31 and their social and political exclusions in Sirach 38:32-33 reflect just such a common social hierarchy.

4.4.3 Conclusion of Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture of “The one lessening $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ can become wise”

Sirach's assertion that scribal wisdom arises in an opportunity for leisure is argued around the premise that “the one lessening business can become wise.” A consideration of intertexture shows that the inverse relationship between $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ and $\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ was a common philosophical concern at least since the time of Aristotle's very influential *Nichomachean Ethics*. Aristotle saw the productive crafts, which involved continual deliberation and choices regarding the quality of what was coming into being, as set over against wisdom which is concerned with the contemplation of those things that were beyond change. The realm of $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ was the world of possibilities for what could be; the realm of $\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ was the world of the necessary, the unchanging, and the enduring. Thus as $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ decreased, the possibility of becoming wise ($\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$) increased. The presence of such a succinct statement at the beginning of the discourse suggests that the idea was familiar enough to the audience that it could provide a starting point for the arguments that follow. While the arguments of Sirach's discourse cannot be shown to

⁵²⁴Hutto, “Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric,” 227–228.

⁵²⁵Ragazzoli, “Weak Hands and Soft Mouths,” 159–160; Fredrik Hagen, “Literature, Transmission and the Late Egyptian Miscellanies,” in *Current Research in Egyptology*, ed. Rachel J. Dann (Oxford: Oxbow, 2006), 84–99.

embrace any specific philosophical position, it is interesting to note how Sirach's arguments move through a lessening of $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ toward a deeper possibility of becoming wise until it finds a stillness before God.

Intertexture also shows that in the Egyptian context of this discourse there already existed a number of well-known and commonly used syncritical comparisons, which contrasted the intensely physical labour and anxieties facing skilled workers with images of a superior and privileged life awaiting those who persisted in their sometimes difficult scribal studies.⁵²⁶ These ancient school text syncrises offered Sirach a convenient arrangement of ready-made and very familiar arguments that highlighted the advantages of a freedom from physical labour so that students might achieve the superior life of a trained scribe. In this discourse Sirach will construct a new syncrisis to contrast the limited nature of the wisdom associated with skilled trades with the superior wisdom possible for those who surrender their minds to the intellectual world of study and their hearts to the very source of wisdom. As with the school texts, Sirach appeals to the benefits, especially the great honour and renown, that will attach to those who achieve this superior wisdom.

Socio-cultural texture and intertexture also reveals a deep aristocratic bias that regards those involved in physical labour (the banausic arts) as inferior to those who enjoy the leisure and self-sufficiency that marks full citizenship and a freedom to engage in civic and social responsibilities. Many skilled trade workers of Egypt may have enjoyed a prosperous life and a high reputation for their work. It has been suggested by James Crenshaw that the reputation and material security of the highly skilled artisans may even have surpassed the social regard formerly reserved for scribes.⁵²⁷ In any event, Sirach's description of skilled craftsmen accentuates manual work, an anxiety associated

⁵²⁶These syncrises are discussed in greater detail in section 4.6.2.

⁵²⁷Crenshaw, "The Book of Sirach," 813.

with production, and the experience of social limitations with respect to the participation in civic and social opportunities. In contrast, he describes the one devoting his mind to intellectual pursuits as enjoying a freedom from the need for physical labour, an opportunity for study, character development, and active participation in service among the great, in courts, in foreign travel and in moral discernment. *Πρᾶξις* has been reduced and the possibility of being made wise seems to be signalled by the engagement in broader activities. The surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him highlights a search for the source of all wisdom and the removal of all need for *πρᾶξις*.

Plato and Aristotle both contended that the highest thing in man is reason and therefore, the purpose of human perfection lies with the activity of reason as expressed in a 'theoretic' or contemplative life.⁵²⁸ From their philosophical perspective, the practice of a physical trade or mechanical labour when it remained attached to *πρᾶξις* prevented such a life. Reason and the activities of mind required a freedom from manual labour and a disciplined engagement in contemplation and learning. Examples and theories supporting the long entrenched division between workers and those with the freedom to study, between artisans and scribes, provided Sirach with already well-accepted arguments in support the premise of his work. Such support increased the persuasive strength of his rhetorical argument.

4.5 Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Associated with Σχολή

A third essential building block in the argument scheme of Sir 38:24–39:11 is the Hellenistic understanding of *σχολή*. The focus of this section, while it may seem to overlap with the previous considerations of *σχολή/ἔργον* and *πρᾶξις*, is a closer examination of some of the specific opportunities associated with the Hellenistic notion of “leisure.” These opportunities include: mindful learning and reflection beyond a need

⁵²⁸Thomas Aquinas cites Sirach 38:25 in reference to angelic contemplation and he cites 39:1 when exploring the establishment of a religious order dedicated to study and reflection. See section 1.3.

to acquire a trade, enculturation into an educated social elite, a welcomed participation in the civic and social duties of the community, the development of personal honour through the virtues and values of a recognized ἀρετή, and the time to contemplate a relationship with the divine source of wisdom.

4.5.1 Σχολή as a Greek Aristocratic Ideal

Σχολή represents an ancient aristocratic ideal reaching back to the early Greek narratives where freedom from necessary physical labour allowed for the mastery of military skills.⁵²⁹ This embodiment of skills and values associated with courage and war was regarded as human excellence, ἀρετή.⁵³⁰ Small communities, dominated by elites of “aristocratic” warriors, evolved a social arrangement in which the elite enjoyed a higher standard of living built upon the labour of slaves as well as on the tribute surrendered by vassal states, and booty amassed from military expeditions. Further conquests, economic growth, and urbanization led to the emergence of a more complex class structure in which Greek citizenry became highly dependent upon slave labour supporting a “leisured” class. By the fourth century BCE σχολή had lost most of its direct connection with military training and battle. What remained, however, was a social elite with the knowledge, freedom, and power to control civic and economic life.⁵³¹

The use of the term σχολή in Greek literature offers a good insight into the opportunities and privileges that came to be associated with the concept. Σχολή is seen to

⁵²⁹See Homer, *Iliad*, 1.129-200 for a description of the skills and virtues of Achilles. Long before the first Olympic Games, athletic contests in boxing, wrestling, foot racing, chariot racing, jumping, discus throwing, and javelin throwing were an integral part of Greek military training and campaigning. In *The Iliad* 13 the princes and nobles contest in athletic games as part of the funeral rites for Achilles's friend Patroclus, killed by Hector. Athletics were considered as preparation for war; war as preparation for athletics. Bruce Kidd, “The Myth of the Ancient Games” in *Sport in Society* 16 (2013): 416–426; Xenophon describes σχολή as a leisure necessary for thorough military training in “Cyropaedia” in *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*, vols. 5 and 6, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 1.6.17; 2.1.16; 4.3.12.

⁵³⁰Derived from ἄριστος, root of the English word “aristocracy.” Werner Jaeger, 5.

⁵³¹Kidd, “The Myth of the Ancient Games,” 420.

be: freedom from the necessity of physical work (e.g. Plato, *Republic*, 2.370c; 3.406d), freedom to linger in thoughts, conversations, or arguments (e.g. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 780; Sophocles, *Ajax*, 815; Plato, *Theaetetus*, 172d), time for the study of philosophy (e.g. Plato, *Phaedo*, 66d), an opportunity for civic duty (e.g. Andocides, *On his Return*, 2.19; Plato, *Greater Hippias*, 281a), time to puzzle and discern hidden meanings (e.g. Plato, *Lysis*, 214d), time to investigate antiquity and tradition (e.g. Plato, *Critas*, 110a), time to study quietly and free from distraction (e.g. Epictatus, *Discourses*, 2.21), and time for attention to ritual and worship (e.g. Euripedes, *Iphigenia*, 1221).

Benjamin Hunnicutt explains that the Greeks used the word σχολή in two different senses. One meaning was the ordinary sense of having freedom from a required activity. The second, and more subtle, meaning implied freedom from a less important activity for engagement in a more important activity. Hunnicutt states: Plato believed that only a few could handle freedom from necessity [leisure] and that the majority, the uneducated and imprudent, would have to keep working. Because he lived in a relatively poor economy, he had little hope that the majority could be educated or lifted up out of poverty into leisure.⁵³² Leisure was never seen to be the equivalent of idleness (ἀργέω) or recreation (ἀνάπαυσις), but as expressed in Aristotle's conservative social theory it was a "happiness" (εὐδαιμονία) which consisted in an activity of the soul/mind (ψυχή) in accordance its highest ἀρετή, contemplation. Contemplation, the highest human achievement, offered insight into matters noble and divine.⁵³³

Work was seen as an obstruction to the happiness and contemplation that resided in "leisure".⁵³⁴ Dependent (*thetic*) workers were considered as slaves, and according to Aristotle there is no leisure for slaves.⁵³⁵ Leisure and slavery form an absolute

⁵³²B. Hunnicutt, "Leisure and Play in Plato's Teaching and Philosophy of Learning," *Leisure Sciences* 12 (1990): 213.

⁵³³Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics" 1177a.1.

⁵³⁴Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics" 1177b.5.

⁵³⁵Aristotle, "Politics" 1334a.20.

dichotomy: leisure representing full freedom and slavery, the complete absence of freedom. Anyone who was dependent on others for his or her livelihood was considered an intermittent slave, lacking the leisure for the autonomous activity characteristic of excellence. The problem, however, was socially “elaborated” to be more than a simple lack of time, which might be easily remedied by a more equitable distribution of work and freedom. The Greek aristocracy strongly contended that the masses lacked the necessary life qualities to use free time in an appropriately noble way. Only “truly free” aristocrats considered themselves prepared for the more important activities associated with leisure. Free from the necessity to provide for survival, they enjoyed the opportunity to immerse themselves in civic, cultural, and intellectual pursuits including ἐλεύθερος παιδεία, the education of a free and noble person.⁵³⁶

4.5.2 Σχολή as an Opportunity for Ἐλευθέριος Παιδεία

The Greek expression ἐλευθέριος παιδεία refers to an education in the liberal arts as opposed to learning a trade. Studying matters of interest which were not immediately associated with making a livelihood was a privilege for those who enjoyed an opportunity of σχολή. Those with an opportunity of “leisure” could spend time lingering on thoughts, ideas, or conversations about issues of social, civic, or intellectual concern, matters beyond the preoccupation of daily survival or a materialist rapacity to have more.

The term παιδεία makes its first known appearance in Greek literature in the fifth century BCE when it is used by Aeschylus in reference to “raising up a child.”⁵³⁷ Παιδεία is normally translated into English as “education,” which conjures up images of schools,

⁵³⁶Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 244-245.

⁵³⁷Aeschylus, “Seven Against Thebes,” trans. Herbert Weir Smyth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), line 18. That παιδεία came to be used to refer to “*tutorage*, i.e. *education* or *training*”; by impl. disciplinary correction—chastening, chastisement, instruction, nurture” seems natural enough. James Strong, “Greek Dictionary,” in *New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1996), 66.

texts, curricula and the like, which can be quite misleading for the archaic period of Greek history. Historians and scholars of Greek thought propose a fuller understanding of παιδεία, one that extends beyond simple references to “schooling” and “child-rearing” to include a broader sense of “socialization” and “enculturation.” Werner Jaeger, for example, sees the term as a comprehensive Greek concept including modern expressions like “civilization,” “culture,” “tradition,” “literature,” and “education.” Each of these English terms is confined to only one aspect of παιδεία and individually these words do not embrace the same breadth of meaning as the Greek concept unless we employ them all together.⁵³⁸ The term “enculturation,” now commonly used by sociologists and some anthropologists, comes closer to the Greek connotation.⁵³⁹ James Fowler, for example, explains that the substance of παιδεία,

consists of a culture’s accrued consensus regarding the good, the true and the beautiful. It represents the substantive ideals and standards of excellence a people has evolved, and the normative stories which instantiate and commend them.⁵⁴⁰

Additionally, he asserts that παιδεία is better understood as a process

of interactive construction by which every member of a community appropriates his or her shared knowledge and moral values; the process by which members of the community intentionally plan and attend to the sharing of its revelatory moments and stories, its knowledge, aesthetic and religious insights, and its standards of excellence.⁵⁴¹

More than a simple transmission of knowledge, values, and ethical ideals of a culture from one generation to the next, παιδεία is to be seen as “each generation’s and each person’s reinvention and augmentation of them.”⁵⁴² The cultural deposit that παιδεία offered to students was clearly defined over against contemporary texts and languages by the antiquity of the authors, their use of language, and their traditional values. Homer, for

⁵³⁸Jaeger, *Paideia*, page following frontispiece, xxiv.

⁵³⁹Kevin Robb, *Literacy and Paideia in Ancient Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 41 n.25; Jennifer Gurley, “Platonic Paideia,” *PLit* 23 (1999): 356.

⁵⁴⁰James Fowler, “Pluralism, Particularity and Paideia,” *JLR* 2 (1984): 263–264.

⁵⁴¹Fowler, “Pluralism, Particularity and Paideia,” 364.

⁵⁴²Fowler, “Pluralism, Particularity and Paideia,” 364.

example, represented an author distant in time, place, and idiom from the Hellenistic students. Euripides, Isocrates, and Menander represented the pre-Hellenistic past, which allowed teachers to enculturate students into speaking and writing a scholarly version of Attic Greek that was distinct from the *koiné* of common usage. Simultaneously, the students were also exposed to models of the “high values” of a bygone age.⁵⁴³ This emerging emphasis on particular authors is evidenced by the creation of an authoritative Alexandrian list of the best old Greek authors to be recognized as ἐγκριθέντες, “sanctioned” or “selected” [as classical]). The list, created by Aristophanes of Byzantium (257–180 BCE) and his colleagues, came to be known as the “Alexandrian Canon,” which set boundaries for classical Greek writings and verified an acceptable collection of Greek intellectual heritage to be passed on to the next generation.⁵⁴⁴ This cultural heritage served as a repository of social wisdom rooted in law, prophecies, history, sayings, proverbs, parables, and a collection of advice for achieving a good life in the world.

Living as a minority within an Egyptian Hellenistic culture of παιδεία, Egyptian Judaism also shared in a traditional collection of education/enculturation texts linked with their own Jewish cultural identity. The existence of an education-textual apparatus in pre-Hellenistic Israel is well attested by non-biblical epigraphic evidence as well as by the Bible text itself. Datable archaeological evidence including graffiti, correspondence, tax receipts, and ancient educational texts point to education of a literate elite and professional scribal practices in early Israel.⁵⁴⁵ The Hebrew Bible, itself a complex collection of texts from widely different periods, testifies to a form of cultural reproduction which seems to have been intensely textual. This textuality is seen in

⁵⁴³Carr, *Tablet of the Heart*, 184–185.

⁵⁴⁴Carr, *Tablet of the Heart*, 186.

⁵⁴⁵Carr, *Tablet of the Heart*, 111–112.

frequent references to the use of legal and annalistic materials, letter writing,⁵⁴⁶ allusions to prior texts, and book-rolls,⁵⁴⁷ as well as narratives and prophecies that linked writings with revelation.⁵⁴⁸

These education/enculturation materials of Hellenistic, Egyptian, and/or Jewish origin served as important repositories of learning, tradition, and wisdom passed from one generation to the next. To linger, study, interpret, preserve, and reflect on the insights to be found in this reservoir of a people's experience, history, sense of meaning and revelation required an opportunity for σχολή and a disciplined παιδεία.⁵⁴⁹ Sirach will contend that a learned individual who surrenders his mind (ψυχή) to consider the law of the Most High, the wisdom of all the ancients, prophecies, the sayings of the famous, proverbs and parables does so in an opportunity of "leisure." Such a freedom lessens the need for πρᾶξις associated with the skilled trades and allows for a movement toward a deeper contemplation of the unchanging wisdom rooted in the Creator. At the same time, any wisdom bestowed on a learned and pious scholar will find its expression in a learned παιδεία and glory in the law of the Lord's covenant (Sir 39:8). Disciplined learning and an appropriate piety when empowered by the divine manifest as an embodied expression of wisdom.

⁵⁴⁶See, for example, Deut 24:1-4; Jer 32:10-14; Job 31:35-36; Neh 7:5, 9:38. Letter writing can be found at 2 Sam 11:14-15; 1 Kgs 21:8-11; 2 Kgs 5:5-7, 10:1, 5,6; Isa 37:14 [9-13]; Jer 29, Ezra 4:7-23, 7:11-26; Neh 6:1-9; Esth 1:21-22, 3:13-14, 9:20-23,29; 2 Chr 30:1, 32:17.

⁵⁴⁷Isa 34:4; Job 31:35; Jer 62:2, 32; Ezek 2:8-9; Ps 49:9; Zech 5:1. References to prior texts are also seen in superscriptions like Gen 5:1 and in many references to source materials (e.g. The Book of Jashar) in the historical books: Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18; 1 Kgs 11:41, 29, 15:7, 8:23, 10:34; 12:19 etc.

⁵⁴⁸Examples of such texts may be found in Exod 17:14; 24:3-4, 7,12; 32:15-16; 34:1, 27-29; Deut 4:13-13; 9:10-11; 10:1; 27:2-3, 8; 28:58, 61; 30:10; 31:9, 19-24; 23:6; 24:26-27; 1 Sam 10:25; 1 Kgs 2:32; 2 Kgs 14:6; 17:37; Ezra 2:3-4; Isa 30:8; Jer 30:2; Ezek 24:1-2; Hos 8:12; Hab 2:2; Neh 10:36; 13:1; 1 Chr 16:40; 2 Chr 23:18; 25:4.

⁵⁴⁹Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, an observant Jew, writing in the first century CE has only positive remarks concerning education. He used the term παιδεία and ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία frequently in his work and interchangeably with μεσὴ παιδεία which he identifies as a prerequisite of wisdom. Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, "De congressu eruditionis gratia," in *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, vol. 4, trans. C. D. Yonge; (London: Bohn, 1854), 1.13, 22, 24. He names the elements of μεσὴ παιδεία as "grammar, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, music, and all the other sorts of contemplation which proceed in accordance with reason." Philo, "De congressu eruditionis gratia," 1.11.

4.5.3 Socio-cultural Texture and Intertexture of Σχολή with the LXX

A consideration of the intertexture of σχολή with traditional Jewish materials preserved in the Septuagint introduces an interesting variation of thought. The noun σχολή occurs only three times in the LXX (Gen 33:14; Prov 28:19; Sir 38:24). In the Genesis text, it refers to a plodding pace of travel,

προελθέτω ὁ κύριός μου ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ παιδός ἐγὼ δὲ ἐνισχύσω ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ κατὰ σχολὴν τῆς πορεύσεως τῆς ἐναντίον μου καὶ κατὰ πόδα τῶν παιδαρίων ἕως τοῦ με ἐλθεῖν πρὸς τὸν κύριόν μου εἰς Σηίρ

Let my lord pass on before his servant, and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir. (Gen 33:14)

In Proverbs 28:19, σχολή is seen as “idle pursuits” set over against the hard work that produces a good harvest.

ὁ ἐργαζόμενος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γῆν πλησθήσεται ἄρτων ὁ δὲ διώκων σχολὴν πλησθήσεται πενίας

Anyone who tills the land will have plenty of bread, but one who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty. (Pro 28:19)

Verbal forms of σχολάζω occur in Exod 5:8, 17, and Ps 45:11. The Exodus usages portray a sense of “laziness” but Psalm 45:11 (NRSV 46:10) offers a positive insight in which the Hiphil imperative masculine plural form of שָׁחֹלְךָ is translated:

σχολάσατε καὶ γινῶτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ θεός ὑψωθήσομαι ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑψωθήσομαι ἐν τῇ γῇ

Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.

The noun form ἀσχολία (no leisure, work) occurs in Sir 40:1 and in 3 Macc 5:34. The verb form ἀσχολέω occurs only in Sir 39:1 with the meaning “engage” or “occupy” the mind with the intellectual work of understanding prophecies, not with manual labour.

In its very limited use by Jewish authors and translators, the various forms of σχολή seem to be associated with a sense of idleness or indolence more than with a leisured opportunity for learning and contemplation. The traditional Jewish attitude to

“idleness” and “sluggardly behaviour” is, as might be expected, negatively portrayed in Proverbs (10:4, 26; 19:15; 20:4, 10; 26:13-16; 31:27). Sirach advises “Do not be reckless in your speech, or sluggish and remiss in your deeds” (4:29). In a much harsher tone he declares:

The idler is like a filthy stone, and every one hisses at his disgrace.
The idler is like the filth of dunghills; anyone that picks it up will shake it off his hand. (Sir 22:1-2)

The Jewish conception of “leisure” is more frequently rooted in Israel’s theology of creation, especially as reflected in the description of God’s role in creating the universe. After creation was brought into being, after the abyss (מְרוֹהַת, ἄβυσσος) was fully ordered with the separation of light and darkness, day and night, water above and below, and sky and land and sea and animals and vegetation and seasons and festivals and humans, God saw and declared it to be very good (טוֹב מְעֹד). On the seventh day, God rested (καταπαύω) from his work, blessed that day and made it holy (Gen 2:3).⁵⁵⁰ Such a theological view of leisure seems to align with Sirach’s point in 39:5 where the “leisured” scholar enters a prayerful contemplation of the Lord who made him and the subsequent rooting of wisdom in God who bestows it at divine will.

4.5.4 Σχολή and an Opportunity for Civic and Social Leadership

In the classical tradition, work and leisure form a double barrier that excludes the working class from positions of civic and social leadership. First is the complete lack of free time. As the need for and volume of work sweeps over the masses, leisure wanes and the workers are deprived of the time necessary to achieve the good life. A citizen who is required to plough and harvest, to tend a shop, or to submit to the demands of an employer or a customer is limited in the ability to participate in the life of the πόλις. In

⁵⁵⁰Robert Dale Crabtree, “Leisure in Ancient Israel (Before 70 A.D)” (University Microfilms International: Texas A&M, 1982), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses; Crabtree, “Leisure in Ancient Israel.”

addition to the matter of demanding physical work, the dependency such labour created challenged the long-standing and powerful Greek value of “self-sufficiency.” Plato and Aristotle both speak well of yeoman farmers who were prominent in the Athenian tradition. Their highest regard, however, was reserved for the independent gentlemen farmers who could lay down their tools whenever they wished, having slaves and hired hands to continue the farm work. Yet, even here, Aristotle proceeds to exclude all tradesmen and farmers from citizenship in his ideal state,

in the most nobly constituted state, and the one that possesses men that are absolutely just, not merely just relatively to the principle that is the basis of the constitution, the citizens must not live a mechanic or a mercantile life for such a life is ignoble and inimical to virtue, nor yet must those who are to be citizens in the best state be tillers of the soil (for leisure is needed both for the development of virtue and for active participation in politics.)⁵⁵¹

Second, scaffolding any approach to Hellenistic civic and social hierarchy is the public honour/shame dynamic and the shifting concept of ἀρετή. For Sirach and his audience this would certainly have played a significant role in understanding the social relationship of those who worked in the banausic crafts and those who did not, those who participated in the βουλή or ἐκκλησία⁵⁵² or the administration of justice and those who did not, those who manifested παιδεία and those who did not, and it was certainly part of the final renown accorded the wise scribe.

In its most basic and literal sense, ἀρετή simply refers to “excellence” of any kind.⁵⁵³ Terrence Ball, asserts that a better, if more awkward, translation is “role-related specific excellence.” By that he means that “ἀρετή is that quality or set of qualities which

⁵⁵¹Aristotle, “Politics,” 1328b–1329a.

⁵⁵²The existence of both βουλή and ἐκκλησία in Egyptian Alexandria are well documented by Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*, ed. Joan Palevsky, Imprint in Classical Literature Hellenistic Culture and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 357, fn. 24.

⁵⁵³Henry Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, rev. Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), s.v. ἀρετή.

enables one to fill a particular role and to discharge its duties.”⁵⁵⁴ Ἀρετή was never used as an abstract moral quality but it was always embodied and applied as an ideal of superior character in action. It represented “the sum total of a man’s strength, courage and achievement.”⁵⁵⁵

The Greeks of the Archaic and Classical periods constructed their conception of an ideal person from their experiences of the city-state, the identity of whose members was strictly predicated on their social role as free citizens within a πόλις. If this condition was removed, the “city-state animal” (πολιτικὸν ζῷον) would lose his identity and with it, his share of the only kind of ἀρετή that really mattered.⁵⁵⁶ The norms and practices of Athenian ἀρετή operated within a “politics of reputation, whose normative poles are honour and shame.”⁵⁵⁷ In other words, it was not enough just to “be” manly without displaying “manliness” through repeated manly acts of courage which were acknowledged with public honour.

Ἀρετή applied only to those who could make themselves useful to the community in war and/or politics, that is, it addressed citizens of the upper middle classes. Understood in this way, ἀρετή could only be afforded by those who enjoyed personal and political freedom, social respectability and a sufficient wealth. Indeed,

In the absence of pay for public service in the Greek city-states, a minimum of εὐπορία was needed for full enjoyment of citizenship, since citizenship involved giving freely of one’s time and service to the community. This required ownership of property, not only in oligarchies, but also in democracies... The idea of government by ‘those endowed with the personal resources’—the εὐποροί—underlies all constitutions, especially oligarchies, but is a prerequisite for active citizenship also in other constitutions, even democracies: the difference is merely in the amount owned.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴Terence Ball, *Reappraising Political Theory: Revisionist Studies in the History of Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 74.

⁵⁵⁵Frederick A. G. Beck, *Greek Education, 450–350 B.C.* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964), 55.

⁵⁵⁶Aristotle, “Politics,” 1253a20; Marglit Finkelberg, “Virtue and Circumstances: On the City-State Concept of Arete,” *AJP* 123 (2002): 37.

⁵⁵⁷David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 183.

⁵⁵⁸Martin Ostwald, *Oligarchia: The Development of a Constitutional Form in Ancient Greece* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), 44–45.

Preoccupied with survival and making a living, the poor and working classes could never have afforded to embody or publicly demonstrate this type of ἀρετή. As Theognis knew well, “For your victim of penury can neither say nor do aught of any account, and his tongue, it is tied.”⁵⁵⁹ The pauper, by the very fact of his social degradation, was deprived of any function worth mentioning in the community to which he belonged.⁵⁶⁰

While the specific social expressions of ἀρετή changed through time, it remained fundamentally linked with knowledge. Παιδεία, the training of a boy to manhood, was closely linked with a development of ἀρετή. The training included: physical training, for which the Greeks developed the γυμνάσιον (gymnasium), mental training which included oratory, rhetoric, basic sciences, and spiritual training, which encompassed music and reflections on ἀρετή. The highest human potential is knowledge and all other human abilities are derived from that central capacity. If ἀρετή is knowledge and study, then the highest human knowledge is knowledge about knowledge itself. In this light, the theoretical study of human knowledge, which Aristotle called “contemplation,” is the highest human ability and happiness.⁵⁶¹ In the end, only those with σχολή held the opportunity and ability to achieve this social honour.

4.5.5 Conclusion on Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture Associated with Σχολή

A consideration of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of σχολή reveals the historical emergence of a complex social structure that separated society into those who laboured for a living and those who enjoyed freedom from that necessity. Such social divisions were rationalized in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle who explained the state as an organic whole in which particular groups performed particular functions necessary for the benefit of all. Those who enjoyed an opportunity for “leisure” also

⁵⁵⁹Theognis, “Elegaic Poems of Theognis” (1931), ll. 177-178.

⁵⁶⁰Marglit Finkelberg, “Virtue and Circumstances,” 41–42.

⁵⁶¹Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1140a.

enjoyed an opportunity for a liberal education (ἐλευθέριος παιδεία) in matters which were unrelated to any concern for earning a living. Free from the necessity of physical labour and the *πρᾶξις* involved in the processes of deliberate production, the learned scholar could commit his mind (*ψυχή*) to study and contemplation of intellectual and wisdom traditions which have their source in God's own creativity and revelation. They were also free to employ their new insights and *ἀρετή* in service to the community and in the arenas of life where wisdom was required for good leadership and administration. Ultimately it was the stillness of *σχολή* that permitted the surrendering of heart in prayerful awareness of the unchanging order of the universe, the Lord, the Creator, the source of all wisdom.

4.6 Socio-Cultural Texture and Intertexture Associated with Γραμματεὺς

The fourth essential element of Sirach's argument is the transfer to the scribe of the conclusions drawn from the syncritical comparison of the artisans with the one who gives his mind to study and his heart to seeking the Lord who made him. An explicit mention of *γραμματεὺς* is made only in Sir 38:24^a, in the proposition *σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς*. The balance of the discourse leaves any connection or application of the argument to the scribe to be inferred from the text. A consideration of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of *γραμματεὺς* in the long-term schematic knowledge of the Jewish–Egyptian–Hellenistic social milieu will highlight commonly held understandings and expectations of scribal culture. If the common expectations of scribal culture align with the wisdom-seeking activities and concerns of the “leisured” scholar, the aptness of the inferred connection between the learned scholar and the scribe will be validated and the argument will be complete.

4.6.1 Scribes in a Macro-Sociological Model

The figure and function of the *γραμματεὺς* was common across the ancient Near East and, indeed, Sirach's Egyptian audience would have had some quite vivid images of the roles, activities, and status associated with various professional scribes, their skills and

important social and administrative roles. In Egypt scribes commonly functioned as a sub-elite of intermediary civil servants responsible for the administrative operation of the Egyptian State and of its temples.⁵⁶² While the elite of high government officials were often themselves literate, scribes were delegated to perform the actual writing and administrative tasks.⁵⁶³ Sociologist Gerhard Lenski, exploring hierarchical social arrangements of power, privilege, and prestige in advanced agrarian societies, ranks “scribes” alongside professional soldiers, government bureaucrats, household servants, petty officials, and tax collectors as part of a “retainer class” making up about five percent of the population.⁵⁶⁴ As retainers, scribes possessed little independent power but instead relied upon the influence of the members of the ruling class who employed them.⁵⁶⁵ Scribes served the needs of the elite and, at the same time, they also functioned as social brokers communicating between the rulers and the masses being ruled. For example, some scribes may have functioned as tax collectors and, in that, they also served as buffers deflecting the resentment of the lower social strata toward those who felt themselves entitled to a portion of their economic surplus. As a reward for their service these scribes would have themselves received a greater share of the economic surplus and a higher social status than the masses being taxed.⁵⁶⁶

Recognizing his model as an etic and homomorphic oversimplification of a quite complex network of relationships, Lenski turned to a study of the many ways that humans actually ranked each other using family status, gender, ethnicity, education, occupation,

⁵⁶²Ragazzoli, “Weak Hands and Soft Mouth,” 157.

⁵⁶³John Baines, “Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society,” *Man* 18 (1983): 572–599.

⁵⁶⁴Gerhard Emmanuel Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*, McGraw-Hill Series in Sociology (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 243–248, 284.

⁵⁶⁵Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 243.

⁵⁶⁶Dennis C. Duling, *A Marginal Scribe: Studies of the Gospel of Matthew in Social-Scientific Perspective*, Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 7 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 262.

religion, and so on.⁵⁶⁷ He designated such multiple alternative social rankings as “class systems,” and undertook a careful study of the relative importance of each system (“weight”), the social distance between the highest and lowest strata (“span”), and the relation of each particular ranking to the whole social system (“shape”).⁵⁶⁸ Taken together, this broad range of status rankings became known as “the distributive system,” which Lenski used in his analysis of various social groups.

Applying this distributive system, scribes are ranked in occupation as “retainers” serving as political and economic officials or bureaucrats; in the educational class system they are the “literate elite” (but not of the highest level); in the family class system they are possibly members of a scribal family in which educated sons assumed their father’s position; and in the gender class system they are usually, but not always, male. When expanded to include the ethnic and religious class systems, scribes ranked higher than “retainers” in the social status of the macro-society since they were part of the religious establishment.⁵⁶⁹

Γραμματεὺς was both a title and a profession in which there was a wide variety of sub-types. Appealing to emic information derived from a various scholars, Dennis Duling identifies at least six different kinds of scribes in the ancient Near East:⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁷“Etic” and “emic” are terms introduced by Kenneth Pike in 1954 to describe two different types of data concerning human behaviour in the social and behavioral sciences. In particular, they are used in cultural anthropology to refer to different kinds of fieldwork done and the different viewpoints obtained.

An “etic” account is a description of a behaviour or customs by an observer in terms that can be applied to other cultures; that is, an etic account attempts to be “culturally neutral.” An “emic” account refers to a description of behaviour or a belief in terms meaningful (consciously or unconsciously) to the actor; that is, an emic account comes from a person within the culture. Almost anything from within a culture can provide an emic account. Marvin Harris, “History and Significance of the Emic/Etic Distinction,” *ARA* 5 (1976): 329–250. For Lenski, scribes are presented as a single category which is always and everywhere the same. While such a formulation served the needs of a heuristic and exploratory macro-model, it is, of course, an oversimplification which other sociologists challenge. See David A. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land is Mine* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1991) who omits “scribes” as a social class but recognizes a “retainer class.”

⁵⁶⁸Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 75, 78, 82..

⁵⁶⁹Duling, *A Marginal Scribe*, 70–71, 262, 270; Shaye J. A. Cohen, “The Political and Social History,” 47.

⁵⁷⁰Duling, *A Marginal Scribe*, 263–267.

- 1) Royal scribes and government bureaucrats served the ruling class directly in Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, Israel,⁵⁷¹ Greece (βασιλικός γραμματεύς), and Rome (*imperator scriba*).⁵⁷² Such scribes copied, memorized, and recited documents. They served as court officials and financial administrators.
- 2) Public and private secretaries could be employed (usually in the *agora*) to write correspondence for another.⁵⁷³
- 3) Village (κομογραμματεύς) and local (τοπογραμματεύς) scribes, who reported to royal scribes, were common in the Egyptian and Roman administrative systems.⁵⁷⁴ Responsible for the administration of the land and the processing of petitions, they served as record keepers and brokers between higher and lower officials.⁵⁷⁵
- 4) Scribes of voluntary associations have been identified from Judean inscriptions in Roman synagogues. These same inscriptions suggest that, while they could probably read and write, some scribes may not have been very highly educated.⁵⁷⁶
- 5) Scribes who taught elementary skills are mentioned in rabbinic literature.⁵⁷⁷
- 6) Ezra was described as a “priest and scribe of the law of the God of heaven” (Ezra 7:12). He was thus described as a learned Torah scholar (Ezra 7:6; 8:5) and a powerful Judean political leader (Ezra 7:20, 25).

⁵⁷¹David W. Baker, “Scribes as Transmitters of Tradition,” in *Faith, Tradition and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context*, ed. A. R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 66–67.

⁵⁷²Randolph E. Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1989), 15–18.

⁵⁷³Richards, *The Secretary*, 10–11.

⁵⁷⁴Arthur Verhoogt, *Menches, Komogrammateus of Kerkeosiris* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 53–69; *Regailing Officials in Polemic Egypt: A Dramatic Reading of Official Accounts from The Menches Papers* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

⁵⁷⁵Martin Goodman, “Texts, Scribes and Power in Roman Judea,” in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*; Alan. K. Bowman and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 59.

⁵⁷⁶Anthony J. Saldarini, “Scribes,” in *ABD* 5, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1016b.

⁵⁷⁷Duling, *A Marginal Scribe*, 265.

The debate surrounding these scribal types, especially that of Torah scholar, continues but, despite that, it remains a fact that in ancient societies some individuals did possess a certain power that was rooted in “literacy.”⁵⁷⁸ While social anthropologists warn against overstating the case, an elite or restricted group retained “power over texts” by determining the status of particular kinds of texts and who may have used them to legitimize their behaviour. This included restrictions on reading, writing, access to and possession or use of a sacred language.⁵⁷⁹ “Power exercised through texts” meant that texts legitimized deeds and spoken words through their (re)interpretation. As Martin Goodman expresses it “the two roles of scribes as writers and interpreters, were mutually reinforcing.”⁵⁸⁰ Texts served to unite communities and also to establish and entrench relations of dominance. Indeed, “gradations of literacy created and corresponded to the gradations of power.”⁵⁸¹ “In the administrative context of the Greek world and the Roman East, the title and position of γραμματεὺς described a function but that also possibly involved a social and political position with relative power and status.”⁵⁸² Such social position and status are seen in the scribal self-representations of Egyptian school texts.

4.6.2 Intertexture with Near Eastern School Texts

The Egyptian Middle Kingdom composition known as *The Satire of the Trades* (alternatively known as *The Maxims of Duauf* or *The Instruction of Dua-Khety*) celebrates the superiority of a scribal career in contrast with the hardships of other physical trades

⁵⁷⁸Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2–3. This is a collection of essays concerning the power of literacy in ancient cultures including Hellenistic Egypt.

⁵⁷⁹Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and Power*, 6.

⁵⁸⁰Goodman, “Texts, Scribes and Power,” 108.

⁵⁸¹Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and Power*, 13.

⁵⁸²Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and Power*, 10.

and professions.⁵⁸³ Until recently, Sirach's dependence on this single Egyptian text was relatively unchallenged. Broader scholarship, however, shows that *The Satire of the Trades*, while it certainly represents an early paradigmatic example of "scribal self-praise," is only part of a much richer and more extensive Near Eastern literary collection of school texts preparing young pupils to become professional scribes and hence for lives as civil servants.⁵⁸⁴ Since these school texts have been prepared by scribes, they offer an important perspective on how scribes saw and described themselves and their place within their Egyptian social context.⁵⁸⁵

Through a process of copying, scribing dictation, and memorizing texts students learned the basic crafts of reading and writing and the more advanced skills of grammar, orthography, vocabulary, and composition. It was also hoped that character building and moral discernment would be taught through the use of didactic texts that would be copied and learned by the developing scribes. The surface themes of school texts were: 1) the teacher's advice to students about diligence and avoidance of dissipation; 2) the superiority of the scribal life over against the lives of labourers and artisans; 3) the

⁵⁸³These are variant titles of an early Egyptian, possibly "satirical," work, which extols the life and skills of the scribe over other professions by emphasizing the labour intensive, dangerous, unpleasant and non-influential aspects of the skilled trades. A complete but corrupted version of *The Instruction of Dua-Khety* has been preserved in the *Sallier II Papyrus* from the Egyptian Nineteenth Dynasty. Miriam Lichtheim, "Dua-Khety or the Satire of the Trades," in *The Context of Scripture, Vol. I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. W. W. Hallo & K. L. Younger (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 122–125 and also in Miriam Lichtheim, *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, vol. 1 of *AEL* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 184–192.; Adolf Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians; Poems, Narratives, and Manuals of Instruction, from the Third and Second Millennia B.C.* (London: Methuen, 1927), 67–71. This comparison includes: stoneworkers, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, carpenters, jewelers, barbers, reed-cutters, potters, bricklayers, vintners, field-hands, weavers, arrow makers, couriers, furnace-tenders, sandal makers, washer men, fowlers, fishermen and tenant farmers. All this is followed by the caution, "But if you understand writings, then it will be better for you than the professions which I have set before you."

⁵⁸⁴Otto Rickenbacher has argued that the texts of Sirach and *The Satire of the Trades* are fundamentally different, but he acknowledges some minor dependence. See *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1973). During more recent times scholars such as James Crenshaw "The Book of Sirach," in *New Interpreter's Bible V*, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 813, and Roland Murphy *Tree of Life*, 165, have tended to measure more carefully the reliance of Sirach on the *Satire of the Trades*.

⁵⁸⁵Chloé Ragazzoli, "Weak Hands and Soft Mouths," *ZÄS* 137 (2010), 157.

grateful replies of students who praised their teachers and wished them happiness and prosperity.⁵⁸⁶ Similarities of structure comparing the vocation of the scribe with the work of various tradesmen, the influential relationship of the scribe in the halls of the “great” and the courts of “rulers,” the benefits and trust attached to the scribal role, and the establishment of a lasting reputation, suggests a significant level of oral-scribal intertexture among these ancient school texts themselves. At the same time, the texts show how scribes perceived themselves (self-image) and how they self-fashioned and taught a public image of scribal culture.

Reviving the work of Åke W. Sjöberg, Victor Hurowitz presents *In Praise of the Scribal Art* (henceforth *IPSA*), a short (seventeen line) Akkadian/Sumerian poem from the Mesopotamian *edubba* materials, as an example of early literature that extolled the craft of the scribe and encouraged students to be diligent in the difficult challenges of acquiring the requisite skills.⁵⁸⁷

A formal scribal education, though difficult, is seen to endow a successful student with opportunity, social superiority, and material security.

The scribal art is the mother of orators, the father of masters;
The scribal art is delightful, it never satiates you;
The scribal art is not (easily) learned (but) he who has learned it need no longer be
anxious about it;
Strive to (master) the scribal art, and it will enrich you;
Be industrious in the scribal art, and it will provide you with wealth and
abundance;⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶Rollston, “Satire of the Trades,” 131–32; Miriam Lichtheim, *The New Kingdom*, vol. II of *AEL* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 167.

⁵⁸⁷“*Edubba*-literature, as it is often called, is a typical genre of the traditional texts copied out in the Old Babylonian period, when young boys learning to be scribes had to master a complicated and progressively difficult corpus of sign-lists, lexical texts and literary compositions. Their school-work survived to be excavated, particularly at Nippur and Ur but also at Isin, Uruk and other sites. The tablets left behind by these young Babylonian apprentices are the principal source that modern scholars in Philadelphia and elsewhere have used over the past sixty years to reconstruct the canonical corpus of Sumerian literary texts, the first important body of literature anywhere in the world.” A. R. George, *In Search of the é.dub.ba.a: The Ancient Mesopotamian School in Literature and Reality*, 1, www.eprints.soas.ac.uk/1618/1/GeorgeEdubba.pdf; Å. W. Sjöberg, “The Old Babylonian *Edubba*,” in *Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen on His Seventieth Birthday, June 7, 1974*, ed. Stephen J. Lieberman (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 159–179. Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, “Literary Observations on ‘In Praise of the Scribal Art’,” *JANES* 27 (2000): 49–56.

Beyond the images of social mobility, prosperity, and wealth, *IPSA* (ll. 7-8) connects the scribe with Mesopotamian religious tradition by promising that “ceaseless work” (*dalāpu*: “the loss of sleep in learning”) will reveal the secret lore of Amanki and Enki.⁵⁸⁹

The scribal art is a house of richness, the secret of Amanki.
Work ceaselessly with the scribal art and it will reveal its secret to you.⁵⁹⁰

Here, the scribal arts are seen to be mysterious and the acquisition of skills is presented as an approach to “secret knowledge.” Rhetorically such expressions of exclusivity serve to maintain a clear distinction between those who enjoyed the benefit of a formal scribal education and those who did not.⁵⁹¹ Language and literacy itself must have seemed magical and powerful in non-literate cultures.⁵⁹²

Though corrupted, *IPSA* ll. 14-17 show enough detail to suggest that the scribe assumes various tasks essential to the establishment, maintenance, and supervision of civil order. Knowledge of sacred languages, the establishment of official markers, the settling of accounts, preserving of scribal traditions, and the control of statutory labour (*corvée*) are all aspects of the scribal role(s) associated with the concerns of the royal palace.

To have superior knowledge in Sumerian ... [to learn] Emesal,
To write a stele, to draw a field, to settle accounts [...] ... palace ...
May the scribe be its [scribal arts] servant, he calls for the *corvée* basket, [...] ⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁸*In Praise of the Scribal Art*, lines 1-5, translated by Å.Sjöberg in Hurowitz, “Literary Observations,” 56.

⁵⁸⁹Acknowledging the vast separation in distance, time, and language, Hurowitz suggests that the benefits attached to mastering this scribal art resemble the rewards which the Book of Proverbs attached to the acquisition of wisdom (Proverbs 3:13-16; 8:18-19, 21). Hurowitz, “Literary Observations,” 50.

⁵⁹⁰Hurowitz, “Literary Observations,” ll. 7–8, p. 56.

⁵⁹¹Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 55.

⁵⁹²Hutto, “Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric,” 218–226. Hutto speculates on the power of language and literacy in ancient Egyptian culture.

⁵⁹³Hurowitz, “Literary Observations,” ll. 14-17, p. 56.

These brief verses place the Mesopotamian scribe among the social elite, the educated *literati*, the orators and the masters of his time, charged with preserving traditions and with managing government and civil institutions in the service of good order and cultural continuity.⁵⁹⁴

In his study of Egyptian texts surviving from the Eighteenth to Twentieth Dynasties, Chris Rollston offers examples of school materials highlighting the advantages and benefits that will come to those students who persist in the difficulties of scribal training.⁵⁹⁵ Egyptian school texts abound with hyperbolic images of prestige, influence, power, abundance, and a lasting reputation that will attach to the career of a successful scribe. *Papyrus Lansing*, for example, declares that the scribe will make friends “with those greater than he ... you will be advanced by your superiors. You will be sent on a mission ... you will become a worthy official.”⁵⁹⁶ It encourages persistence in scribal training so that “you become one whom the king trusts; to make you gain entrance to treasury and granary ... to make you issue the offerings on feast days ... you have a powerful office, given to you by the king.”⁵⁹⁷

After diligently completing scribal studies the reward will be a quick ascendance to a place of importance and influence:

Barely grown, still a child, he is greeted, sent on errands,
hardly returned he wears a gown.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁴Hurowitz, “Literary Observations,” 50–51, 56.

⁵⁹⁵These dynasties are identified as the New Kingdom or the Ramesside Period (approx. 1550–1070 BCE). Instructional and didactic materials survive from this time and may represent a part of a scribal training syllabus. R.B. Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt: A Dark Side to Perfection* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002), 110, 235. Christopher A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 85. The earliest comprehensive study of the relationship between *Sirach* and *The Satire of the Trades* was undertaken by P. Humbert, *Recherches sur les sources égyptiennes de la littérature sapientiale d’Israël, par Paul Humbert*, Mémoires de l’Université de Neuchâtel (Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l’Université, 1929).

⁵⁹⁶*Papyrus Lansing* contains a school book devoted to the theme “Be a Scribe.” Miriam Lichtheim, *The New Kingdom, AEL*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971–1980), 168.

⁵⁹⁷Lichtheim, *The New Kingdom*, 171.

⁵⁹⁸Lichtheim, *The New Kingdom*, 171.

Scribes of high accomplishment will establish reputations that will persist even beyond death. They will be remembered and celebrated in their work:

A man decays, his corpse is dust, all his kin have perished;
but a book makes him remembered [...]
Better is a book than a well-built house,
than tomb-chapels in the west.⁵⁹⁹

A papyrus from Thebes, dating from 1300 BCE states that scribes are praised because “theirs is an everlasting name; their books of wisdom are pyramids ... More effective is a book than a decorated tombstone ... It is writing that makes a scribe remembered in the mouth of a reciter.”⁶⁰⁰

The Egyptian school texts consistently emphasize a scribe’s disengagement from manual labour and freedom from physical work as among the benefits of scribal life. *The Satire of the Trades* asserts, “I have seen many beatings—set your heart on books! I watched those seized for labor—there’s nothing better than books! It’s like a boat on water.”⁶⁰¹

Papyrus Lansing recommends, “Set your sight on being a scribe ... you will not be like a hired ox.”⁶⁰²

Papyrus Sallier I reminds a scribal student who has withdrawn from school that the life of a farmer is difficult and uncertain while a scribe is in control of his own and others’ situations:

Do you not recall the condition of the cultivator faced with the registration of the harvest-tax after the worm has carried off half of the corn and the hippopotamus has eaten up the rest? The mice abound in the fields, the locust descends, the cattle devour. The sparrows bring want upon the cultivator. The remainder that is

⁵⁹⁹ “The Satire of the Trades,” in Miriam Lichtheim, *AEL, Volume 1: The Old and Middle Kingdom* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 185.

⁶⁰⁰ Pritchard, *ANET*, 431.

⁶⁰¹ The verso of Papyrus Chester Beatty IV contains school texts which include comments on the immortality of books and authors. Lichtheim, *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 185.

⁶⁰² *Papyrus Lansing*, Lichtheim, *AEL*, vol. 2, 171.

on the threshing-platform is almost at an end and is for the thieves...but a scribe, he is the head of everybody's work.⁶⁰³

Papyrus Anastasi II recommends:

Be a scribe. It saves you from toil and protects you from all manner of work.
It spares you bearing hoe and mattock, so that you do not carry a basket.
It sunders you from plying oar and spares you torment,
as you are under many lords and numerous masters.⁶⁰⁴

The Egyptian comparisons of the scribal life with the difficulties of skilled workers are often presented as a disparagement or denigration of the trades immediately followed by exaggerations of the advantages of the scribal life. *The Satire of the Trades*, for example, comments:

I do not see a sculptor as an envoy,
Nor is a goldsmith ever sent;
But I have seen a smith at work
At the opening of his furnace;
With fingers like claws of a crocodile
He stinks more than fish roe...

The potter is under the soil,
Though, as yet among the living;
He grubs in the mud more than a pig,
In order to fire his pots...

The gardener carries a yoke,
His shoulders are bent as with age;
There is a swelling on his neck
And it festers.⁶⁰⁵

Contrasted with the wretchedness of these tradesmen is the alternative image of the comfortable, autonomous scribal life:

See, there's no profession without a boss,
Except for a scribe:
He is the boss.
Hence if you know writing,
It will do better for you than those professions I've set before you,
Each more wretched than the other...
The day in school will profit you,
Its works are forever.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³Ricardo A. Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, Brown Egyptological Studies (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 315–316.

⁶⁰⁴Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, 51.

⁶⁰⁵Lichtheim, *Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 186–187.

Papyrus Lansing encourages an enthusiastic engagement in scribal study while it reminds the students of the life of peasants:

If you have any sense, be a scribe. If you have learned about the peasant, you will not be able to be one. Take note of it! ... I instruct you to make you sound; to make you hold the palette freely. To make you become one whom the king trusts.⁶⁰⁷

Some scholars have maintained that these comparisons were intended as realistic portrayals of the harsh life in the trades and a glimpse of “scribal” self-importance.⁶⁰⁸ Others see the materials to be humorous exaggerations with a lightness of tone which invited laughter and mild contempt. Miriam Lichtheim argues that the statements in *The Satire of the Trades* are so fundamentally different from all of the other statements made in Egyptian literature concerning the accomplishments of labour that “they are most easily understood as hyperbolic and humorous scribal propaganda.”⁶⁰⁹ Leonard Lesko points out that this type of exaggerated characterization and hyperbolic comparison, when found in school texts, was not meant to be taken literally but is better understood as the work of a teacher using a “satiric wink” or “an element of ridicule” to motivate stubborn youth to continue the demanding task of acquiring scribal skills.⁶¹⁰

The Egyptian school texts, whatever their exact purpose may have been, are constructed as satirical syncrisis which use the same topics of comparison as set out in the lists offered by much later progymnastic exercises. Theon, for example, sets out his topics for an effective syncrisis including: 1) external goods (good birth, city, tribe,

⁶⁰⁶Lichtheim, *Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 189–190.

⁶⁰⁷Lichtheim, *Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 168–173.

⁶⁰⁸Wolfgang Helck, *Die Lehre des Dua-Khetj: Textzusammenstellung von Wolfgang Helck*, Kleine Ägyptische Texte (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970), 162. Chloé Ragazzoli suggests that this is a effort to distinguish scribal culture and skills from the illiterate who strain their limbs and rely on physical strength in direct contact with raw materials. Scribes work with their hands and fingers but equipped with a writing prosthesis and the finesse of a *savior-faire*. “Weak Hands and Soft Mouth,” 163.

⁶⁰⁹Lichtheim, *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 184.

⁶¹⁰Leonard Lesko, “Some Comments on Ancient Egyptian Literacy and Literati,” in *Studies Presented to Miriam Lichtheim, Vol. 1*, ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 659, 661.

constitution, ancestors and other relatives, education, friendships, reputation, official positions, wealth, good children, and a good death); 2) bodily goods; and 3) goods of mind (virtues) and actions relating to those virtues.⁶¹¹ In the texts and examples presented above, it is easy to find the topics of education, associations, reputation, official positions, wealth, bodily goods (physical labour, deformity, tiredness, and living conditions of the workers). Goods of mind are easily associated with an education and circumspect life skills. The *Satire of the Trades*, for example, compares the lives of various skilled workers (carpenter, jewel-maker, barber, reed-cutter, potter, mason, gardener, farmer, weaver, arrow-maker, courier, stoker, cobbler, washerman, bird-catcher, fisherman) with the advantages of being a scribe. Each trade is portrayed as physically demanding, exhausting, sometimes painful, demanding long hours, and with rewards supporting little more than a basic subsistence. The scribe, on the other hand, is presented as one associating with magistrates and the elite, free from necessary physical labour and its demands, not lacking material rewards, influential, able to read and write, entrusted with roles of responsibility, holding a respected name, and favoured by the gods Renenet and Meshkhenet with bounty and good children.⁶¹² The ability to reason, pursue learning and probe ideas is less evident and without the same persuasive profile occupied by physical and social benefits.

By appealing to these ready-made and well-known syncrisis comparing the life of a scribe with the lives of artisans, Sirach appeals to a deeply rooted, popular base for his consideration of scribal wisdom. Sirach's own syncrisis, as will be detailed later, is constructed using the same unchallenged encomiastic topics that appear in the school texts: official positions of responsibility, an excellent reputation, relationships with

⁶¹¹Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, "The Encomiastic Topics of Syncrisis as the Key to the Structure and Argument of Hebrews," *NTS* 57 (2011): 422.

⁶¹²Renenet is the Egyptian goddess of bounty and fortune. Meshkhenet oversees births. See Miriam Lichtheim, *AEL*, vol. 1, 192, n.20.

people of high standing, goods of the mind (knowledge, interpretive skills, counsel, understanding, moral discernment, contemplation and wisdom), a sound body, and possibly, a good (satisfied) death. While Sirach does not show even the slightest disparagement of the craft workers or their labours, the text of Sir 38:25-31 strongly emphasizes the manual and material nature of their work. After acknowledging the important contributions of the skilled workers to the establishment of human communities (Sir 38:32), a list of social and political limits for those who give their hearts to the trades (Sir 38:33-34) sets a clear boundary for the domain-specific wisdom of the workers who support the fabric of the created world but limit their focus to their individual expertise. In contrast with the skilled workers, the one who surrenders his mind (ψυχή)⁶¹³ to study and thinking (Sir 39:1-4), like the scribes of the school texts, is exempted from physical work. Unlike the Egyptian syncretises, however, Sirach places a much greater emphasis on the goods of mind (e.g. considering, seeking out, interpreting, pondering, piety, prayer) than on the external goods and reputation that seem so dominant in the earlier comparisons. Connections with social status and material wealth that are repeatedly evident in the earlier traditions are absent from Sirach's syncretism. Thus, while the Egyptian school texts provide a well-known and effective starting point for a syncretical comparison of skilled workers with scribes, Sirach will take that comparison in a new direction seeking to elaborate an even higher level of wisdom which he associates with a faithful Jewish scribe.

4.6.3 The “Social Superiority” of the Scribal Profession

A full formal education in ancient societies was the prerogative of the upper classes. The prestige and advantages that attached to scribal education are easily noted in ancient

⁶¹³The giving over of ψυχή suggests an immaterial essence of self (soul) which does not dissolve with the body at death. The centre of emotions, desires and affections.

rhetoric and royal ideologies, which simply assumed that kings must have excelled in various branches of scholarship. King Šulgi, for example, boasts:

As a youth, I studied the scribal art in school, from the tablets of Sumer and Akkad. No noble could write a tablet like I did, in the place where people try to master the scribal art. Adding, subtracting, counting and accounting: I completed the whole curriculum. The fair Nanibgal, that is: Nishaba, endowed me generously with wisdom and intelligence, I am a dexterous scribe whom nothing impedes.⁶¹⁴

Assurbanipal praises himself declaring:

I have learned the hidden secret of the complete scribal art. With my own eyes I have seen the tablets of heaven and earth. I have discussed in the assembly of the scholars. I have offered interpretations of “If the liver is a mirror of heaven” [a commentary appended to the extispicy series *bārûtu*] with the skilled diviners. I have explained complicated divisions that had no obvious solution. I have read bilingual compositions whose Sumerian is obscure and whose Akkadian is difficult to decipher. I have examined stone inscriptions from before the Flood which are extremely obscure.⁶¹⁵

The kings’ insistence on their achievement of excellent scholarship signals that formal education functioned as a marker of high social distinction. Only the social elite—the royal family, high level court officials, landowners and wealthy businessmen—could possibly afford the tuition fees associated with a full scribal education. Simply stated, the educational system of ancient Mesopotamia favoured a small upper class of educated men who were raised to consider themselves to be intellectually superior to other social groups.

In Egypt, as in Mesopotamia, literacy was a mark of the elite and it carried an immense prestige. Many pharaohs claimed the ability to write and several were even buried with writing implements.⁶¹⁶ What is known about education in Egypt suggests that it was intensely focused on the mastery, reproduction, and memorization of specific key texts. Egyptologist Jan Assmann identifies these materials as “cultural text,” by

⁶¹⁴Åke W. Sjöberg, “The Old Babylonian Eduba,” 172–173. Šulgi Hymn B, ll.13-20.

⁶¹⁵Cited by Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 54.

⁶¹⁶H.W.F. Saggs, *Civilization Before Greece and Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 98–99; John Baines and Christopher Eyre, “Four Notes on Literacy,” *GM* 61 (1983): 79–81.

which he means that the texts that were copied and memorized by students as they were trained in scribal skills also served to enculturate them into an elite class of tradents passing on these same texts. Taking such “cultural texts” into their hearts, prospective students were inducted into the values and concerns of the ruling class and, thereby, perpetuated a prevailing social structure in their own lives and teaching. This education/enculturation process was regarded as the final step in the formation of a complete human being. Assman expresses it in modern terms when he says, “the biological *hardware* says virtually nothing, only cultural *software* makes the person into a human.”⁶¹⁷

The cultivation of appropriate social protocols, attitudes, and a facility with various literary forms, ranging from instructional wisdom and historical collections of legal rulings and omens to royal hymns, and astrological knowledge was a central part of scribal training. Such skills prepared prospective scribes to take their places in service of the ruling elite, not just as experts in traditional “wisdom-teaching,” but also as trained experts in many different dimensions of a broad cultural, intellectual, and social repertoire.⁶¹⁸ While a few scribes may have been privately funded (e.g. teachers), as a class they remained largely a state-sponsored tool of and for social and political control.⁶¹⁹

In Egyptian-Hellenistic culture, the preparation for life among the elite involved an immersion in literacy skills, local traditions, juridical matters, and various intellectual

⁶¹⁷Jan Assmann, “Kulturelle und literarische Texte,” in *Ancient Egyptian History, Literature and Forms*, ed. A. Loprieno, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 69–70.

⁶¹⁸Richard A. Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 10.

⁶¹⁹“Literacy in Egypt was connected almost exclusively with government service, acquired in government schools and leading to what was considered a desirable government position. Possibly because literacy was connected with social status in a very conservative society, and possibly also because the Egyptian writing system was so extremely complicated, literacy must have seemed unimaginable to the average Egyptian (though common people did make use of scribes to send letters). Probably in part for these reasons, Egyptians regarded writing as something connected with magic and special knowledge (an idea that has been expressed in other cultures as well).” Hutto, “Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric,” 225.

pursuits, which were firmly based on an enculturation process of classical *παιδεία*. Such an education brought important social and political advantages to those who successfully completed the process. Proud of their learning accomplishments, scribes celebrated them openly as may be seen in the school texts, but a full scribal education required much focus and a long, disciplined period of training. The exemption from manual labour for the scribes may have seemed a privilege that belonged to the ruling class, especially to the masses engaged in the harsh reality of physical labour, but the surviving school texts also offer a quite clear image of the struggle and discipline required to gain scribal proficiency.⁶²⁰ The advantages of the scribal life easily came to be interpreted as a social superiority. That was the image and self-understanding intended by the scribes who authored these syncrisis.⁶²¹

4.6.4 Scribes, Knowledge, and the Transmission of Traditions

When speaking of the training of Mesopotamian scribes, Francesca Rochberg-Halton argued that “the scribal curriculum can ... be seen in the service of cultural continuity”⁶²² because it preserved textual materials over time. Beyond that, scribal education also played a role in the geographic dissemination of materials and ideas. For example, when Akkadian became the *lingua franca* of the Near East, before it was replaced by Aramaic, expert scribes were required to read and write in this medium of international

⁶²⁰Baker, “Transmitters of Tradition,” 68.

⁶²¹See the work of Chloé Ragazzoli “Weak Hands and Soft Mouth,” *ZÄS* 137 (2010), 157–170. Ragazzoli saw Egyptian scribes as a “sub-elite of intermediary civil servants who were responsible for the administrative functioning of the Egyptian State and of its temples.” The high elite of the state were also literate but they delegated actual writing and administrative tasks to scribes. Ragazzoli proposes that by analyzing the texts it is possible to identify the parts of their writings which fulfilled the function of scribes and the parts which reflect their own thoughts and imagination. In other words, she was interested in getting at what the scribes themselves thought they were doing and how they understood their social and cultural roles. In that sense, these are identity texts in which scribes advance a self-fashioned self-image. Such images present a perceived superiority based in skills and social roles. I propose that this same dynamic underlies Sirach’s construction of scribal wisdom in the discourse of Sirach 38:24–39:11..

⁶²²Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Canonicity and Cuneiform Texts,” *JCS* 36 (1984): 133.

exchange.⁶²³ Scribal schools were established in Babylonia and Assyria to train personnel for domestic needs, but some of the scribes who trained in these schools may have moved on for further training in religious, business, or diplomatic settings. Thus, scribes trained in one area may have moved on to other areas. Evidence of such movement may be found in the use of common conventions and techniques, the presence of “exercise tablets” using international signs and words, explanatory glosses in texts and common training syllabi.⁶²⁴

An examination of the intellectual, sapiential, and juridical traditions identified as the concerns of the one devoting his mind to study (Sir 39:1-4) will highlight the fact that these are the same conventional concerns of well-trained and devoted scribes. The socio-cultural and intertextual considerations of this section will draw the attention of a modern audience to what must have been very obvious to the intended audience of this discourse. By associating the study of law, history, prophecy and the stories of the wise with the one who surrenders his mind to seeking a superior wisdom, Sirach is clearly emphasizing the importance of such intellectual and pious pursuits for those who wish to identify with the “superior” life of a scribe. In a culture where scribal roles have been diversified and scattered over a broad range of different administrative activities and civic functions, the association of scribal tasks with a surrender of mind to learning and a surrender of heart to the Creator seeks to focus or refocus the scribe on a higher order wisdom which embraces an active pursuit of the wisdom of creation and a close attention to the wisdom of revelation.

4.6.4.1 Scribes and “The Law of the Most High”. Law has existed from the beginning of organized human society but it was not until after the advent of writing that lawmaking could leave any durable documentary traces.⁶²⁵ Here the skills of scribes in

⁶²³A good example of this can be found in the Tell el-Amarna tablets from fourteenth century BCE Egypt, which were written in Akkadian and included correspondence between Egypt and city-states of the western Levant, which did not use Akkadian as their native language. William L. Moran, *The Amarna*

writing and reciting would have been essential. While writing was widely used to document legal acts, recitation played the major role in ancient Near Eastern legal tradition. Speech acts, ceremonies, and solemn oaths were the common means used to create legal obligations. The thousands of “contractual” records which have been preserved are not themselves the contracts; they are rather the protocols and evidence of the oral transactions spoken before witnesses who, in the event of a dispute, could personally testify concerning the agreements. Similarly, the situation with legislation and administrative orders must also be understood in terms of both writing and orality. A letter from a king giving an order may originally have been an oral statement dictated to a scribe, to be repeated to a recipient by another scribe.⁶²⁶

Scribal reading, recitation, and interpretation also included religious laws, which were often synonymous with civil laws. In Mesopotamia, for example, scribes, initiated into the secrets of the gods, became interpreters and administrators of law, learning the sacred languages in which the law was first recorded, writing steles to set geographic and legal boundaries, settling accounts, and overseeing statutory labour. The scribe was a recorder, maintainer, and establisher of order.⁶²⁷

The important place of the scribe in the Egyptian legal tradition is especially well noted, even from the period of the New Kingdom (sixteenth to the eleventh century BCE). The extensive archives discovered at Deir el-Medina offer a rich insight into the role and importance of the scribe in the local *qenbet* (a type of municipal council), composed of the most esteemed citizens of the community. The *qenbet* was responsible for directing the progress of local affairs and for keeping order, which included power

Letters, ed. and trans. William L. Moran (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

⁶²⁴Baker, “Transmitters of Tradition,” 71.

⁶²⁵Examples of early historical records of Near Eastern law have been listed by Raymond Westbrook and Gary Beckman, “A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law” in *Handbook of Oriental Studies*, Section One, The Near and Middle East (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 5–12.

⁶²⁶Westbrook and Beckman, *Ancient Near Eastern Law*, 12–13.

⁶²⁷Hurowitz, “Literary Observations,” 56, ll. 14–17.

over a local bench of judges. Professional scribes were appointed to attend to the matters of local administration. In both wages and social rank these scribes were second only to the chief workmen in a given area. The administrative scribe, often known by the title “king’s scribe,” was accountable only to the Egyptian vizier himself.⁶²⁸ Together with the chief workmen, the scribe was responsible for maintaining local order and managing any possible disruptions such as strikes. Taken together, the Deir el-Medina documents offer an extensive image of a scribe who appears to have been such a key administrative figure that, in citing laws of the community, his name alone sufficed as reference for legal precedents and for records of personal matters or of business decisions among the local inhabitants.⁶²⁹

Records of the Egyptian court proceedings of the New Kingdom and then later Ptolemaic documents show references to divine law and judgement.⁶³⁰ The notion of *ma’at* referred to cosmic and social order, truth, and justice in which the gods dispense blessings on the obedient and curses on the trespassers.⁶³¹ A number of early Egyptian documents refer to “the Tribunal of the Great God” in which judgements are made that surpass the jurisdiction of the local courts.⁶³² The witness, recitation, and interpretation of scribes was key in each of these situations. Formularies for document writing as well as collections of laws demonstrate a standardization in both scribal training and in administrative practice.⁶³³

⁶²⁸Jaroslav Černý, *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period*, Bibliothèque d’études (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2001), 199–224.

⁶²⁹Other more recent documentation describes the role of scribes in managing local business. See Verhoogt, “Menches,” 107–148, 177–180.

⁶³⁰Safik Allam, “Egyptian Law Courts in Pharonic and Hellenistic Times,” *JEA* 77 (1991): 113; Allam, *Hieratische Ostraca und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, no. 21.

⁶³¹Assmann, “When Justice Fails,” 151.

⁶³²Citing the textual work of E. Edel, Assmann, “When Justice Fails,” 152.

⁶³³Eyre, *The Use of Documents*, 3. For examples see J. R. Rea, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XLVI* (London: Egyptian Exploration Society, 1978), 30–38; C. J. Martin, “How to Write a Demotic Legal Document: P. BM EA 10648,” in *Actes du IXe Congrès international des études démotiques: Paris, 31 août – 3 septembre 2005*, ed. Ghislaine Widmer and Didier Devauchelle (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2009), 195–222.

The scribes of Israel also played a role in interpreting and administering civil law (Esth 1:19, 8:9-14; Dan 6:8) but the biblical texts place a greater emphasis on the recitation and interpretation of the “law of Moses” by which all, even the king’s house, could be judged. The ordinary exponents of the Mosaic Law were the priests.

Some early Israelite scribes, courageous and highly respected officials at court, maintained close connections with temple personnel. A few devoted themselves to the task of supporting the voice of prophetic radicals even to the point of becoming their means of communication. At the time of King Josiah, for example, the royal scribe Shaphan was the bearer and reader (2 Kgs 22:8-10) of the “newly found” book of the Law which he received from the high priest Hilkiah. Shaphan’s office and his sons (Ahikam, Elasha, Gemariah) and grandson (Micaiah) continued their support of Jeremiah the prophet (Jer 26:24; 29:3; 39:14; 40:6, 36:11-14) and his scribe Baruch (Jer 36:26-22). For the prophet Jeremiah, knowing the law was never enough, not even for the most erudite scholar, rather it had to be embodied in an full orthopraxis. Thus Jeremiah will question the wise:

How can you say, “We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us,” when, in fact, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie? The wise shall be put to shame, they shall be dismayed and taken; since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what wisdom is in them? (Jer 8:8-9)

Following the exile, copies of the Law were scribed and taught by Ezra and the Levites.⁶³⁴ The Book of Chronicles rarely identifies the Levites as scribes (1 Chr 24:6; 2 Chr 34:13), but the tasks with which they were invested could be completed only by those with a proper scribal training.⁶³⁵ Extra-biblical texts from the Hellenistic period show the Levites to be among the literate elite of Second Temple period with a responsibility for the transmission of sacred writings especially the Torah.⁶³⁶ The place of scribal

⁶³⁴The Book of Deuteronomy provides a model of scribal culture and its activities in “making” the “Book of the Torah.” Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 109–172.

⁶³⁵Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 90.

⁶³⁶Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 94. The *Levi Document*, *Jubilees*’ and the *Testament of Qahat* show that

culture in the preservation, recitation, interpretation and teaching of law in general and the “law of the Most High” in particular, would be hard to overestimate in any of the Near Eastern cultures.

Scribes were prepared for their juridical and interpretive activities in various ways according to time and place. That some scribes were involved with the formal study of law may be seen in the literary-rhetorical curriculum developed by the Greeks of the Hellenistic period, which included, as its culminating exercise, a full deliberative or forensic declamation and oration on an imaginary theme in which the speaker impersonated a specific character.⁶³⁷ To prepare for this declamation students were trained in a series of preliminary exercises that systematically equipped them with the necessary infrastructure of skills to support the higher-level demands. The final two of these *progymnasmata* were *thesis* and what Aphthonius would later call, introduction of a law (νόμου εισφορά).⁶³⁸ In the latter according to Aphthonius 14.1-2, students were required to support or attack a proposed or already existing law. In this way scribes were trained with the forensic rhetorical skill and judgement to make the necessary arguments in their future occupational roles.

4.6.4.2 *Scribes and “the wisdom of the ancients”*. The “wisdom of the ancients” was separated from the common people by time and language. Access to the wisdom of ancient culture for a largely illiterate population was through the recitations of scribes and their ability to read and interpret texts written by other scribes, who had collected them, often in a language different from that in common public use. The scribal skills of memory, reading, reciting, and interpreting ancient “sacred” languages were key in approaching the reserves of ancient wisdom. In Mesopotamia, knowledge of Akkadian,

the Levites continued the responsibility for teaching Torah into the Hellenistic period. During the Roman period the Levites disappear from written sources.

⁶³⁷Robert J. Penella, “The Progymnasmata in Imperial Greek Education,” *CW* 105 (2011): 77–78.

⁶³⁸Aphthonius, “Preliminary Exercises” in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 124; Penella, “The Progymnasmata,” 81-82.

Sumerian, and Emesal were essential. In Egypt, the sacred scripts were hieroglyphic and hieratic—reserved as “vessels” protecting spiritual ideas. Judaism looked to a knowledge of Hebrew in addition to the Aramaic that was used in everyday life. As cultures evolved, and new spoken languages and ancient meanings evolved, scribes functioned as skilled bridges of forgotten languages and important interpretations of the “wisdom of the ancients.”⁶³⁹

4.6.4.3 *Scribes “concerned with prophecies”*. Prophets were traditionally men and women of the spoken word who delivered their messages to audiences who were mostly incapable of reading the written word. While it may be shown that some prophets did write on occasion, most did not.⁶⁴⁰ The survival of oracles depended on the work of scribes who committed separate oracles to writing and then organized them into collections. The prophets and seers who gave their names to the collections wrote neither the books nor the oracles which they contain. The prophetic texts are the work of scribes and are a blend of collected oracles, narratives about the prophets, creative citation, and the appropriation of oracles from anonymous sources.⁶⁴¹ The *Mari Prophecies*, the *Archive of Kititum*, the *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, and the *Prophecy of Jeremiah* are all products of the same process involving scribes and their skills.

In Israel, the relationship between scribes and prophetic “schools” preserving and developing the texts of (Second) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Joel, and Amos is now well accepted.⁶⁴² Baruch’s role as a scribe, for example, is seen to be an extension of Jeremiah’s own prophetic activity: Jeremiah is instructed to write a prophecy on a scroll (36:2, 28) but it is, in fact, Baruch who writes Jeremiah’s dictation (36:4, 32); it is

⁶³⁹John F.A. Sawyer, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts*, Religion in the First Christian Centuries (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁶⁴⁰Hab 2:2; Isa 8:1; Jer 29:1; Lachish Letter 3, lines 20-23 provide four examples of scribes who wrote for the purpose of communication.

⁶⁴¹Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 203.

⁶⁴²Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 44.

Baruch who reads the scroll to the people in the house of the Lord and to palace officials (36:5, 15) and Baruch, who along with Jeremiah, is liable to be arrested and punished for the prophetic utterances (36:26).

At another level, the survival of the text of Jeremiah's prophecy as we have it was the product of scribal activities. The colophons of the surviving versions of Jeremiah attest that the preservation of the text, including some significant editing and several interpretive additions, are to be attributed to the scribal activities of Baruch and his brother Seraiah.⁶⁴³

The prophecy of Joel demonstrates similar circumstances in which prophecies are almost midrashic prophetic compositions referencing other prophetic materials. This represents a "learned prophecy" that takes up a received eschatological message and, with the help of sapiential training, gives it a new expression in relation to the expectation of Yahweh's future.⁶⁴⁴ Such scribal activity related to prophecy at a learned level is not clearly distinguishable from the work of the prophet himself. In this sense, the scribes involved with preserving the text are themselves "prophetic."⁶⁴⁵

4.6.4.4 Scribes and sayings, parables, and proverbs. In classical rhetorical training, progymnasmata were formally structured exercises used to train students through the copying, imitating and reciting of texts until the skills and materials had been mastered. Among the standard progymnastic exercises was the use of *χρεία*, a form traditionally used for anecdotes and sayings attributed to famous persons.⁶⁴⁶ In the

⁶⁴³See Jer 45 in the LXX text and 51:59-64 in the MT version.

⁶⁴⁴Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. S. Dean McBride, trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, and Charles A. Muenchow (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 11–12.

⁶⁴⁵Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 46.

⁶⁴⁶*Χρεία* is one of fourteen preliminary exercises in the study of rhetoric as set out by Aelius Theon, (Pseudo-) Hermogines, Aphthonius and Nicolaus the Sophist. George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 15–23. *Χρεία* ("useful", "need", "what should be supplied") is a pithy saying introduced by a brief description of a situation in which it was purportedly spoken by a well-known person. Sometimes it takes the form of an anecdote that reports either a saying, an edifying action, or both. Unlike a maxim, it was attributed to a

exercise, students were expected to elaborate and defend the saying or action, sometimes by simply fleshing out a bare narrative, but more often by using eight standard topics or heads.⁶⁴⁷ The ability to elaborate on a theme or a saying with reference to the famous was a prized skill in antiquity because it demonstrated the fruits of a rhetor's long study and a well-trained memory. Examples of *χρεία* appear widely in ancient discourses and scholars often made private collections of "useful sayings."⁶⁴⁸

Along with the use of *χρεία*, Hellenistic progymnasmata also included another exercise known as *παροιμία* (proverb) in which students, using the same heads proposed for elaborating a *χρεία*, were expected to amplify the short declarative statement of a proverb or maxim. Norman Whybray, proposes that whole sections of the *Book of Proverbs* were composed, "like their foreign counterparts, mainly for use as a textbook in schools whose purpose was to educate a small scribal class."⁶⁴⁹

In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguishes two types of "example" (*παραδείγματα*), historical and invented with the latter divided into comparisons (*παραβολή*) and fables (*λόγοι*). He understands *παραβολή* as a type of invented, persuasive argumentation as exemplified by Socrates contention that magistrates should not be chosen by lot any more than athletes or helmsmen should be chosen by lot.⁶⁵⁰ While not everyone agreed with

particular person and it usually conforms to a pattern such as "On seeing..." (*ιδών*), "On being asked..." (*ἐρωτηθεὶς*), or "He said..." (*εἰπὼν*). See Marcus Fabius Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920) 1.9.4.

⁶⁴⁷The heads included: a panegyric, a paraphrase, a defense of the saying (proof by cause), a refutation (proof by contrast), support by analogy (proof by illustration), an anecdote or example (quote from an authority) and an encouragement of emulation. David J. Fleming, "The Very Idea of a Progymnasmata," *RR* 22 (2003): 111–112.

⁶⁴⁸Good example of such collections may be found in Plutarch's "Apothegmata Laconica," in *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931) or in the pseudonymous, "Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata," in *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931). An excellent illustration of the amplification of a *χρεία* is Libanius's work on Isocrates's saying "The root of learning is bitter but sweet are its fruits." Libanius, *Progymnasmata: Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, trans. Craig A. Gibson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 65. See A. L. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (London: Methuen, 1977), 259–260.

⁶⁴⁹Roger Norman Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: Commentary*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 87.

Aristotle's understanding of parable, παραβολή came to be included as an important exercise in the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon, the *Institutio Oratoria* of Quintilian, and in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.⁶⁵¹ The point here is to show that the one devoting his mind to study is engaged in activities that relate to a consideration of intellectual traditions and also to concerns that are characteristic of scribal training in a Hellenistic social context. The interpretation of sayings, proverbs, and parables required skill, time and a lingering reflection which is related to σχολή.

4.6.4.5 *Scribes in service of the great and appearing before rulers.* Everywhere in the scribal texts of Near Eastern cultures are indicators that scribes held offices and assumed roles that placed them among rulers and the great. Viziers, judges, prophets, high priests, teachers, oracles, military officers, work supervisors, scribes and many others were described as retainers, managers, or colleagues of the ruling classes. To be sure, this is not the situation for every scribe, but for those who had achieved higher levels of learning and an appropriate cultural adroitness there was access to the world of the elite.⁶⁵² Wise and accomplished scribes served as counsellors to rulers and other great people, as keepers of secrets, and as trustworthy advisors (Prov 14:35; 25:15; 10:19; 12:23; 20:25-26; 23:26-28). The task of counsellors was to assist in formulating well-laid plans that would enable leaders to succeed in their efforts and others to experience life and well-being.⁶⁵³ For Sirach, the comment about “serving among the great and appearing (being seen) before rulers” (39:4) realizes the same rhetorical purpose

⁶⁵⁰Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2.20.1-5.

⁶⁵¹Aelius Theon, *The Progymnasmata of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary*, trans. James R. Butts (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1991), 494; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.4.21; Anonymous, *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, IV.xlix.62.

⁶⁵²Ian S. Moyer, “Court, Chora, and Culture in Late Ptolemaic Egypt,” *American Journal of Philology* 132 (2011): 15-38. As part of a strategy to preserve Ptolemaic power, the Egyptian courts were shifting away from exclusive cultural and ethnic spaces toward the creation of a transcultural space which included representatives of local elites as part of the royal court.

⁶⁵³Perdue, *Proverbs*, 24.

as the exaggerations of scribal achievement in the school texts—it elevates the status of the scribe and, at the same time, places the scribe in counterpoint with the limitations experienced by the tradesmen in earlier verses (Sir 38:33-34).

4.6.4.6 Scribes travel in foreign lands and good and evil in the human lot. Travel as an emissary or diplomatic envoy was not an uncommon duty for a court scribe. Many school texts used in training scribes allude to travel, errands and missions.⁶⁵⁴ As seen above, the Tell El-Amarna tablets give much evidence that scribes were often involved in international diplomacy and trade.⁶⁵⁵

Jewish texts also point to scribes and emissaries in various social contexts which required well-developed literacy and negotiation skills. (Num 21:21-27; 2 Kgs 16:7; 1 Macc 12:28, 13:4). The presence of multilingual scribes at international contexts (2 Kgs 18:18, 26, 37) and in military contexts (2 Kgs 25:19) involved travel to foreign lands.

Because Sirach presents the knowledge of good and evil as a gift from God at the creation of humanity (Sir 17:12), the testing of “good and evil” has a particularly important place in the thought and pursuits of a scribe seeking wisdom. The exposure to various cultures and socio- cultural practices gave the scribe a particular perspective on what passes as acceptable human behaviour and allows for comparison with “the law of the Most High.” Both travel and practising discernment of good and evil support and broaden scribal experience and knowledge; they deepen insight and fathom the wisdom poured out at creation. That Sirach presents his learned scholar engaged in activities which are often identified as roles assumed by trained scribes strengthens his identification of γραμματεύς with the one surrendering his mind to intellectual pursuits.

⁶⁵⁴The Satire of the Trades, for example, talks of sending scribes on missions or as envoys . Lichtheim, *Ancient Eastern Literature, Volume 2: The New Kingdom*, 171, 189

⁶⁵⁵See section 4.3.4.

4.6.5 Scribes and the Practice of Piety

Ancient Near Eastern cultures did not dichotomize between faith and rational inquiry or between the practice of religion and moral behaviours.⁶⁵⁶ All wisdom begins with the Creator and Sustainer of order in the cosmos. Any quest for wisdom, scribal or otherwise, necessarily involved a recognition that God was its source. An appropriate disposition toward the source of wisdom was indispensable for learning, interpreting, and understanding wisdom.⁶⁵⁷

Sirach 39:5 presents the learned scholar surrendering his heart to seeking the Lord, who made him. He petitions the Most High (ὑψιστος) with prayer and seeks pardon for his sins. Here the learned and pious scholar recognizes and accepts his place before God. Biblical tradition declares that an attitude of reverential piety is a prerequisite for anyone seeking wisdom: “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Job 28:28; Prov1:7). Sirach’s scholar displays such reverence in prayer and seeking forgiveness. After great social success in the pursuit of wisdom, what remains is a reverential contemplation of the power of God, the unchanging first principle. If willing, the great Lord may fill the scholar with “the spirit of understanding” which results in a pouring forth of wise words, inspired counsel and knowledge that will be manifest in the παιδεία of his teaching and in his glory in the law of the Lord’s covenant. Creation wisdom and the revealed wisdom of Israel’s covenant tradition are empowered and expressed through the activity of the learned and pious scribe.

4.6.6. Conclusion on Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Associated with Γραμματεὺς

⁶⁵⁶Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult*.

⁶⁵⁷See section 4.3.6.

A consideration of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of γραμματεὺς in Jewish-Egyptian-Hellenistic social milieu examined commonly held expectations of scribal culture and performance. Beginning with a consideration of the place of the scribe in an advanced agrarian society it was proposed that most scribes functioned as “retainers” serving in roles as political and economic officials or bureaucrats. Γραμματεὺς was both a title and a profession within which there was a wide variety of sub-types. Scribes functioned as part of a literate elite that enjoyed a relative influence, power, and status. The cultivation of appropriate social protocols and attitudes, as well as a facility with various literary forms, was a central part of scribal training. Such skills prepared prospective scribes to take their places in the service of the ruling elite, expounding traditional “wisdom-teaching,” and serving as experts with a broad and varied cultural, intellectual, and social repertoire.

Because scribes produced written materials, they consciously or unconsciously presented their own perceptions of scribal culture. Referring to these sources it is possible to explore scribal self-images and perceptions of their relationship to the world. Egyptian school texts provide one source which offers several important insights. Literate scribes wished to distinguish themselves from the illiterate part of society. That separation takes the form of various syncritical comparisons which argue the superiority of a scribal life based in advantages associated with learning and intellectual efforts. In Egyptian texts, that superiority is always expressed by associating the successful scribe with various responsibilities in imperial administration.⁶⁵⁸ Sirach, seeking to establish the superiority of the wisdom sought by the one surrendering his mind to intellectual pursuits, first excludes those of lesser wisdom from such tasks and then places the mindful scholar at high levels of administrative responsibility usually assumed by trained scribes.

⁶⁵⁸Baines, “Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society,” 584.

Finally, by examining extensive scribal involvement in each of the areas of concern presented in Sir 39:1-5, the section may safely conclude that a transference of the accomplishments of the mindful scholar to the scribe of the opening proposition is apt and supported by the text. As will be shown in the next chapter, it is the aptness of the scribe–scholar identification that makes possible the elaboration of scribal wisdom in the terms of an opportunity for σχολή.

4.7 Conclusions on Socio-Cultural Textures and Intertexture Configuring the *Topoi*

Sirach’s elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως was embedded within social and cultural environments of the Jewish–Egyptian–Hellenistic diaspora of the second century BCE. It was also influenced by an interplay with outside texts, objects, historical events, customs, values, social roles, cultural institutions, and traditions, which formed broad networks of meaning and meaning effects within which and out of which the discourse was produced.

The chapter began by examining the rhetorical arrangement of the discourse as deliberative syncrisis characterized by two aims: the acceptance of the proposal that “the wisdom of the scribe (is) in an opportunity for leisure,” and a contrastive comparison (syncrisis) of domain-specific wisdom represented in the work of artisans (Sir 38:25-31) with the fuller wisdom sought by “one who surrenders his mind” to study and his heart to seeking the Lord who made him (Sir 39:1-5). The use of implied enthymemes and a paradigmatic contrast clearly reflect the rules and topic lists that would be schematized in later progymnastic exercises. The rules and topics set out in these exercises will be useful in chapter five when the configured *topoi* are re-engaged within the argumentative flow of the discourse.

The innertexture of Sir 38:24–39:11 highlighted four key elements that served as the essential building blocks in Sirach’s argument schema:

- 1) God is the source of all wisdom and order;
- 2) the one lessening *πρᾶξις* can become wise (σοφίζω);

- 3) σχολή with its privileges and opportunities leads toward a broad wisdom;
 4) and γραμματεὺς is identified with the activities and attitudes of the one engaged in mindful study and submission of his heart to the divine.

The persuasive strength of Sirach's argument depended on how deeply the audience accepted each of these essential building blocks and how well Sirach transferred that acceptance to his own purpose. The socio-cultural texture and intertexture of each element, as well as the interplay among the elements, configure the plausible meaning and relative strength of each building block as a secure base for Sirach's conclusions.

The first element, the assumption that God is the source of all wisdom and order, was shown to be a commonly held belief in the cosmologies and social structures of Mediterranean cultures. The wisdom expressed in artistic excellence as well as the wisdom traditions preserved in the common repositories of knowledge, law, ancient tradition, prophecies, sayings, proverbs, and parables, leadership and moral discernment were understood to be derivative of divine wisdom. Even Hellenic philosophical wisdom was ultimately rooted in the gods as a first cause or life-principle. The first assumption seems to provide a very secure base for the argument schema of the discourse.

Second, the assumption that “the one lessening business (πρᾶξις) can become wise (σοφίζω)” is the starting point for Sirach's enthymematic arguments and the main focus for his syncritical comparison of skilled workers with a mindful scholar. At the level of intertexture, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* establishes an inverse relationship between “the coming-to-be” implied by πρᾶξις and the “unchanging necessity” that is σοφία. This same inverse relationship seems to be what is at play in Sirach's lessening of πρᾶξις and the possibility of becoming wise (σοφίζω). Both Aristotle and Sirach appealed to craft workers to illustrate their reasoning.

The discourse also suggests an intertexture with ancient Egyptian school texts containing well-known syncritical comparisons of various skilled workers with the superior life of a scribe. Appealing to the contrasts rooted in popular school texts, Sirach

constructs his own syncretism to illustrate the differences between the wisdom of artisans and the superior wisdom sought by a mindful scholar.

Further evidence of socio-cultural texture and intertexture is evident in a traditional separation of those who practiced the banausic arts from those who were aristocratic by nature and who engaged in what they considered to be nobler deeds. An education in τέχνη was understood to be necessary for civilization, but trade workers were not accepted as worthy citizens. Intellectual elites were often contemptuous of the working masses and it would not be a surprise for artisans living in an Egyptian–Hellenistic setting to find no place at assemblies, in councils, on judges’ benches or in positions of influence.

A third assumption underlying the discourse on scribal wisdom is that an opportunity for σχολή leads to wisdom. The use of the term σχολή in Greek literature highlighted a freedom from the necessity of physical labour, an opportunity for an education unrelated to earning a livelihood, and time to linger over conversations, thoughts, and ideas. The one committed to study and thoughtful reflection has moved beyond the limitations of πρᾶξις into a possibility of contemplation and of being made wise. Intertexture with the idea of contemplation of the divine as the highest human activity and the mindful consideration of intellectual and wisdom traditions present a view of σχολή that supports and enhances Sirach’s argument. As suggested in Psalm 46:10, “be still and know that I am God.”

The fourth essential building block of the discourse is the identification of “the one who surrenders his mind to study and thought” with γραμματεύς. A consideration of the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of γραμματεύς in the context of a Jewish–Egyptian–Hellenistic social milieu established commonly held understandings and expectations of scribal culture and performance. Beginning with a consideration of the place of the scribe in an advanced agrarian society it was shown that most scribes functioned as “retainers” serving in roles as political and economic officials or

bureaucrats. Γραμματεὺς was both a title and a profession in which there was a wide variety of sub-types. Scribes functioned as part of a literate elite which sometimes included relative influence, power and status. The cultivation of appropriate social protocols, attitudes and a facility with various literary forms ranging from instructional wisdom and historical collections of legal rulings and omens to royal hymns and astrological knowledge was a central part of scribal training. Such skills prepared prospective scribes to take their places in the service of the ruling elite, expounding traditional “wisdom-teaching,” and to serve as experts in many different dimensions of a broad cultural, intellectual, and social repertoire. The close alignment of the behaviours of “the one surrendering his mind and his heart” with the expectations attached to a well-trained scribe establishes the aptness of the argument’s identification of the scribe with the learned scholar.

The multiple over-lapping textures of σοφία, σοφίζω, πράξις, σχολή, ἔργον, παιδεία, ἀρετή, καρδία, and ψυχή with Hellenistic syncretism and Jewish ideas of election, and covenant are compressed into a complex nexus of materials and experiences at play in the everyday life of the Egyptian–Jewish diaspora. When viewed together in a consideration of ideological texture, the richly configured *topoi* dynamically support and reconfigure one another to create a web of rhetorical reality, mental landscapes, and a social environment able to propose plausible meanings of σοφία γραμματέως .

CHAPTER 5

IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE: MOVING THE AUDIENCE

5.1 Introduction

The socio-rhetorical interpretation of Sir 38:24–39:11 began with a close reading of innertexture, which focused on matters internal to the discourse that produced the networks of signification within the text itself. A consideration of socio-cultural texture and intertexture probed rhetorically significant elements of the discourse and recognized their participation in vast webs of background information, cultural knowledge, societal attitudes, historical events, and literary connections, that intersected with the discourse and had been consciously or unconsciously assembled in order to create meaning within the text. Taken together, the various clusters of associations form *topoi* that dynamically support or reconfigure one another to create webs of rhetorical reality, mental landscapes, and rhetorical environments within which the arguments are played out. In this chapter the concern shifts to a consideration of how these assembled resources functioned to move the audience, real or fictive, toward the desired goal. If successful, the discourse is said to have a “rhetorical force” that may lead to the establishment of a new cultural perspective or context.⁶⁵⁹ An analysis of ideological texture, therefore, must be concerned with tracking the ways in which a rhetor seeks to reconfigure aspects of the existing world or to move audiences in directions “away from or in variance to or even to

⁶⁵⁹L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Eyes wide open, seeing nothing: The challenge of the Gospel of John’s non-visualizable texture for readings using visible texture,” paper presented at Mellon Sawyer Seminars (Atlanta, GA, September 16, 2013), 6.

confirm existing cultural practices.”⁶⁶⁰

Identifying the ideological movement in Sir 38:24–39:11 will be accomplished by re-engaging the richly configured *topoi* within the argumentative texture to show how the rhetologic and rhetographic dimensions of the argument link and blend to construct an understanding of the relationship between “scribal wisdom” and an opportunity for σχολή. A second consideration focuses on the transcultural aspects of the discourse to show how Sirach interacts with his Egyptian-Hellenistic social context to advance a broadened understanding of Jewish scribal wisdom. The chapter closes with an assessment of the rhetorical force of the arguments as they are presented before a plausible audience with a real life urgency.

5.2 Re-engaging the Configured *Topoi* within the Argument Flow of the Discourse

As noted when considering intertexture, the argumentative flow of Sir 38:24–39:11 conforms to a common rhetorical arrangement identified as deliberative syncretism. As deliberative rhetoric the aim of the discourse is to gain audience acceptance of the proposition that the wisdom of the scribe is linked with an opportunity for σχολή; as syncretical rhetoric it seeks to validate that proposition by contrasting images of those without an opportunity for leisure with those who do enjoy the privilege. The argumentative flow of the discourse unfolds as a rhetographically-resourced network blending cognitive mental images within the rhetology of two implied enthymemes (38:25-34; 39:1-8). In other words, the argument works by contrasting images of artisans committed to the busyness of productive excellence who demonstrate a skill-specific, specialized wisdom with images of one who devotes his mind to considering broad intellectual traditions and his heart to seeking the Lord who made him. The images of the

⁶⁶⁰L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture, and Ideology: Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the Reading of New Testament Texts,” in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium*, ed. James D. Hester and J. David Hester (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2010), 124.

artisans project a high level of *πρᾶξις* and a wisdom that is restricted to craft production; the image of the scholar projects a lower level of *πρᾶξις* and a freedom to engage an intellectual openness to universal knowledge traditions, opportunities for civic and social responsibilities, and the time to seek the very source of wisdom itself. Re-engaging the configured *topoi* is complex and will proceed in several interrelated stages considering the opening proposition, the premise, the syncrisis, and the encomium.

5.2.1 Re-engaging the Configured *Topoi* with the Opening Proposition

The discourse opens with the proposition σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς (39:24^a). Since the material appears as a written text, its very existence is the work of a scribe and the development of the notion of σοφία γραμματέως implicitly represents a self-reflective and self-fashioned understanding of scribal wisdom. Thus, while the proposition of the discourse is to produce an understanding of the conceptual construct σοφία γραμματέως and an opportunity of σχολή, the material must also be approached as a form of self-reflective scribal literature. The proposition and its supporting arguments are shaped by a scribe, influenced by a scribal self-understanding and a particular scribal view of the world. The written word is self-consciously embedded within a specific community (i.e. Jewish-Egyptian diaspora), specific life contexts (i.e. the skills of a scribe in relation to the skills of artisans and master artisans), and structures of power (i.e. imperial Egypt, the Lord's covenant). The discourse is a manifestation of Jewish-Egyptian diaspora scribal behaviour as well as a reflection on that behaviour. These expressions and reflections will become apparent as the analysis of ideological texture unfolds.

The expression σοφία γραμματέως (“the wisdom of the scribe”) is unique to Sir 38:24^a. It appears nowhere else in canonical biblical literature; nor can it be found in pseudepigraphical texts or classical Greek writings. By joining the two nouns with the genitive case Sirach creates a lexical construct intended to convey a particular

understanding of wisdom as it is experienced or expressed in relation to the scribe and scribal activities. Skehan and Di Lella translate the expression σοφία γραμματέως as the “scribe’s profession” suggesting the traditional link between wisdom and craft or skill, thus “scribal craft.”⁶⁶¹ It has been suggested by Randal Argall that Sirach was extolling the sage who wrote compositions.⁶⁶² Other scholars argue that the terms “scribe” and “sage” have been used interchangeably or that the word γραμματεὺς was used to designate one particular activity of an educated sage.⁶⁶³ David Carr and Christopher Eyre contend that the term γραμματεὺς was commonly used across Mediterranean world as an honorary title for any literate or well-educated person.⁶⁶⁴ Whatever the case, that Sirach finds it necessary to construct an understanding of scribal wisdom in relation to an opportunity for σχολή suggests a perceived need for some reflection on scribal wisdom in his community. Scribes, (perhaps Sirach himself), may have been criticized for an engagement in reflective and intellectual activities in a culture where livelihoods were dependant on physical labour. It may have been that the intellectual concerns of a scribe came to be regarded as having less material value, social status, or public esteem than the prestige of prosperous and productive artisans or business leaders.⁶⁶⁵ In that case, the discourse may have served as a general apology for scribal “leisure.” Alternatively,

⁶⁶¹Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 445, 447.

⁶⁶²Randall Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation, and Judgment*, Early Judaism and Its Literature 8 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 84. Argall argues that Sirach praises the writing sage. Presumably there were also sages who did not write because they preferred an oral mode of transmission. The absence of any references to writing in the description of scribal activity (39:1-6) raises the same observation that led Christine Schams to reject this discourse as reliable historical evidence for constructing a profile of Second Temple scribes. See section 1.5.7.

⁶⁶³Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 10.

⁶⁶⁴The word γραμματεὺς in its Egyptian-Hellenistic context was also among a collection of words used to label individuals who had completed an advanced education and not simply as a reference to “a full-time writing professional.” In both Mesopotamia and Egypt, the idea of “scribe” sometimes roughly equated with the modern idea of a “college graduation.” David M. Carr, “Torah On the Heart: Literary Jewish Textuality Within Its Near Eastern Context,” *Oral Tradition* 25 (2010): 17–40. See also Christopher Eyre, *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 233. “‘Scribe’ was used as a courtesy title for all literate members of the community.”

⁶⁶⁵Crenshaw, “The Book of Sirach,” 813.

perhaps the role of a scribe as it was being lived in Sirach's social context had taken on a "busyness" (reading, writing, counting and reporting) that reflected the practice and business of the skilled trades flourishing in Egypt.⁶⁶⁶ In that case, the intention of the discourse may have been to recall a scribal superiority based in the pursuit of knowledge, intellectual traditions, and a reflection on a faithful Judaism. Whatever the case, it is clear that Sirach felt a particular need to create an elaboration of scribal wisdom in terms of an opportunity for σχολή and the benefits of such an opportunity for a diaspora Jewish community.

The word σχολή, unusual in the language of diaspora Jews, appears only once in the discourse, in the opening proposition (Sir 38:24^a).⁶⁶⁷ An opportunity for σχολή implies a freedom from the necessity of physical labour, the mental leisure necessary for engaging in the liberal arts, and a self-sufficiency required for participation in social and civic activities and duties.⁶⁶⁸ In advanced agrarian societies most individuals were necessarily occupied in some form of physical labour and a freedom from the necessity of such work was relatively rare. Both Hellenic and Egyptian literary traditions associate σχολή with an aristocratic few so that the term was heavily freighted with images of privilege and social influence.⁶⁶⁹ For a scribe to be associated with such an opportunity would certainly have raised some interest and discussion.

⁶⁶⁶Arthur Verhoogt, *Menches, Komogrammateus of Kerkeosiris* (Leiden: Brill, 1998). Also see Arthur Verhoogt, *Regaling Officials in Ptolemaic Egypt: A Dramatic Reading of Official Accounts from the Menches Papers*, for many examples of the dominance of administrative, accounting and business concerns in the active life of a scribe. Also see section 4.6.1 for comments regarding levels of scribal performance and the emergence of "clerks" with a scribal identity but a lower level of education.

⁶⁶⁷Σχολή is unique to the Greek text of the discourse. There is no formal equivalency with the surviving Hebrew text. See section 1.5.2.

⁶⁶⁸See section 4.5.

⁶⁶⁹See sections 4.4.3, 4.6.2.

5.2.2 Re-engaging the Configured *Topoi* within the Rhetology and Rhetorgraphy of the Argument

With the statement ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται (“the one having little business can become wise” Sir 38:24^b), Sirach sets a premise that will serve to measure the enthymematic reasoning of his arguments. By establishing an inverse relationship between *πραξις* and *σοφίζω*, Sirach shows at least a passing familiarity with a commonly known philosophical debate concerning the relationship of *πραξις* and *σοφία*.⁶⁷⁰ While it is not known where Sirach actually derived the idea of an inverse relationship between *πραξις* and *σοφίζω*, Roger Crisp notes that the ideas expressed in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* became very popular in philosophical discourse shortly following Aristotle’s death in 322 BCE. He indicates that such an influence was especially notable in Hellenistic Stoicism and Epicurianism.⁶⁷¹

Sirach does not define his understanding of *πραξις* but some insight may be derived from the discourse itself. Sirach 38:24-31 presents vivid images of artisans and master artisans engaged in the practice of their crafts. The workers are portrayed as highly skilled and focused on the quality of their products. In this context, the word *ἀγρυπνία* is used repeatedly (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30) to suggest a constant deliberation and care for the details of their craft and the productive excellence of their work. This type of deliberation and choice among various alternatives in the creative process seems quite close to what Aristotle identified as *φρόνησις* expressed in *πραξις*.⁶⁷² The deliberations concerning productive excellence in Sirach’s description of the crafts places that work in the realm of things that shift and change or that could be otherwise.⁶⁷³ In that sense, the

⁶⁷⁰See section 4.4.1.

⁶⁷¹Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. & ed. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), viii.

⁶⁷²The distinction between *σοφία* as contemplative wisdom and *φρόνησις* as practical wisdom was first articulated in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. *Πρόνησις* is implicated in prudent deliberations about actions which are advantageous to achieving a good life, and so it is concerned with what is particular and

artisans can never fully achieve wisdom because there is no absolute or necessary end that would eliminate the need for some form of *πραξις* in their work. Every product that they fashion requires some process of decision and deliberation regarding what is required to move toward manufacturing the best possible artifact. Philosophically, achieving wisdom in the realm of the necessary and unchanging is not possible for these artisans because the very nature of their work demands deliberation and change. The *σοφίζω* of the artisans remains restricted to the narrow domains of their specific trades.

Sirach, of course, has not approached this issue using the abstract or theoretical language of philosophers, rather, he explores the experiences of artisans at work, actively engaged in their respective trades. The rhetology of the argument is resourced with rhetographic images and repetitions which picture the physical and material nature of the work reflected in a detailed sensory-aesthetic texture (ploughing, driving oxen, painting, hammering, moulding, etc.) and a constant attention to detail (careful feeding, life-like images, patterns, decoration, quality and quantity of products, etc.) accentuated by the repetition of *ἀγρυπνία* as the artisans search and deliberate the causes and principles of productive excellence.⁶⁷⁴ The workers are repeatedly described as surrendering their hearts to their work. The repetition serves to support Sirach's claim that such a preoccupation with physical work and attention to detail is characteristic of every artisan and master artisan who works by night and by day. (Sir 38:27). It will be noted later that *καρδία* represents the centre of human decisions and life perspective which is often associated with wisdom (e.g. Prov 10:3; 14:33; Ps 89:12(LXX); Sir 10:12; 21:26). The suggestion in these texts is that a surrender of heart to *ἔργον*, common to all who work as

variable. *Πραξις* represents a functional approach to *φρόνησις*. Machek, "Doubleness of Craft," 519.

⁶⁷³See section 4.4.1.

⁶⁷⁴See section 3.4. "We assume that artists are wiser than men of mere experience (which implies that in all cases wisdom depends rather upon knowledge); and this is because the former know the cause, whereas the latter do not. For the experienced know the fact, but not the wherefore; but the artists know the wherefore and the cause... Thus the master craftsmen are superior in wisdom, not because they can do things, but because they possess a theory and know the causes." Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 981a, 25-26.

artisans and master artisans, is a surrender to a life of manual labour and to seeking a lesser wisdom which remains focused in their productive tasks (Sir 38:31).

Reinforcing the “limited” wisdom of the skilled workers, Sirach acknowledges their contributions in the construction of human communities and then, using a quick catena of negatives, he strongly emphasizes the dissociation of domain-specific wisdom from other civic and social needs (Sir 38:32-34). The first implied enthymeme of the discourse is complete: images of the limited social status associated with the banausic crafts, the demands of *πρᾶξις*, the physical labour, the limited wisdom of the skilled trades, and the images from the Egyptian school texts combine to form a picture of those who do not and cannot share the advantages of an opportunity for leisure. The work of the artisans permits the development of a narrow and domain-specific wisdom but this is not a wisdom associated with any roles beyond their own skilled expertise.

The text of Sir 39:1-3 presents an image of one who surrenders his mind (*ψυχή*) to study and thoughtful reflection (*ἐκζητέω, διανοέομαι*).⁶⁷⁵ There is no product or doing or making associated with the activity of this “scholar.” There is an interior learning and a studious reflection on already accepted intellectual and sapiential traditions. The one surrendering his mind is not preoccupied with the same anxieties or concerns (*ἀγρυπνία*) as those that beset the artisans. The images of physical work and workers have been replaced with a language evoking pictures of one committed to study, interpretation, and lingering over ideas. In contrast with the language of *ἔργον*, the text has turned to a series of images associated with the notion of *σχολή*, its opportunities and privileges. Rhetology and rhetography have created a second portrait characterized by a reduction of *πρᾶξις*.

⁶⁷⁵As will be seen later, in biblical anthropology *ψυχή* (mind) functions as an intellectual sub-set of *καρδία* (heart) which is the centre of human strength, knowledge, wisdom and life decisions. In this text *ψυχή* may operate simultaneously as an intellectual consideration of ideas while the primary life perspective of the faithful Jewish scholar remains centred in Yahweh, his Creator (39:5). “...the life according to intellect is best and pleasantest, since intellect more than anything else is man.” Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1172b.

The text goes on to associate the mindful scholar with positions of civic and social responsibility (Sir 39:4). Unlike the artisans who experienced social boundaries because of their limited wisdom, the studied scholar is associated with broader affairs of business, governance, delegation and judgement. The images of exclusion and inclusion mutually illustrate and reinforce the advantages of an opportunity for σχολή. The text of 39:1-3 makes no reference to any need for deliberation about decisions concerning a course of action.⁶⁷⁶ For Sirach, the activities presented here are already informed by a familiarity with the well-accepted intellectual and sapiential sources to which the scholar has turned his mind. The enthymematic point is that a reduction of *πρᾶξις* has resulted in the development of a fuller wisdom which leads to fuller involvement in civic and social activities.

In Sir 39:5 the text flows directly from the engagement in broad learning and an involvement in civic and social responsibility into a surrender of heart to rising early to seek the Lord who made him. There is no language of transition or contrast. Rather, having studied wisdom traditions and having experienced the arenas of life where wisdom is expected and exercised, the scholar's extends his attention directly to a consideration the very source of wisdom. A surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him suggests embracing a perspective of life which holds the Creator at the centre of all things. Here Sirach makes an association with prayer and asking forgiveness of sins. For a faithful Jewish scholar such an image may evoke associations with traditional torah piety.⁶⁷⁷ The image of rising early suggests a priority of a task at hand, easily associated with the morning *salutatio* of retainers and patrons, and evokes multiple images from Israelite tradition where one rises early to meet Yahweh. Images of

⁶⁷⁶In eudaimonistic philosophy, anything that turns the focus of thought from the contemplation of wisdom to the achievement of some other end such as the satisfaction of a political or social need, is a form of *πρᾶξις*.

⁶⁷⁷Deut 6:4-5 represents a surrender of heart in traditional prayer as well as a link with a command to pass on such a prayerful disposition to God.

movement toward the Creator in prayer and seeking forgiveness of sins is a movement away from all *πρᾶξις* and a surrender in contemplation before the Most High the source of all wisdom and order. In the rhetology of the discourse, the mindful and pious scholar is now ready to be made wise. The great Lord willing, the one surrendering his mind and his heart will be filled with the spirit of understanding and will pour forth words of wisdom of his own. The images of wisdom flowing like water, divine guidance, thankful prayer, and a wise and faithful teacher bring the second enthymeme to a conclusion: a removal of *πρᾶξις* allows for study and a stillness (contemplation) (*σχολή*) before God that opens out to the possibility of being filled with a spirit of understanding and manifesting a divinely informed wisdom. The one (presumably the scribe) lessening *πρᾶξις* can and has been made wise (*σωφίζω*).

The rhetology of Sirach's implied enthymematic arguments are fully supported and enhanced by a syncritical comparison of the limited wisdom embodied in the activities of the conscientious and skilled workers with the intellectual knowledge and wisdom sought by one surrendering his mind to study and his heart to seeking God.

5.2.3 Re-engaging the Configured *Topoi* within the Syncrisis

Sirach's use of a syncritical comparison to differentiate the life and concerns of artisans from the superior life of one who devotes his mind to intellectual pursuits applies a well-known literary practice from the Egyptian school text tradition.⁶⁷⁸ Scribal students were commonly required to copy and memorize texts comparing the labour intensive lives of skilled workers with the superior life of a scribe. The purpose of the exercises was to rehearse the reading, copying, and reciting of texts but, at the same time, they also served to encourage student efforts by showing them the benefits associated with a future life as a scribe. Descriptions of scribal life included: exemption from physical labour, social

⁶⁷⁸See section 4.6.2

privilege associated with roles as project managers and civil servants, political influence associated with the service of kings and rulers, travel as royal emissaries, a personal renown attached to a lasting name, and material security.⁶⁷⁹ Such promises of social superiority which echoed throughout the school text tradition must have been very powerful motivators.⁶⁸⁰ For an audience of scribes, Sirach's use of a syncritical comparison of the wisdom of skilled craftsmen with the wisdom sought by a mindful scholar would easily have evoked memories of the self-proclaimed scribal superiority of the school text tradition. Recalling the dynamic of that claim, Sirach is now proposing a superiority based on seeking a superior wisdom rooted in the devotion of mind to studying the wisdom traditions of the world and commitment to seeking a relationship with the Creator.

The exact rhetorical paradigm of the syncritical comparison applied in this discourse is not known, but the encomiastic topics borrowed from the "Exercises" of Aelius Theon provide a suitable heuristic tool for examining the contrasts at play in Sirach's syncrisis.⁶⁸¹ As seen above, these topics of comparison include: external goods, bodily goods, and goods of the mind with the resulting actions including those praised after death.⁶⁸² There is no assumption that all of these topics are used within any particular syncrisis but there must be enough of them to demonstrate the relationship of the elements being compared.

⁶⁷⁹See section 4.6.2 and 4.6.3. Comments such as "the scribe, whatever his place at the residence, he cannot be poor in it" are considered to be motivational statements to encourage scribal students to persist in their studies. "Satire of the Trades" in Miriam Lichtheim, *AEL* 1, 185.

⁶⁸⁰See sections 4.6.2. and 4.6.3.

⁶⁸¹These topics are patterned on the traditional goods of personhood. "Since good things especially are praised and some good things relate to mind and character, others to the body, and some are external to us, clearly these would be the three large classes of things from which we shall get an abundance of arguments for an encomium." Aelius Theon, "Exercises" in George Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 50.

⁶⁸²See section 4.2. Aelius Theon, "Exercises," 50-51; Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, "The Encomiastic Topics," 422.

In the comparison of external goods, Sirach contrasts different embodiments of education, culture, positions of responsibility, associations, and reputation. The artisans demonstrate an excellent knowledge of their crafts and an attention to detail (care for the breeding and feeding of cattle; variety of signets and lifelike images; patterns and the decoration of iron-work; moulding, glazing, and firing pottery) that illustrates knowledge of the causes and principles necessary to fashion excellent products. These workers are excluded from areas of civic and social duty because of their narrow wisdom and because they are without παιδεία.

In contrast, the learned activities itemized in Sir 39:1-3 are all associated with a surrender of mind (τοῦ ἐπιδιδόντος τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ) to study and reflection.⁶⁸³ Each of these activities and their objects of concern imply an availability or an access to the materials and traditions being studied and the ability to use them. Such access to learned traditions may be acquired through association and relationships, through holding official positions, and through a disciplined study (παιδεία). Sirach 38:4 places the learned “scholar” in positions of service and responsibility similar to those from which the artisans have been excluded. Sirach 39:8 highlights the παιδεία of the “scholar’s” teaching as a public manifestation of his divinely inspired wisdom.

The final three verses of the discourse offer high praise for the one who demonstrates a superior wisdom (Sir 39:9-11): “many will praise his understanding;” “his memory will not disappear;” “his name will live through all generations;” “nations will speak of his wisdom;” “the congregation will proclaim his praise;” “he will leave a name greater than a thousand;” “if he goes to his rest (dies), it is enough for him” (i.e. he lives

⁶⁸³For Sirach, ψυχή refers to the intellectual part of the human person, the part able to engage in study and reflection. In this discourse the giving over of ψυχή (Sir 39:1) is contrasted with the giving over of καρδία (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30; 39:5). This relationship will be explored further when considering bodily goods. The intellectual pursuits of Sirach 39:1 include: ἐκζητήσει (“he will seek out”); ἀσχοληθήσεται (“he will engage”); συντηρήσει (“he will preserve, memorize”); συνεισελεύσεται (“he will enter with, discuss”); ἐκζητήσει (“he will seek out”); and ἀναστραφήσεται (“he will overturn, probe, interpret”). Such activities stand in contrast with the material concerns of the artisans.

on after death in his name and his reputation). In matters of education, association, official positions, reputation, a lasting name and a good death, the learned scholar is arguably far superior to the artisans.

The comparison of topics related to bodily goods also demonstrates the superiority of the one devoting his mind to study. The artisans engage in physical labour. They are depicted in graphic language: grasping a plough, driving oxen, tending cattle (Sir 38:25-26), engraving seals, producing lifelike images (Sir 38:27), sitting at work, feeling heat, hammering iron (Sir 38:28), molding clay, glazing pots, and tending kilns (Sir 38:29-30). The descriptions of these physical activities are strengthened even further by multiple references to body parts and sensory experiences.⁶⁸⁴ The work requires skill and focus as the artisans continually assess and reassess the alternative actions and refinements leading to productive excellence.

In contrast, the depiction of the one devoted to study offers no references to physical labour, body parts, or the manipulation of material objects. The world of the scholar is an interior, intellectual world of reason and reflection, a world that has moved away from the concerns of material *πραξις* and into a closer association with already well-established and fully-accepted intellectual traditions that pass on the wisdom of creation and the unique wisdom of specific cultures.

The contrast of bodily goods is carried forward by noting how Sirach has differentiated between “the giving of heart” and “the giving of mind.” The artisans surrender their hearts (*καρδία*) to the *ἔργον* of their trades (Sir 38:26, 27, 28, 30), but the “scholar” surrenders his mind (*ψυχή*) to study (Sir 39:1) and then subsequently surrenders his heart (*καρδία*) to seeking the Lord who made him (Sir 39:5). Both *καρδία* and *ψυχή*, are notoriously difficult to define in the shifting spectrum of biblical anthropology.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸⁴See section 3.4 for details of sensory-aesthetic texture.

⁶⁸⁵Recent publications reexamining theological anthropology signal a new appreciation of the complexity and evolving understanding of the human person as presented in biblical texts. Hans Schwartz,

The meaning of the Greek word καρδία, is complex and changes over time. In both Greek and Hebrew, the term can denote the chest organ central to physical life but it is almost never used that way in Jewish literature.⁶⁸⁶ “Heart” is most often used figuratively referring to the seat of physical, spiritual and moral strength, understanding, wisdom, knowledge and rational thought.⁶⁸⁷ The heart is the organ responsible for a person’s words and actions. As Thomas Krüger has expressed it, the heart “is the moral control and guidance centre” of the person.⁶⁸⁸ In that sense, “heart” functions as the executive self, the self which integrates and directs all other activities.

A search of the use of καρδία in Greek literature reveals hundreds of occurrences but very few of these are biological in nature (e.g. the spear of Idomeneus in the heart of Alcahous is biological. *Iliad* 13, 424). Greek literature and philosophy also tend to use καρδία as an idiomatic, figurative expression for the seat of thought, feeling, courage, consciousness, knowledge and wisdom.⁶⁸⁹ A number of Greek-English lexicons interpret καρδία as the seat and centre of all physical and spiritual life, the vigor and vitality at the core of human life.⁶⁹⁰ In a similar way, the philosophers have used καρδία to represent the centre of human consciousness. Chrysippus sees καρδία as carrying the soul. Philolaus, the Italic philosopher, identified four main organs which served four

The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Thomas Krüger, “Das ‘Herz’ in der alttestamentlichen Anthropologie,” in Andreas Wagner, *Anthropologische Aufbrüche: alttestamentliche und interdisziplinäre Zugänge zur historischen Anthropologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

⁶⁸⁶Hans Schwartz, *The Human Being*, 10.

⁶⁸⁷Thus the full surrender implied by Deuteronomy 6:4. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

⁶⁸⁸Thomas Krüger, “Das ‘Herz’ in der alttestamentlichen Anthropologie,” 109.

⁶⁸⁹For examples of the figurative use of heart see Euripides, “Hecuba” in *The Complete Greek Drama*, trans. E. V. Rieu (New York, NY: Random House, 1938), 216; Bacchylides, *The Poems and Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), Ode 17.

⁶⁹⁰Walter Bauer and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969) s.v.; Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005), s.v.; Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), s.v.

fundamental functions: the brain was the centre of thought (νοῦς), the heart housed the soul (ψυχή), the umbilicus was the centre of growth and the genitals were responsible for reproduction.⁶⁹¹

In the context of this discourse, I read the “giving over of heart” as a surrender of self-guidance and executive decision-making. In other words, for the artisans, it is the demands of the trade and the desire for excellence in productivity that influence, perhaps determine, most of life’s decisions and choices. By “surrendering heart” to work, one is choosing to view the world and one’s place in it from the perspective and requirements of that work. In this instance, the artisan surrenders to the demands of productive excellence, *πρᾶξις*, and views his world and even his prayer through that lens (Sir 38:34). At the same time, Sirach 38: 26-30 repeats the surrender of heart four different times in relation to four different examples of skilled trades. In this, Sirach supports his assertion that such a concern with *πρᾶξις* and *ἀγροπνία* is pervasive and extends to all artisans and master artisans (Sir 38:27). In this use of multiple examples, Sirach is imitating the Egyptian school text syncrisis which create an emphasis of an idea by offering multiple concrete examples of the same thing contrasted over and over again with a single scribe. The effect is to show that a preoccupation with *πρᾶξις* dominates and limits the wisdom of all those who choose to be engaged in practicing the skilled trades. In the context of this syncrisis, Sirach is certainly emphasizing the surrender which is common to all the skilled trades in which care and reputation for excellent work (*πρᾶξις*) will produce equally excellent reputations and prosperity for the worker.

For the scholar, “giving over his heart” to seeking the Lord who made him (Sir 39:5) is also a handing over of the executive self, but unlike the artisans, this handing over is a surrender, not to work, but to the source of all creation, all wisdom, and all

⁶⁹¹A. A. Long, “Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics” (New York, NY: Scribner’s Sons, 1974), 134, 171–2.

order. Unlike the skilled worker who expects a *πραξις* to lead to a greater prosperity and reputation, the giving over of heart, expressed in the cultic piety of prayer and in the ethical piety of seeking forgiveness for sins, is a humble surrender of human agency (*πραξις*) before the Most High. For a learned and pious Jewish scholar this would have embraced both traditional prayer and obedience to the law of the Lord's covenant. The surrender of heart to the Creator is a surrender to the source of perfect wisdom which is beyond any need for deliberation or choice. In this surrender, all *πραξις* yields to the stillness of divine necessity. The pious and learned scholar is ready for *σοφίζω*, "to be made wise" but he does not control it.⁶⁹² Rather than seeking the control implied by the work of the artisans, the scholar must simply surrender into the realization of his place before the source of all wisdom. Perhaps such a high demand lies behind Sirach's choice to present multiple examples of artisans but a single example of the humble and pious scholar. Many will seek an opportunity for controllable prosperity, only a few will seek the superior wisdom which comes from study and surrender before God.

Ψυχή (variously translated as "soul," "mind," "heart"), like the Hebrew term נֶפֶשׁ, originally referred to breath or breath of life. It is "the breath which gives life to humans," the vital force connected with "living." In its classical usage, *ψυχή* is that which may be threatened in battle (Homer, *Iliad*, 9.322). At the moment of physical death, *ψυχή* is said to leave the body through the breath (Homer, *Iliad*, 9.408). A physical body without *ψυχή* has no life. Like *καρδία*, the meaning of *ψυχή* shifted over time and took on a wide variety of different connotations including an association with reason, thought, and judgement.⁶⁹³ In the thought of Aristotle, the unique characteristic activity of a human being is an activity of soul (*ψυχή*) in accordance with reason.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹²In Aristotelian philosophy this would be the stillness of contemplation of the divine and the fullest human happiness. "Nicomachean Ethics", 1177b.

⁶⁹³Sophocles, *Antigone*, 176; Aristotle, *De Anima*, 413b11.

⁶⁹⁴Aristotle "Nicomachean Ethics", 1098a

As a part of Sirach's syncretical comparison, *ψυχή* serves the rhetorical purpose of setting the "mindful" activities of Sirach 39:1-3 in contrast with the multiple references to body and physical activities in the preceding verses.⁶⁹⁵ *Ψυχή* is not concerned with products or productivity, rather it attends to reason and reflection. The "scholar" surrenders his "mind" to studying and reflecting wisdom as it has been captured in human tradition. Indeed, *ψυχή* itself was held to be an immortal part of man that did not dissolve with the body after death but rather it lived on. In this sense *ψυχή* represents a lessening of *πρᾶξις* and a movement toward studying traditional wisdom and the possibility of "being made wise."

In the comparison of bodily goods, Sirach first depicts the physical nature of the trades that engage the body and preoccupy the heart with matters of production and asks how anyone so occupied might become wise. His answer is a narrow domain-specific wisdom with no applicability in those areas requiring a broader skill base. The wisdom of the artisans is completely focused on maintaining the fabric of the created world. In contrast, he presents the activities of one surrendering to a thoughtful consideration of wisdom traditions. This is a world with no mention of body. Rather it juxtaposes the immortal world of *ψυχή* with the accepted reliability of a continuing wisdom preserved and passed on in tradition.

In a further contrast, the surrender of heart associated with the work of the artisans is placed over against a different surrender of heart by the learned "scholar" who rises early to seek the Lord who made him. The surrender of heart by the artisans leads to *πρᾶξις*; the surrender of heart by the scholar leads to prayer, petition and asking forgiveness of sins and a full openness to being made wise. The artisans embody a cycle of an unending quest for wisdom in continuously maintaining the fabric of creation; the

⁶⁹⁵Piet van Imshoot, "Soul" in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Bible*, trans. Louis F. Hartman (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1963), col. 2289. By the Hellenistic period, *ψυχή* came to be used to indicate a clear distinction from "body."

one surrendering mind to studying wisdom has found and surrendered to the very source of wisdom itself. In regard to the comparison of bodily goods, clearly the wisdom of the one devoted to study and sapiential tradition is superior.

The third topic of comparison is goods of the mind (with the resulting actions including those praised after death). According to the text of the syncrisis, the goods of mind among the artisans are restricted to information and knowledge about the causes and principles of manufacturing excellent artifacts. Sirach 38:31 declares “All these rely on their hands, and all are skillful (σοφίζω) in their own work.” In contrast the one who surrenders his mind to study is equipped with a broad range of skills and interests (διανοέομαι, συντηρέω, ἐκζητέω, ὑπηρετέω, πειράζω)) that open out to an application in the community. The implication here is that the thoughtful scholar possesses the intellectual and social virtues deemed necessary for inclusion in the activities of state and business. The goods of mind also extend to include the expression of a humble piety before the Most High (38:5) and a stillness before God, the source of wisdom.

Viewing Sirach’s syncrisis through the lens of Theon’s encomiastic topics concerning the goods of personhood leaves no doubt that the wisdom sought by the one surrendering his mind to study and his heart to the Creator is presented by Sirach as superior to the wisdom of the artisans. Like the Egyptian school texts, Sirach has fashioned a powerful motivator intended to encourage the audience to embrace the superior wisdom rooted in the study of broad intellectual and wisdom traditions, public service, and a pious surrender before God.

5.2.4 Superior Wisdom and an Opportunity for Σχολή

In describing the wisdom sought by the one surrendering his mind to study Sirach portrays activities and situations commonly associated with an opportunity for σχολή. In contrast with the preceding verses, a lexis of ἔργον, πρᾶξις, and social exclusion has been replaced with references to study, seeking out, reflection and interpretation. There is no

reference to a need for physical labour or the practicalities of seeking a livelihood. Instead the focus has shifted to law, history, prophecy, wise sayings and parables. By projecting the activities of the mindful scholar into the very arenas of life from which the artisans were excluded, Sirach signals the emergence of a fuller wisdom and the social recognition of the virtues and values required for such activities. In this Sirach has drawn a close link between the superior wisdom of one devoting his mind to study and an opportunity for σχολή. By accepting the syncretical argument for the superiority of the wisdom sought by the one surrendering his mind to study, the audience also implicitly accepts the role of an opportunity for σχολή in achieving that higher level wisdom.

Seamlessly, the discourse reaches beyond the achievement of social success to include a surrendering of his heart to rising early to seek the Lord who made him. As seen elsewhere, ψυχή represents the mind, the capacity for reason, thought and judgement. Καρδιά represents the centre of personal decisions and moral guidance. By surrendering his heart to rising early to seek the Lord who made him, the scholar is choosing to view his own life, intellectual learning and his public involvements from the deeper perspective of having been created and of standing in a relationship with the very source of all wisdom. Awareness of a relationship with the Creator leads the scholar to a cultic and ethical piety, prayer and seeking forgiveness of sins, as an expression of his reverence and obedient submission before the power of God. Because God is held to be the source of all wisdom and order in creation, submission before the Most High implicitly acknowledges the limits of human agency in the pursuit of wisdom.⁶⁹⁶ What remains can only be an attendance on the power of the universal, necessary and unchanging presence of God.⁶⁹⁷ Embracing the limits of human agency removes the need

⁶⁹⁶In Israel's history rising early was a sign of priority in meeting with God. See section 4.3.6. In advanced agrarian societies morning was a time for *saluatio*, to meet with a patron for daily instructions. In temple practice this was a time of *tamid shel shachar*, morning sacrifice for forgiveness of sins.

⁶⁹⁷See section 4.5.1. Euripedes, *Iphigenia*, 1221. This text uses σχολή as an opportunity for prayer and worship.

for any form of *πραξις* and, in this “stillness” (*σχολή*) before the great Lord, one may experience the power of divine agency.⁶⁹⁸ God willing, the learned and humble scholar will be empowered with the spirit of understanding and pour forth words of wisdom of his own.⁶⁹⁹

For a faithful Jewish scholar, the opportunity to study wisdom as reflected in the broad intellectual traditions of the world offers great insight into the extension and comprehension of creation wisdom. A difference, however, occurs in the surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him. For the faithful Jewish scholar the Creator is Yahweh, the source of all wisdom and order but also the God of Israel’s election. A faithful Jewish scholar already shares in a long tradition of prayer, covenant law and submission before the Most High.⁷⁰⁰ In that respect, Israel already shares in a sense of having been chosen and filled with a particular wisdom, yet even the faithful Jewish scholar depends on the spirit of understanding to know the full breadth and depth of divine wisdom as it moves to accomplish its purpose in creation and in the law.

In summary, the combination of the rhetological premise that “the one lessening *πραξις* can become wise” with the rhetographic images aligning the quest for a superior wisdom with an opportunity for *σχολή* creates an argument leading the audience to

⁶⁹⁸Greek poets and philosophers interpret such a stillness before god as a complete dependence on the predispositions and preferences of the gods alone. There was nothing that any individual can intellectually, socially or religiously offer or do to increase the likelihood of being the one chosen to receive a bestowal of wisdom. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), chapter 6. Such a complete dependence of human beings on the gods was a frequent theme of the poet Theognis who declared: “no man is himself the cause of loss and gain ... the Gods are the givers of them both.” Theognis, *Elegy and Iambus I*, trans. J. M. Edmonds (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), l. 134.

⁶⁹⁹The fundamental grammar of the moral self in the Hebrew Bible seems to have an applicability here. The interior agency of the individual (desire, knowledge, and submission to external authority) is empowered by a divine agency (usually spirit, *רוח*) which creates a new capacity within the individual. In this text, divine agency comes through the spirit of understanding who fills and enhances the interior capacity of the scholar for wisdom, counsel, and knowledge expressed in *παιδεία* and in a life in accord with covenant law. Carol Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self: Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism,” *SBL* 131: 5-25; John R. Levenson, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

⁷⁰⁰See section 4.3.9.

embrace both the superiority of the wisdom sought by the one surrendering his mind to study and its close connection with the surrender of his heart to seeking the Creator. For Sirach, the surrender of mind to intellectual pursuits and the surrender of heart to seeking the creator are both dependent on an opportunity for the physical and mental freedom associated with the social concept σχολή. The removal of any need for *πρᾶξις* leaves the scholar ready to be filled with an inspired wisdom reflecting the breadth and depth of divine wisdom itself.

5.2.5 Πνεῦμα Συνέσεως and the Unity of Wisdom

Being filled with the spirit of understanding is an act of divine empowerment which validates and builds on the interior agency of the scholar. Having surrendered his mind to the study of creation wisdom in the broad intellectual traditions of the world and having surrendered his heart to seeking his Creator, the scholar embraces a humble and prayerful stillness before the Most High. Since God is held to be the source of all wisdom, it can only be God who may empower the wisdom of the scholar. The language of Sirach 39:6 evokes images of a creative flowing together in which the scholar will be filled (*ἐμπίπλημι*) with a spirit of understanding (*σύνεσις*) (union, conflux) and pour forth (*ἀνομβρέω*) words of wisdom and grateful praise.⁷⁰¹ The text evokes images of a confluence of divine wisdom poured out at creation with the wisdom of Israelite election tradition.⁷⁰² The extension and comprehension of divine wisdom flow together in the faithful scholar and pour forth as words of wisdom and grateful praise. The work of the successful and faithful scholar continues, but now his counsel and knowledge are informed and guided by the divine as he manifests an inspired wisdom in the *παιδεία* of his teaching (*διδασκαλία*) and his pride in the law of the Lord's covenant. The strong image of divine empowerment serves as an important rhetorical validation of scholarly

⁷⁰¹See section 4.3.8.

⁷⁰²See the images of water, pouring, flowing, flooding and channeling in Sirach 1:9-10; 24:25-34.

activities that reach beyond the limits of Jewish tradition to explore the wisdom of the world and, at the same time, remain faithfully rooted in the unique wisdom revealed to Israel. This is the superior wisdom that Sirach wants to identify as σοφία γραμματέως.

5.2.6 Γραμματεὺς and the Mind and Heart of the Scholar

The word γραμματεὺς appears only in the proposition σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρία σχολῆς (Sir 38:24). There is no other explicit mention of scribe anywhere else in the discourse. Any intended connection between γραμματεὺς and the sage scholar of the syncrisis must be inferred from the text of the discourse. The inferences may be drawn in several ways.

First, the socio-cultural texture and intertexture of Sirach's discourse with Egyptian school text traditions that commonly contrasted the physically demanding lives of skilled trade workers with the privileged life of a scribe suggest a sense of scribal superiority and the desire to achieve it. Sirach's contrast is not between artisans and scribes but between the wisdom embodied in the skilled artisans and the wisdom sought by the one dedicating his mind to study. The domain-specific wisdom of the skilled workers maintains the fabric of the created world. The intellectual pursuits of one devoting his life to broad study will embody a superior wisdom and may come to embody a reflection of divine wisdom itself. Since the school text syncrisis appeal to the superiority of scribal life over the lives of artisans, it would be natural for the audience to identify the superior wisdom of Sirach's syncrisis as the wisdom desired to maintain the social superiority of the scribe. The socially conservative and hierarchical structure of Egyptian society is to be maintained by the association of the scribe with the superior wisdom of the syncrisis.

Second, the advantages and privileges which characterize the superiority of scribal life in the traditional school texts include: freedom from the necessity of physical labour, an opportunity for learning, appointment to positions of responsibility, relationships with

influential and powerful people, and a lasting name. In Sirach's syncretism, the narrow wisdom of the artisans is exercised in the busyness of physical work and the deliberations of a continual *πραξις*. The association of scribal wisdom with the wisdom of the artisans amounts to a surrender of advantages and privileges traditionally associated with the scribal profession. Sirach's subsequent dissociation of those embodying the narrow wisdom of artisans from positions traditionally occupied by scribes (Sir 39:33-34) offers yet another reason why scribal wisdom would not self identify with the lesser wisdom of the skilled workers. In contrast, the wisdom sought in mindful study leads to a complete maintenance of traditional scribal privileges and to full engagement in the roles and opportunities considered to be part of the socially superior domain of well-trained and learned scribes.⁷⁰³ It is not too difficult to make the transfer of the wisdom sought by a learned and pious scholar to the realm of the scribe.

Finally, Sirach's alignment of the wisdom of the scribe with an opportunity for *σχολή*, aligns scribal wisdom with the opportunities and concerns that characterize the wisdom of the sage scholar. Embracing *σχολή* and its freedom from busyness allowed time and mental space for learning and reflecting on broad intellectual traditions, for developing the virtues of character associated with *ἀρετή*, for participating in civic and social duties, and for a pious submission before the Creator, the source of all wisdom. In

⁷⁰³In Egypt, as in Mesopotamia, literacy was a mark of the elite and it carried an immense prestige. Many pharaohs claimed the ability to write and several were even buried with writing implements. H.W.F. Saggs, *Civilization Before Greece and Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 98–99; John Baines and Christopher Eyre, "Four Notes on Literacy," *GM* 61 (1983): 79–81. What is known about education in Egypt suggests that it was intensely focused on the mastery, reproduction and memorization of specific key texts. Egyptologist Jan Assmann identifies these materials as "cultural text," by which he means, the cultural texts that were copied and memorized by students as they were trained in scribal skills also served to enculturate them into an elite class of tradents passing on these same texts. Taking such "cultural texts" into their hearts, prospective students were inducted into the values and concerns of the ruling class and, therein, perpetuated a prevailing social structure in their own lives and teaching. This education-enculturation process was regarded as the final step in the formation of a complete human being. Assman expresses it in modern terms when he says, "the biological *hardware* says virtually nothing, only cultural *software* makes the person into a human." Jan Assmann, "Kulturelle und literarische Texte," in *Ancient Egyptian History, Literature and Forms*, ed. A. Loprieno, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 69–70.

this shared opportunity for σχολή, the learned scholar and the sage scribe have, in the mind of the audience, become identical in their shared σχολή and in their stillness before God.⁷⁰⁴ In this stillness, the scribe, already wise in exploring and knowing human limits, submits to the divine who may bestow the spirit of understanding that will “pour forth” as an inspired wisdom.

The argument of the discourse is complete. The wisdom of the scribe is identified with the superior wisdom of the learned and faithful scholar. Since the superior wisdom of the scholar is built upon an opportunity for the privileges and relationships that characterize σχολή, the wisdom of the scribe is necessarily in such an opportunity of leisure (σχολή).

5.2.7 The Concluding Encomium

Appealing to common encomiastic topics such as those used in his syncretism, Sirach begins by pointing at the “many” (πολλοί) who “will praise” the scribe’s understanding” (αἰνέσουσιν τὴν σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ πολλοί) (Sir 39:9^a). Epideictic discourse functions to encourage and augment the intensity of audience adherence to values and judgements which are not strictly demonstrable through apodictic logic and, hence, remain open to possible challenge or disregard.⁷⁰⁵ Here, Sirach is modelling the response that he expects from his immediate audience as they are moved to recognize the excellent achievements of the inspired scribe. Continuing with the topic of personal reputation and a remembered name, Sirach echoes the promises common to the Egyptian school texts and

⁷⁰⁴The psalmist already knew this “stillness” when declaring: σχολάσατε καὶ γινῶτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ θεός (Ps 45:11 LXX), “Be still and know that I am God....”

⁷⁰⁵“Argumentation is an action which always tends to modify a preexisting state of affairs. This is true even of epideictic speech: this is why it is argumentative. But while the person who takes the initiative in a debate is comparable to an aggressor, the one who by speaking wishes to strengthen established values may be likened to the guardian of dikes under constant assault by the ocean.” Chaïm Perelman, “The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning (1970),” in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from the Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed., ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston, MA: Bedford, 2001 NY: Bedford, 2000), 1384–1385. Cf. Richard Graff and Wendy Winn, “Presencing ‘Communion’ in Chaïm Perelman’s New Rhetoric,” *PR* 39 (2006): 47.

Greek encomia for a lasting remembrance and a name that will live through all generations, τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ζήσεται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν (Sir 39:9^b). The wisdom of the scribe will be spoken of (διηγέομαι) by the nations (ἔθνη). The renown of the scribe, like the extent of divine wisdom, is both international and local. Highlighting the breadth and depth of reputation, the rhetor mirrors for the audience the breadth and depth of the scribal wisdom to be achieved through an opportunity for σχολή. The scribe is now included among the famous men whose sayings may be remembered (Sir 39:2) and his praise will be proclaimed (ἐξαγγέλλω) in the assembly (ἐκκλησία) where the artisans have no eminence. (39:10). The language of praise and memory (αἰνέω, ἔπαινος, οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται, οὐκ ἀποστήσεται, διηγήσονται, ἐξαγγελεῖ) reinforces the embodiment of superior wisdom and the place of σχολή in its development. Because such values as reputation and renown are neither fixed nor immutable, they are continually recast and remodeled to reassure audience support.⁷⁰⁶

A final εἰάν construction ends the discourse on a note of settled satisfaction in life and even in death: εἰάν ἐμμεῖνῃ ὄνομα καταλείψει ἢ χίλιοι καὶ εἰάν ἀναπαύσῃται ἐκποιεῖ αὐτῷ (“If he lives a long life he will leave a name greater than a thousand and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him,” Sir 39:11) The last thought of the discourse is a final reference to a great name that lasts even beyond the grave.⁷⁰⁷

5.3 A New Understanding of Wisdom

Among the many different Hellenistic and Egyptian influences evident in the text of Sirach’s discourse on scribal wisdom is the use of the Hellenistic concept of σχολή.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁶Perelman, “Practical Reasoning,” 1379.

⁷⁰⁷Hutto, *Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric*, 222. In Egyptian culture, one’s soul lives on as long as one’s name lives on. Gaining and keeping a good name are strong motivators which had great influence on moral behaviour.

⁷⁰⁸Hellenistic-Egyptian influences include: a text presented as part of a collection self-identified as a Greek translation of earlier Hebrew materials, intertexture with Egyptian school text traditions, the

As already seen, the appearance of *σχολή* in the Septuagint text is rare and, when it is used, the tone is almost always negative.⁷⁰⁹ There is no formal equivalency with the surviving Hebrew fragments of Ben Sira 38:34.⁷¹⁰ The term appears as an addition or interpretation included in the five word proposition setting out the intention of the discourse.

What Sirach has accomplished in this discourse is an elaboration of a superior scribal wisdom in which traditional religious boundaries are crossed and maintained simultaneously.⁷¹¹ Faced with the reality of living as part a Jewish sub-culture within a dominant syncretistic Hellenism, Sirach wanted to elaborate an understanding of scribal wisdom that accounted for the uniqueness of Jewish faith within the realities and demands of quotidian experience dominated by Hellenistic culture and its opportunities. Examining the web of beliefs and practices of Israel's election tradition, Sirach finds interpretive purchase in the belief that the God of Israel is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire world. This belief is consistently present throughout the discourse. It is expressed in the recognition that the artisans support the fabric of the created world and that their prayer of entreaty is for trade skills (Sir 38:34). It is present in the law of the Most High, the wisdom of the ancestors, and in the prophecies representing the voice of the divine (Sir 39:1). It is present in the surrender of heart to the Lord who made him (39:5), and in the spirit of understanding which empowers the wisdom of the learned and pious scholar (39:6). Because of this belief Sirach is able to maintain that all wisdom and order is rooted in the God of Israel. Moreover, since that wisdom and order was poured out over all creation, it must be a universal wisdom accessible to all who search for it. The

influence of a philosophical debate concerning the relationship of *πρᾶξις* and *σοφία*, references to *παιδεία* as indicators of wisdom, international recognition and praise for the scribe and so on.

⁷⁰⁹See section 4.5.3.

⁷¹⁰See section 1.5.1

⁷¹¹Steven Mailloux, "Articulation and Understanding: The Pragmatic Intimacy Between Rhetoric and Hermeneutics," in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, ed. Walter Jost and Hyde J. Michael (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 387–88.

learning and study of all scholars who observe the order of the world and reflect on the patterns of successful, life-giving behaviours are focused on the same creation wisdom that was poured out by Israel's God. The learning and insights of the sages and scholars who study and ponder creation are preserved and recorded in the intellectual and sapiential traditions of the world. These traditions may be named differently, they may be associated with other religious histories or laws, they may even claim their own prophetic revelations and insights, but for Sirach they are all absolutely rooted in the singular creative power of Israel's God. The same is true for the effects of that creation wisdom which support the development of the personal ἀρετή necessary for participation in service among the great and appearing with rulers, for service abroad and for moral discernment. For Sirach, all of this development and activity is rooted in the wisdom of creation poured out by Israel's God. At the same time, Sirach also recognizes that the quest for creation wisdom leads the scholar to seeking the Lord who made him, the very source of wisdom itself. Because, that source of wisdom is, for Sirach, the God of Israel, even faithful Jewish scholars may confidently cross the religious boundaries of Jewish tradition to mindfully engage and probe the great intellectual and wisdom traditions of the world as they consider the universal wisdom of creation. Traditional religious boundaries are crossed in the intellectual pursuit of the wisdom fashioned and poured out by the Creator.

The faithful Jewish scholar, who gives his mind to studying the intellectual traditions of the world and applies his learning in the broad arenas of life (Sir 39:1-4), also surrenders his heart to seeking "the Lord who made him," engages in prayer, and asks forgiveness for sins (Sir 39:5). In this the traditional boundaries of Israelite election, law and wisdom tradition continue to be maintained. The Creator being sought in prayer and forgiveness is Yahweh, the source of all creation wisdom and also the God who entered into a particular relationship with Israel, established an identifiable cultic presence among the people, and set forth a covenant law to be respected and obeyed.

Standing humbly before his God, the learned and faithful scholar may be filled with “the spirit of understanding” which empowers and directs his wisdom, counsel and knowledge. The faithful Jewish scholar is empowered by the spirit of understanding to probe the full breadth and depth of divine wisdom as it is manifest in the universal wisdom of creation and also as it is revealed in the particular wisdom of Israel’s election and covenant. Such an empowerment by the Creator serves as a rhetorical approval and validation of the faithful scholar’s boundary crossing study and community service.

Paradoxically, the same boundaries that protect Jewish identity are now also opened to a new understanding of wisdom that aligns with Israel’s broadened cultural experience.⁷¹²

Oppositional binary language is avoided with a model of cultural interaction that does not intend to unify Jewish and non-Jewish cultures but to diversify them further through their mutual interaction. What Sirach has expressed is a practical reweaving of wisdom with the image of a learned and boundary crossing scholar who probes the universal wisdom of creation and simultaneously remains faithful to the particular wisdom of Israel’s election tradition. This is the wisdom that Sirach wishes to identify with the scribe who manifests that wisdom in the broad boundary-crossing παιδεία of his teaching and, at the same time, maintains traditional boundaries by glorying in the law of the Lord’s covenant. In this, the wisdom of the scribe embodies and models the σύνεσις (coming together, union, understanding) of divine wisdom itself which embraces both the universal and the particular simultaneously. Such a rewoven understanding of wisdom allows Hellenistic-Egyptian-Jewish diaspora scribes to remain engaged in the full range of activities and tasks associated with public scribal culture and, at the same time, to live lives that reflect a faithful embrace of their Jewish traditions.

In the final encomium of the discourse (39:9-11), Sirach publicly celebrates and embraces the achievement of this rewoven, non-binary understanding of wisdom with a

⁷¹²Epstein, “Transcultural Experiments,” 8–10.

recognition and praise of many (πολλοί) including a full representation of the Gentile nations (ἔθνη) as well as the community of the faithful (ἐκκλησία). The σύνεσις of the wisdom is matched with a σύνεσις of praise.

In summary, Sirach has used the opportunity for σχολή to demonstrate the superiority of an intellectual pursuit of creation wisdom leading to a recognition of the Creator as the source of all wisdom. Σχολή also implies a stillness before the Most High, and a recognition of the limits of human πράξις which may lead to being filled with a spirit of understanding that empowers the scholar to voice the breadth and depth of divine wisdom itself in a continued, but divinely inspired, teaching and obedience. The wisdom of the scribe has been rewoven to establish its place within the broader cultural horizon of the Jewish-Egyptian diaspora.

5.4 Rhetorical Force and Audience Movement

Rhetorical force has been described as “a complex set of symbolic forces set in play at the moment of utterance.”⁷¹³ The rhetorical force of a text can never be presumed or given as a fixed element, rather it is dynamic and must continually be observed at play in particular rhetorical utterances as it moves an audience toward a desired goal. As part of an interpretive analytics, rhetography is the way in which a text, written or spoken, evokes images, scenes or simulations in the imaginations of the readers or hearers. Such graphic images combine with the rhetoric of a text to move the audience to adopt a particular attitude or course of action.⁷¹⁴ In other words, rhetographic interpretation is

⁷¹³Stephen Browne Howard, “Close Textual Analysis: Approaches and Applications,” in *Rhetorical Criticism: Perspectives in Action*, ed. Jim H. Kuypers (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 63.

⁷¹⁴The current attention to rhetography arises from the work of cognitive theorists, especially those who have pioneered the notions of “conceptual blending” and “cognitive integration networks.” What is being suggested is that human beings, at the most basic level, make decisions based on the ability to create “imaginative mental simulations” and to project imaginatively the processes they would entertain as possible courses of action and their consequences. This process is supported by past experience and observations (including past cultural experiences encoded in, for example, rituals, texts, and traditions which serve as a resource for current decision making. The human capacity for language allows for the

concerned with how graphic images and the conceptual domains which they evoke augment the expressed argumentation (rhetology) of a discourse.⁷¹⁵ Thus “a speaker or writer composes, intentionally or unintentionally, a context of communication through statements or signs that conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke “familiar” contexts that provide meaning for a reader or hearer.”⁷¹⁶ The rhetorical force in Sirach 38:24–39:11 has been structured using images of scribes, leisure, artisans, craftsmanship, social inclusion and exclusion, social superiority, scholarship, positions of influence, surrender before God, divine empowerment, public praise, and a lasting renown. With these multiple images, Sirach plays out a rhetological argument using implied enthymemes showing that a reduction of *πραξις* leads being made wise (*σοφίζω*).

The discourse opens with a proposition that evokes multiple social images and attitudes: “the wisdom of the scribe (is) in an opportunity of leisure.” Images would have included: mental pictures of scribes, their wide range of activities, and their perceived influence in Egyptian society. The images would also have included projections of a “leisured” class of citizens who engaged in a privileged way of life and saw themselves as embodying a particular set of socially honoured values (*ἀρετή*).⁷¹⁷ That the wisdom of the scribe was to be associated with an opportunity for *σχολή* would have evoked

sharing of these “mental simulations” with others. By assigning phonemes to represent the “imaginative simulations” in the public domain, it is possible to affect and influence each other’s thoughts and feelings. Such principles appear in the rhetorical theories of many modern rhetoricians. Todd Oakley, “The Human Rhetorical Potential,” *Written Communication* 16 [1999]: 98–100; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*; Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Allan Paivio, *Mind and Its Evolution: A Dual Coding Theoretical Approach* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

⁷¹⁵deSilva, “Seeing Things John’s Way,” 274; Robbins, “Enthymeme and Picture,” 179.

⁷¹⁶Recent works by L. G. Bloomquist, “Eyes wide open” and “Methodology” seek to ground rhetography in cognitive psychology and neuroscience.

⁷¹⁷The Greek notion of character, while difficult to define precisely, includes both a performative and an ethical dimension. Those with “an opportunity of leisure” calls up evaluative or contrasting images of those who are and are not required to engage in labour or to work for another to provide the necessities of life. Temmerman, *Crafting Characters*, 11.

different feelings ranging from anticipatory accord to critical resentment or even a dismissal of such a non-Jewish idea.

The opening proposition suggests an audience with whom Sirach wanted to explore the relationship between scribal wisdom and an opportunity for σχολή. It is possible that entire discourse was a personal apology explaining Sirach's own perceived leisure in the performance of his scribal role. Alternatively, it is also possible that Sirach was concerned with raising the profile of scribal wisdom at a place and time when the wisdom of the skilled trades was valued more than scholarly reflection. Whatever the specific case may have been, the discourse makes it clear that Sirach intended to demonstrate the superiority of a wisdom sought through intellectual exploration and a surrender of heart to seeking the source of all wisdom. Foundational to both of those searches for wisdom is an opportunity for σχολή with its particular advantages and privileges.

Sirach 38:24^b introduces the rhetological dimension of the argument with the succinct statement, ὁ ἐλασσούμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται (“the one lessening business can become wise.”).⁷¹⁸ Establishing an inverse relationship between πράξις and σοφίζω, the statement functions as a premise that will be explored and validated in a rhetographically resourced syncretism contrasting the wisdom of the artisans with the wisdom sought by the one devoted to mindful study. The πράξις of the artisans, accentuated with repeated images of their attention to detail and a resulting ἀγρυπνία, offers a very effective picture of a domain-specific σοφίζω. The limited nature of such a wisdom is further emphasized by a listing of activities from which skilled workers are

⁷¹⁸The statement has a chreia-like tone and directness but it is not attributed to any wise authority. The statement also reflects common philosophical and social discussions related to eudaimonism and the relationship of work to happiness, well-being or a good life. See Michael Gass, “Eudaimonism and Theology in Stoic Accounts of Virtue,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61 (2000): 19–37.

excluded because such involvements require a wisdom beyond what they have achieved in their realm of activity.

In contrast with the artisans, Sirach presents the image of one devoting his mind to the study of intellectual traditions. Here one finds a lessened *πρᾶξις* and a fuller wisdom expressed in arenas of public activity similar to those from which the artisans were excluded. The discourse offers an effective image to argue the superiority of the broad wisdom and skills sought through mindful engagements. The achievement of superior wisdom is set within a context that deploys a language and a progression that implies an opportunity for *σχολή*. In accepting the superiority of intellectual wisdom over the wisdom of the skilled workers, the audience also accepts the role that an opportunity for *σχολή* has played in achieving that superior wisdom. The scholar's surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him continues the quest for wisdom with a further a lessening of *πρᾶξις*. With prayer, petition and asking forgiveness of sins, the scholar recognizes the limits of human action and submits in stillness (*σχολή*) before the very source of wisdom itself.

Sirach's use of syncrisis in setting forth the superiority of mindful and prayerful wisdom easily recalls the traditional use of syncritical comparisons to establish the superiority of the scribal life over the lives of skilled trades workers. The school text syncrises stressed the exemption of scribes from manual labour so that they might engage in more prestigious and materially rewarding roles attached to the royal administration. In this Sirach is implicitly appealing to the scribal sense of social superiority. In this syncrisis, however, Sirach is proposing a social superiority based in the achievement of a higher level of wisdom. This superior wisdom still leads to positions of responsibility but it also extends to include a scholar's surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him. In prayer and asking for the forgiveness of his sins, the scholar moves into a closer relationship with the necessary and unchanging realm of the divine, the domain of full

wisdom.⁷¹⁹ In this image, Sirach extends the lessening of *πρᾶξις* toward a stillness (*σχολή*) before the divine source of all wisdom (Sir 39:5). In stillness (*σχολή*) the learned and pious scholar is open to divine agency that may empower him with the spirit of understanding that enables him to pour forth words of inspired wisdom and prayerful gratitude.

The empowerment of the scholar serves as a rhetorical affirmation and divine approval of the quest for wisdom among the intellectual traditions of the world and in the revealed wisdom of Israel's election tradition. In this Sirach has constructed an understanding of wisdom which reaches beyond the limits of his diaspora Jewish community and, at the same time, maintains the boundaries of Judaism's uniqueness. Thus, while the learned scholar surrenders his mind (*ψυχή*) to a pursuit of the intellectual traditions of the world, he surrenders his heart (*καρδία*), to seeking the Lord who made him. He surrenders, the executive-self, his fundamental understanding and perspective of the world, to the God who entered relationship with Israel. In prayer and seeking forgiveness of sins he builds on that relationship and surrenders before the power of his God.

An opportunity for *σχολή* has enabled broad learning, the development of intellectual virtues, participation in arenas of public life, opportunities for reflection, and a stillness before the wisdom of God. An opportunity for *σχολή*, has prepared and allowed the scholar to be filled with a superior wisdom that reflects the breadth and depth of divine wisdom itself as it continues to be poured out in the *παιδεία* of his teaching and in his embrace of covenant law.

The discourse has skillfully and persuasively moved the audience from a view of scribal wisdom that somehow questioned the value or need of an opportunity for *σχολή* to

⁷¹⁹Philosophers identify such stillness as contemplation, the highest form of human activity which is concerned with a reflection on the ultimate foundation of life, the unchanging necessity of wisdom, which is beyond any need for the moral deliberation of *πρᾶξις*.

a recognition that such an opportunity is foundational to the establishment of a superior wisdom. By providing an opportunity to study the broad intellectual and wisdom traditions of the world, σχολή promotes a deeper sense of the breadth of the wisdom poured out by God at creation. By allowing a stillness before God, σχολή recognizes the limits of human agency and stands open to the spirit that empowers all wisdom. The faithful Jewish community now stands open to the intellectual insights that may be derived from the study of wisdom captured in the repositories of international scholarship and, paradoxically, it also remains centred in and formed by the particular wisdom revealed in Israel's election and covenant tradition.

5.5 Conclusion of Ideological Texture

Ideological texture is concerned with how the assembled resources of the discourse function to move the audience toward its desired goal. Here the concern was with how Sirach moved his audience toward an acceptance of a relationship between scribal wisdom and an opportunity for σχολή. Tracking that movement began with a re-engagement of the configured *topoi* within the argumentative flow of a deliberative syncrisis presented as a rhetographically resourced argument flowing from the premise that the one lessening πρᾶξις can become wise. A syncritical comparison of the wisdom embodied in the work of artisans with the wisdom sought by one devoted to mindful study and surrender before the Creator concluded that the intellectual pursuit of wisdom was superior to the domain-specific wisdom of the artisans.

While arguing the superiority of the wisdom sought by the learned scholar, Sirach makes it clear in Sir 39:1-5 that he establishes the superior wisdom in privileges and opportunities associated with σχολή. By accepting the superiority of the mindful search for wisdom in the intellectual traditions of the world, the audience also implicitly accepts an association of such superior wisdom with an opportunity for σχολή. The audience has already started to move.

Considering the learned and faithful scholar within the limits of his own Judaism, he surrenders his heart to seeking the Lord who made him. That is, he seeks the Creator, God of Israel's covenant tradition. In prayer and asking forgiveness of his sins the scholar submits before the Most High and in this submission acknowledges the limits of human agency. In the rhetology of the discourse, the movement toward the source of wisdom reduces the place and need for *πρᾶξις*. The result is a stillness (*σχολή*) before God that embodies a readiness to be made wise. If willing, God may empower the activities of the scholar with the spirit of understanding (*πνεῦμα συνέσεως*, literally "the spirit of confluence, of flowing together") so that he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own. Such an empowerment leads to an inspired teaching and an embrace of covenant law.

Since the God of Israel is the source of all wisdom and order poured out at creation and since that creation wisdom is accessible to all, an intellectual exploration of creation wisdom and order permits a faithful Jewish scholar to engage the wisdom and knowledge traditions of the world. In this Sirach has proposed an intellectual crossing of the traditional religious boundaries of Judaism to explore the sapiential materials of the nations and to participate in their social and civic affairs. Paradoxically, the boundaries are also firmly maintained by the scholar's surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him. It is an opportunity for *σχολή* which allows the intellectual pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. It is also the stillness of *σχολή* before the Creator which may lead to the fullness of *πνεῦμα συνέσεως*. The wisdom of the scribe is in an opportunity for *σχολή*. At the level of human agency that wisdom is in a learned and faithful stillness before the source of all wisdom. At the level of divine agency it is an understanding of the full breadth and depth of divine wisdom itself.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis proposes that Sir 38:24–39:11 is a rhetorical elaboration of σοφία γραμματέως as a divinely inspired wisdom uttered by a learned scholar who embodies a dynamic correlation of the universal wisdom “poured out” at creation with the particular wisdom revealed to Israel in its covenantal history. The claim is that Sirach uses the Hellenistic social concept σχολή to argue that freedom from manual labour, engagement in ἐλευθέριος παιδεία, the development of personal virtue (ἀρετή), and an appropriate piety before the Creator, disposes the scribe to being filled with a divinely bestowed “spirit of understanding” which empowers the utterance of a new, superior wisdom. The superior wisdom will be embodied in a continued, but divinely informed, correlation of παιδεία with “glory (καυχάομαι) in the law of the Lord’s covenant.” The efforts of this research have yielded the following conclusions.

6.1 Sirach 38:24–39:11 is a Rhetorical Argument

Sirach 38:24–39:11 is a rhetorical argument structured as a deliberative syncrisis with the intention of moving an audience to accept the proposition that “the wisdom of the scribe (is) in an opportunity for σχολή.” A programmatic socio-rhetorical interpretive analytics of the discourse began by establishing the discourse as a discrete rhetorical unit. An examination of the many critical attempts to situate the discourse within an overall organizational structure of *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* found no academic consensus regarding the place or function of the discourse within the overall collection of

the Sirach corpus.⁷²⁰ The only common agreement was that Sir 38:24–39:11 is to be taken as a single literary interpretive unit in which a clear opening (Sir 38:24) and closing (Sir 39:9-11) bracket an extended comparison of skilled artisans concerned with the quality and detail of their work (Sir 38:25-34) with one who devotes his mind to intellectual pursuits and surrenders his heart to seeking the Lord who made him (Sir 39:1-8). A closer examination of the textures at play within the discourse reveals that the comparison is actually between those who are more and less preoccupied with the necessity of *πραΐξις* (business, busyness) in their search to become wise. Both the rhetology and rhetography of the text combine to create a persuasive argument that all who are less preoccupied with *πραΐξις* can be made or become wise (*σοφίζω*). Since the argument was being presented within the cultural horizon of the Hellenistic–Jewish–Egyptian diaspora, the arguments are socially and culturally constructed for such an audience. The Hellenistic concept *σχολή*, for example, is central to Sirach’s argument, but it has no formal equivalency in the surviving Hebrew fragments of Ben Sira.⁷²¹

The discourse is deliberative in that it intends to move an audience to accept the association of scribal wisdom with an opportunity for *σχολή*. It is syncretical in that it employs common encomiastic topics of comparison (e.g. education, culture, positions of responsibility, social influence, good citizenship, reputation, mindfulness, and piety) to demonstrate the superiority of the wisdom sought in the mind and heart of a scholar over the narrow, domain-specific wisdom demonstrated in the expertise of skilled workers. Sirach will argue that the surrender of mind to study and heart to seeking the Creator represents a search for a superior wisdom with a reduced need for *πραΐξις* and a fuller readiness to be made wise by the spirit of understanding (Sir 39:5-8). A divine

⁷²⁰See sections 1.5.4 and 3.2

⁷²¹See section 2.2 regarding the cultural horizons of a rhetorical argument.

empowerment of the pious scholar allows for the expression of an inspired wisdom that is manifest in a learned παιδεία and a glorying in the law of the Lord's covenant.

The discourse ends with an encomium of high praise (Sir 39:9-11) accorded to the one achieving and mediating such a superior wisdom. By placing the praise and recognition in the mouths of the many, through all generations, among the nations, as well as in the assembly, Sirach reflects the all-encompassing appeal of the inspired scribal wisdom. Rhetorically such extensive praise serves to validate the conclusion of the discourse and to elicit from the immediate audience the same high level response for the understanding and wisdom of the wise scholar. The expressions of recognition, honour, renown, and a name that lasts even beyond death draw the audience into full support for the opening proposition, σοφία γραμματέως ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς.

6.2 God is the Source of all Wisdom

A basic assumption of Sirach's argument is that God is the source and sustainer of all wisdom. That assumption surfaces at many points throughout the discourse. The wisdom of the artisans "maintains the created world" and their prayers of entreaty (δέησις) are to secure the skills of their trades (Sir 38:34). The law of the Most High assumes a divine origin for social and religious legislation; the wisdom of the ancients assumes an order better understood by those living closer to the moment of creation; the study of prophecy assumes a divine voice (Sir 39:1). Surrendering of heart to seeking the Lord who made him, prayer, and asking forgiveness of his sins all assume a relationship with a powerful Creator and discernible expectations. The possibility of being filled with the spirit of understanding, prayers of gratitude, divine guidance in counsel and knowledge, and glorying in the law of the Lord's covenant presume the presence of a God who is the source of universal and revealed wisdom.

Accepting the belief that God is the source of wisdom and order allows Sirach to view wisdom as a unity. Since all wisdom originates with God, the universal wisdom and

order of creation, probed and explored in the intellectual traditions of the world, is considered to be a reflection of its divine source. Such a wisdom which governs cosmic order and human behaviour is accessible to all who search for it. The wisdom expressed in the exercise of the skilled trades is rooted in God. The wisdom sought and articulated in the intellectual and sapiential traditions of shared human experience was poured out by God. The wisdom expressed by the mindful scholar originates in God. God is also the source of the particular wisdom expressed in Israel's election tradition, religious practice, and in the law of the Lord's covenant. All wisdom holds together in the one God who created the universe and who entered into a particular relationship with Israel. There is no separation of wisdom into conflicting or contradictory pockets of meaning or application. Humans may struggle to comprehend or express the single fabric of all wisdom, but for and in God all wisdom is one.

A freedom of mind and body allows an opportunity to study and consider the repositories of human reflections on the wisdom of the created universe.⁷²² Wisdom is expected and exercised in social order, skilled work, productive living, good governance, and right judgement. The intellectual pursuit of wisdom wherever it is to be found may be seen as an engagement with the Creator. Jew and Gentile alike may intellectually pursue creation and probe the wisdom inherent in it.

As a pious Jew, Sirach recognizes that the surrender of heart to the Lord who made him, is a surrender to Yahweh, the God of creation and the God of Israel's unique covenant. The general intellectual pursuit of creation wisdom must also include a surrender of the core self (καρδία) to Yahweh who initiated a particular relationship with Israel. In prayer and asking forgiveness for his sins, the faithful Jewish scholar will recognize the cultic and ethical piety of Israelite tradition which signals a submission before the Most High. The God of creation and the God of covenant are the same; the

⁷²²See section 4.3.1.

wisdom of God is one. The learned and faithful Jewish scholar embraces that unity within the human limits of his diligent study and faithful obedience. Since all wisdom is rooted in God, a full comprehension of God's wisdom necessarily requires πνεῦμα συνέσεως. Being filled with the spirit of understanding empowers the scholar to pour forth words of wisdom and prayerful gratitude. The unity of wisdom is understood, expressed and lived out in a learned παιδεία and a faithful obedience. The recognition of the unity of wisdom is rhetorically reasserted and reinforced by the encomium (Sir 39:9-11) in which the sage scholar is praised by the many, the nations, the assembly, and all generations, both in life and in the memory of his great name.

6.3 An Opportunity for Σχολή Leads to a Superior Wisdom

In full agreement with the opinion of Christine Schams, an understanding of scribal wisdom is the primary concern of this discourse.⁷²³ That understanding, however, is a concern with scribal wisdom as it is experienced and lived in the Hellenistic–Jewish–Egyptian diaspora. The discourse is concerned with σοφία γραμματέως as it relates to the Hellenistic concept of σχολή and the full cultural and social implications of that opportunity. Sirach argues that the achievement of a superior wisdom, unlike the wisdom of the artisans, requires a freedom of mind and body to engage in the learning and probing of established wisdom traditions, the development of the intellectual virtues associated with participation in the arenas of life where wisdom is expected and exercised, and the reflective time to engage in seeking the source of all wisdom. As Schams notes the text is not much concerned with delineating the specific skills of the scribal craft (reading, writing, reciting, accounting, teaching, interpreting). Such skills are already implied in the high level activities and civic responsibilities associated with the scholar. Sirach is more concerned with an understanding of the nature of scribal

⁷²³See section 1.5.7.

wisdom in relation to the wisdom of artisans, the wisdom of a scholarly scribal culture, the wisdom of Israel and ultimately the wisdom of God. By delineating the superior wisdom of a learned and faithful scholar, Sirach proposes an understanding of wisdom which permits a full and open engagement of a Jewish scholar in the requirements, opportunities and appointments associated with Hellenistic-Egyptian scribal culture while, at the same time, remaining faithful to the intellectual and religious traditions of Israel.

In constructing his syncretical comparison of the wisdom embodied by skilled workers with the wisdom sought in the mind and heart of the scholar, Sirach deploys different lexical patterns configure different understandings of wisdom. For the wisdom of the artisans, he deploys a lexis which depicts a surrender of heart to ἔργον, a careful and continual attention to detail, and a high-level of *πραξις*. Such a surrender results in a narrow wisdom which is limited to the causes and principles of productive excellence.

In contrast, when describing the wisdom sought by one devoting his mind to study and his heart to seeking the Lord who made him the lexis shifts to include attitudes, privileges, and opportunities commonly associated with the notion of σχολή. As the syncretical comparison builds an argument for the superiority of the wisdom being sought in mind and heart, the implicit associations with the characteristics and opportunities of σχολή allow Sirach to establish a strong connection between the quest for a superior wisdom and the means by which it is sought.

The activities of the mindful scholar are the intellectual concerns of study, reflection, and interpretation. The text makes no reference to physical labour, preoccupation with business, or the requirements of material productivity. The notion of *πραξις* and its effects no longer dominate the discourse. Instead, the text projects the physical, intellectual, and mental freedom associated with an opportunity for σχολή. The verbs of Sirach 39:1-3 are concerned with the engagement of ψυχή rather than the physical body. The matters of concern are not material objects that require manipulation

but rather ideas and traditions that require study and thoughtful reflection. The considerations of the mindful scholar are the matters and topics of human intellectual and sapiential traditions rather than matters of work or the necessities of livelihood. In that sense, the mindful scholar is presented as one who enjoys time to linger with ideas, persons, and activities related to the privilege of ἐλευθέριος παιδεία.⁷²⁴ Sirach 39:4 places the mindful scholar in public service among the social elite. Such opportunities presume the establishment and demonstration of a personal excellence, self-reliance, and good citizenship (ἀρετή) demonstrated by those who enjoy the advantages of σχολή.⁷²⁵ Without ever using the word, Sirach has constructed an image of the one seeking wisdom in mindful study by applying images of actions, engagements, and privileges implicitly associated with those who enjoy an opportunity of σχολή. By embracing the syncretical argument for the superiority of intellectual wisdom, the audience also embraces the place of σχολή in that achievement.

The surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him (Sir 39:5) also implies an opportunity for σχολή. The time to attend to cultic and ethical piety expressed in prayer and asking forgiveness of sins requires mental and physical freedom from the demands of business and necessary work. A surrender of heart before the Creator acknowledges the limits of human agency. In philosophical terms, the scholar who recognizes the limits of human action also understands that the need or possibility of any form of πρᾶξις is unnecessary before God. What remains is a contemplative surrender before the divine necessity of the Most High. What is required is σχολή as it appears in the imperative form σχολάσατε.⁷²⁶ With all need for πρᾶξις gone, the inner and outer stillness prepares the one surrendering mind and heart to be made wise. God, the source of all wisdom, may fill the learned and pious scholar with πνεῦμα συνέσεως, the spirit of

⁷²⁴see section 4.5.2.

⁷²⁵See section 4.5.4.

⁷²⁶See section 4.5.3. Also see Ps 45:11 (LXX): “Be still and know that I am God!”

understanding. The superior wisdom that Sirach associates with the scribe is to be achieved in an opportunity of σχολή.

6.4 Πνεῦμα Συνέσεως Reveals the Unity of Wisdom

With the expression πνεῦμα συνέσεως Sirach identifies and names the unity of divine wisdom (Sir 39:6). Since all wisdom is rooted in God, πνεῦμα συνέσεως must be understood as a gift flowing from the creative spirit and power of God and as filling the one surrendering mind and heart. The word συνέσις, translated as “understanding” or “insight”, literally implies a conjoining, union, or conflux of water or thoughts. In the context of Sirach 39:6, the expression implies a divinely empowered “flowing together” of creation wisdom with election wisdom in the mind and heart of the learned and faithful scholar who pours forth words of wisdom of his own.⁷²⁷ These new words of wisdom are never separated from their divine source and the text continues to associate the wise words of the scholar with prayers of gratitude, meditation, and a divine guidance of counsel and knowledge. Even the lived expression of the inspired wisdom remains connected to a mindful παιδεία and a faithful commitment to covenant law. The wisdom of creation and revelation are never divided.

For people living in a social context dominated by an Egyptian-Hellenistic scribal culture and an intellectual syncretism, the belief that the experiences, knowledge, and insights represented in universal sapiential traditions are expressions of God’s own creative wisdom permits and invites Jewish scholars to intellectually engage ideas and traditions that extend far beyond those of Israel and diaspora Judaism. The development of the intellectual virtues necessary to hold public office are well within the realm of possibility for a Jewish scholar who devotes his mind (ψυχή) to study. At the same time, a faithful scholar also surrenders his heart (the core of his life and commitment) to

⁷²⁷See section 4.3.8.

seeking the Lord who made him. This surrender in prayer and asking forgiveness of sins is an acknowledgement that the God who poured out all wisdom and order on creation is the God of Israel's election. By surrendering his mind to studying intellectual traditions of the world and his heart to establishing a relationship with Yahweh, the Jewish scholar may cross the boundaries of a strictly Jewish world view and, at the same time, maintain those boundaries by remaining faithful in the practice of an appropriate piety before Israel's covenant Lord. When it is recognized that all wisdom and order is from God the efforts of human agency and learned achievement may be transformed into something even greater.

“The spirit of understanding” bestowed by God on the learned and faithful scholar empowers the utterance of a wisdom which reflects and mediates the breadth and overflowing fullness of God's own perfect wisdom. Such an inspired wisdom cannot be reduced to creation wisdom alone, nor can it be replaced by the wisdom of the law alone, rather it continues as a lived commitment to the all-embracing fullness of divine wisdom itself. For a sage scribe that commitment will be manifest in the embodied correlation of the παιδεία of his learning with the wisdom bestowed on Israel in “the law of the Lord's covenant” (ἐν νόμῳ διαθήκης κυρίου καυχῆσεται). Mind and heart, intellect and faith remain together.

6.5 The Scribe is the One Seeking Wisdom in Mind and Heart

That Sirach wants to identify the scribe with the one surrendering mind and heart to the search for wisdom is implied in the unfolding of the discourse. First, Sirach's use of deliberative syncretism mirrors the use of syncritical comparisons common in scribal training. Syncretisms like *The Satire of the Trades* were intended to establish the social superiority of the scribal profession over the lives of skilled workers. They served to motivate students to persist in their studies and reap the benefits of their work rather than

turn to the trades in hope of immediate prosperity.⁷²⁸ In a similar way, Sirach uses deliberative synchronism to argue the superiority of a wisdom sought in the realms of intellect and faith (realms associated with the necessary and absolute) over a wisdom sought in the realms of the physical and material (realms of the changing and impermanent). By dissociating scribal wisdom from the wisdom of the artisans and by appealing to a traditional sense of scribal superiority, Sirach wants to link scribal wisdom with learning and positions of public responsibility and influence. Superior social status and the privileges associated with that status will hold an immediate appeal for the scribe who wishes to maintain his place within a social hierarchy.⁷²⁹

Second, when setting out the domain-specific limits of the wisdom of the skilled workers, Sirach excludes such workers from positions and responsibilities commonly held by those who would be identified as scribes (Sir 38:33-34).⁷³⁰ In this, the wisdom required by the scribe is dissociated from or expanded beyond the limited wisdom demonstrated in the expertise of the trades. Similarly, by showing that the one seeking wisdom in the intellectual traditions of the world finds a full engagement in public responsibilities and opportunities commonly associated with highly successful scribes, Sirach associates his understanding of σοφία γραμματέως with the wisdom sought by the one devoting his mind to learning, reflection, and service. The implication is that the intellectual activities of the scholar are the same activities as those exercised by scribes in their public service roles. Sirach then extends the concern of the learned scholar to include a surrender of heart to seeking the Lord who made him. By implication such a seeking extends and expands the intellectual devotion of the scholar/scribe into a simultaneous search for the source of wisdom itself. With this reasoning, Sirach proposes

⁷²⁸See section 4.6.2.

⁷²⁹See section 4.6.3.

⁷³⁰See the sections of 4.6.4.

an association of both mind and heart in the one seeking a superior wisdom. He invites the faithful Jewish scholar/scribe into a deeper wisdom associated with the God of Israel.

Finally, by proposing that the wisdom of the scribe requires an opportunity for σχολή, and then arguing that the possibility of a superior wisdom is clearly related to the many advantages that flow out of an opportunity for leisure, Sirach is strongly linking the wisdom of the scribe with the superior wisdom of the one who surrenders his mind to learning and reflecting on universal wisdom traditions and who surrenders his heart to a relationship with the divine. In this, Sirach hopes that the scribe, like the learned and pious scholar, may be filled with the spirit of understanding and embody an inspired wisdom reflecting the breadth and depth of divine wisdom itself.

6.6 Sirach and The Wisdom of the Scribe

For Sirach the wisdom of the scribe is understood to be an intellectual openness to the vast collections of knowledge and reflection assembled in the sapiential traditions of the world. Sirach's scribe will be fully engaged in the mindful activities of seeking out, considering, preserving, and interpreting law, history, prophecy, sage narratives and wise sayings (Sir 39:1-3). Such a mindful probing of intellectual traditions is understood as an exploration of the wisdom and order poured out by God at the creation of the universe. The scribe will demonstrate the intellectual virtues and embody the social values necessary to participate in civic duties and to be entrusted with responsible and influential positions (Sir 39:4). Such opportunities are a privilege accorded to the few who enjoy an opportunity for σχολή and who are willing and able to accept the discipline of study (παιδεία) and the focus of learning. Public participation in positions of power and influence are clear indicators of success and social status. In that sense, the scribe may be considered as accomplished and socially approved. For Sirach, however, scribal wisdom necessarily implies more than the achievement of social status and success.

The wisdom of the scribe also involves a commitment to rising early to seek the Lord who made him. The fundamental perspectives of life (καρδία) which direct the intellectual virtues and civic service are to be grounded in the realization that wisdom is rooted in the Most High. In prayer and asking forgiveness of his sins, the scribe submits before the Creator, the ultimate and necessary foundation of wisdom itself. In this the scribe recognizes the limits of his own human agency in the search for wisdom. The σχολή that permitted the opportunity for learning and service also leads the scribe to recognizing a humble dependence on God and the necessity of divine agency in the achievement of wisdom. The privileges and superiority of scribal accomplishment are also challenged and tempered by a patient and powerless submission before the great Lord. The controlled and controlling *πρᾶξις* of the artisans is replaced by the privilege of learning and the challenge of knowing that all is ultimately dependent on God. The life and learning of the scribe is both privileged and challenged.

Holding together the dynamic correlation of accomplished learning and service with the humble recognition of dependency on God, the scribe may be filled with “the spirit of understanding” which pours forth in words of wisdom and gratitude. That the spirit of understanding is presented as a divine gift flows naturally from the belief that all wisdom has its origin in God. In this text, the gift functions as a rhetorical validation of the efforts to embrace the universal wisdom of creation and the particular wisdom of Jewish tradition which are brought together by the spirit of understanding.

From Sirach’s Jewish perspective, the Creator of the world and its order was Yahweh, the God of Israel. Any intellectual reflection on the wisdom and order of the world, irrespective of its source, is a reflection on the wisdom and order established by Yahweh. Because of this, a Jewish scribe may freely engage in the discourse of contemporaneous intellectual culture and still remain faithful to God and Jewish tradition. The focus of such intellectual discourse is nothing other than an exploration of the wisdom of the Creator, Yahweh. At the same time, while the faithful Jewish scribe is

surrendering his mind to a full participation in the intellectual discourse of his time, he is surrendering his heart to seeking the Lord who made him. The mind is engaged in study, but the heart surrenders in a living recognition of the Creator, the God of Israel's election. Such a balance of mind and heart is already a wisdom that recognizes the place of Israel's God within the world. The faithful Jewish scribe is already aware of the continuity between the divine act of creation and the divine act of election. At the level of human agency, this realization is already a deep scribal wisdom that dynamically balances the wisdom of creation with the wisdom of Israel's election and covenant law. In humble surrender before God, acknowledging the breadth and the continuity of divine wisdom, the scribe may now be empowered with the spirit of understanding so that he may pour forth words of wisdom of his own. In prayerful gratitude and a continuing divine guidance, the scribe will now manifest a wisdom that dynamically embodies a correlation of the universal wisdom poured out at creation with the particular wisdom revealed to Israel in its unique covenantal history. Scribal wisdom is the gift of spirit which enables the understanding and expression of the full breadth and depth of divine wisdom itself.

APPENDIX

Repetitive/Progressive Texture Charts

Appendix

Repetitive Texture and Patterns Sirach 38:24-39:11

	σοφία/σοφίζω	σχολή/ ἀσχολέω	καυχώμαι	ἀναστρέφω	ἔργον/ ἐργασία	διήγησις	οὕτως	καρδίαν/αὐτοῦ	δίωμι/ἐπαθίσωμι	ἀγρυπνία
38:24	σοφία	σχολῆς								
	σοφισθίησεται									
38:25	σοφισθίησεται		καυχώμενος	ἀναστρεφόμενος	ἔργοις	διήγησις		καρδίαν αὐτοῦ	δίωσει	ἀγρυπνία
38:26								καρδίαν αὐτοῦ	δίωσει	ἀγρυπνία
38:27					ἔργον		οὕτως	καρδίαν αὐτοῦ	δίωσει	ἀγρυπνία
38:28					ἔργα ἔργων		οὕτως	καρδίαν αὐτοῦ	δίωσει	ἀγρυπνία
38:29					ἔργῳ ἔργον		οὕτως			
					ἐργασία			καρδίαν αὐτοῦ	ἐπαθίσωσει	ἀγρυπνία
38:30										
38:31	σοφίζεταί				ἔργῳ					
38:32										
38:33										
38:34					ἐργασία					
39:1	σοφίαν	ἀσχοληθήσεται							ἐπαθίσεντος	
39:2						διήγησιν				
39:3				ἀναστραφήσεται						
39:4										
39:5								καρδίαν αὐτοῦ	ἐπαθίσωσει	
39:6	σοφίας									
39:7										
39:8			καυχήσεται							
39:9										
39:10	σοφίαν					διηγῆσονται				
39:11										

Repetitive Texture and Patterns Sirach 38:24-39:11 (cont'd)

	πᾶς	κάθημαι	κάμινος	συντέλεια/συντελέω	πούς	σύ	βουλή	ἐκκλησία	ἀλλά	διαθήκη	κρίμα
38:24											
38:25											
38:26											
38:27	πᾶς										
38:28		καθήμενος	καμίνου	συντέλειαν συντελείας							
38:29	παντὸς πᾶσα	καθήμενος			ποσὶν						
38:30			κάμινον	συντελέσαι	ποδῶν						
38:31	πάντες										
38:32						οὐκ, οὐ, οὐδὲ					
38:33		καθίσθηνται				οὐ, οὐχ, οὐ, οὐ	βουλήν	ἐκκλησίᾳ	ἀλλ'	διαθήκην	κρίματος
38:34						οὐδὲ			ἀλλὰ		κρίμα
39:1	πάντων										
39:2											
39:3											
39:4											
39:5											
39:6											
39:7							βουλήν				
39:8										διαθήκης	
39:9											
39:10								ἐκκλησίᾳ			
39:11											

Repetitive Texture and Patterns Sirach 38:24-39:11(cont'd)

	διανοέομαι	ἐκφαίνω	παιδεία	παραβολή	αἰών	θέσις/ θέομαι	νόμος	ὑψιστος	ἐκζητέω	ἀποκρυφος	ἐναντι
38:24											
38:25											
38:26											
38:27											
38:28											
38:29											
38:30											
38:31											
38:32											
38:33	διανοηθήσονται										
38:34		ἐκφάνωσιν	παιδείαν	παραβολαῖς	αἰῶνος	θέσις					
39:1	διανοουμένου						νόμῳ	ὑψιστου	ἐκζητήσει		
39:2				παραβολῶν							
39:3				παραβολῶν					ἐκζητήσει	ἀποκρυφα	
39:4											ἐναντι
39:5						δεξιθήσεται δεξιθήσεται		ὑψιστου			ἐναντι
39:6		ἐκφανεῖ									
39:7	διανοηθήσεται									ἀποκρυφοις	
39:8			παιδείαν				νόμῳ				
39:9					αἰῶνος						
39:10											
39:11											

Repetitive Texture and Patterns Sirach 38:24-39:11(cont'd)

	ἀντὶς	ὀνομαστικός/ ὄνομα	ἔθνος	κύριος	προσευχή	σύνεσις
38:24	ἀντοῦ					
38:25	ἀντῶν, ἀντοῦ					
38:26	ἀντοῦ x2					
38:27	ἀντοῦ x3					
38:28	ἀντοῦ x2					
38:29	ἀντοῦ x3					
38:30	ἀντοῦ x3					
38:31	ἀντῶν, ἀντοῦ					
38:32	ἀντῶν					
38:33						
38:34	ἀντῶν					
39:1	ἀντοῦ					
39:2		ὀνομαστών				συνεισπλεύσεται (verbal form)
39:3						
39:4			ἔθνων			
39:5	ἀντοῦ x3, ἀντὸν			κύριον	προσευχῇ	
39:6	ἀντὶς, ἀντοῦ			κύριος κυρίω	προσευχῇ	συνέσειως
39:7	ἀντὶς, ἀντοῦ x2					
39:8	ἀντὶς, ἀντοῦ			κυρίου		
39:9	ἀντοῦ x3	ὄνομα				σύνεσιν
39:10	ἀντοῦ x2		ἔθνη			
39:11	ἀντῶ	ὄνομα				

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

- Aberbach, David Moshe. *Labour, Crafts and Commerce in Ancient Israel*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994.
- . “The rabbis, education and the obliteration of class.” Pages 57–59, 133–135 in *Jewish Education and History: Continuity, Crisis and Change*. Edited by David Moshe Aberbach. Florence, KY: Routledge, 2009.
- Adams, Samuel L. *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions*. JSJSup 25. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Aelian. *Historical Miscellany*. Edited and translated by N. G. Wilson. LCL 486. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Aelius Theon, γυμνασία. Pages 59–130 in *Rhetores Graeci*, vol. 2. Edited by L. Spengel. Leipzig: Teubner, 1854–1856.
- Aeschylus. “Seven Against Thebes.” Pages 317–419 in *Aeschylus I*. Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.
- . “Eumenides.” Pages 267–371 in *Aeschylus II*. Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.
- Allam, Safik. “Egyptian Law Courts in Pharonic and Hellenistic Times.” *JEA* 77 (1991): 109–127.
- . *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*. Urkunden zum Rechtsleben im alten Ägypten. Tübingen: self-published under editor’s imprint, 1973.
- Alonso Schökel, Luis. *Proverbios y Eclesiastico*. Madrid: Los Libros Sagrados, 1968.
- Alster, Bendt. *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer: The World’s Earliest Proverb Collection*. Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1997.
- Andocides. “On the Mysteries” in vol.1 of *Minor Attic Orators*. Translated by K. J. Maidment. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Annus, Amar. “On the Origin of Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions.” *JSP* 19 (2010): 277–320.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translations, Introductions, Notes, Appendices and Glossaries*. Vol.61, General Index. London Blackfriars, 1981.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. Republished 1998.
- Argall, Randal A. *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation, and Judgment*. Early Judaism and Its Literature 8. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Aristeas. *Aristeas to Philocrates: (Letter of Aristeas)*. Edited and translated by Moses Hadas. New York, NY: Ktav, 1974.
- Aristotle. “Metaphysics.” Pages 1552–1728 in vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Translated by W. D. Ross. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- . “Nicomachean Ethics.” Pages 1729–1867 in vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Translated by W. D. Ross. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- . “Eudemian Ethics.” Pages 1922–1981 in vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Translated by W. D. Ross. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

- . “Politics.” Pages 1986–2189 in vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translations*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Translated by B. Jowett. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- . “Prior Analytics.” Pages 39–113 in vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Translated by A. J. Jenkinson. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- . “Rhetoric.” Pages 2162–2269 in vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Arnald, Richard. *A Critical Commentary Upon the Book of the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach*. London: Printed for the author, by W. Bowyer. 1748.
- Assmann, Jan. “When Justice Fails: Jurisdiction and Imprecation in Ancient Egypt and the Near East.” *JEA* 78 (1992): 149–162.
- . “Kulturelle und literarische Texte.” Pages 60–82 in *Ancient Egyptian History, Literature and Forms*. Edited by A. Loprieno. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Athanassakis, Apostolos N. *Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Baarda, T. “The Sentences of Syriac Menander.” Pages 583–590 in vol. 2 of *OTP*. Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1985.
- Baillet, M., J. T. Milik, and R. de Vaux. “Les ‘Petites Grottes’ de Qumran.” Pages 75–77 in *DJD* 3. Oxford: Clarendon, 1962.
- Baines, John. *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Baines, John, and Christopher Eyer. “Four Notes on Literacy.” *GM* 61 (1983): 65–96.
- Baker, David W. “Scribes as Transmitters of Tradition.” Pages 65–77 in *Faith, Tradition and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context*. Edited by A. R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994.
- Ball, Terence. *Reappraising Political Theory: Revisionist Studies in the History of Political Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1995.
- Balme, Maurice. “Attitudes to Work and Leisure in Ancient Greece.” *GR* XXXI (1984): 140–152.
- Bar-Ilan, M. “Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism: Scribes and Books in the Late Second Commonwealth and Rabbinic Period.” Pages 21–38 in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and in Early Christianity*. Edited by M. J. Mulder and H. Sysling. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989.
- Barré, Michael L. “‘Fear of God’ and the World View of Wisdom.” *BTB* 11 (1981): 41–43.
- Barton, John. *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel After the Exile*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Bauer, Walter, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Beck, Frederick A. G. *Greek Education, 450–350 B.C.* New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 1964.
- Beentjes, Pancratius C. *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*. VTSup 68. New York, NY: Brill, 1997.

- . *Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom (Sir. 14,20): Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira*. Leuven: Peeters, 2006.
- . “Scripture and the Scribe: Ben Sira 38:24–39:11.” Pages 115–122 in *Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom*. Edited by Pancratius C. Beentjes. Leuven: Peeters, 2006.
- . “Some Major Topics in Ben Sira Research” Pages 3–16 in *Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom*. Edited by Pancratius C. Beentjes. Leuven: Peeters, 2006.
- . “Prophets and Prophecy in Ben Sira.” Pages 135–150 in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*. Edited by Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006.
- ben Joseph, Saadia. *Sefer Hagaluy*. Edited by A. A. Harkavy. Berlin: M’kize Nirdamim, 1891.
- Berg, Shane. *Religious Epistemologies in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Heritage and Transformation of the Wisdom Tradition*. Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2008.
- . “Ben Sira, the Genesis Creation Accounts, and the Knowledge of God’s Will.” *JBL* 132 (2013): 139–157.
- Bergen, Benjamin K. *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.
- Bernard, Evrard. “Au Dieu Très Haut.” Pages 107–111 in *Hommages à Jean Cousin. Annales littéraires de l’Université de Besançon* 273. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1983.
- Berquist, Jon. “Theories of Space and the Construction of the Ancient World.” Paper presented at the Constructs of the Social and Cultural World of Antiquity Group, Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, MA, 30 November 1999.
- Berry, Ellen E., and Mikhail N. Epstein. *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication*. New York, NY: St. Martin’s, 1999.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bickerman, Elias J. *The Jews in the Greek Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Bissell, Edwin Cone. *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1890.
- Bitzer, Lloyd F. “The Rhetorical Situation.” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14.
- Bizzell, Patricia, and Bruce Herzberg. *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Boston, MA: Bedford of St. Martin’s, 2001.
- Black, Jeremy A. “Eme-Sal Cult Songs and Prayers.” *AuOr* 9 (1991): 23–36.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *A History of Prophecy in Israel*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983.
- . “The Sage, the Scribe and Scribalism in the Chronicler’s Work.” Pages 307–315 in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- . *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism*. The Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Bloomquist, L. Gregory. “Paul’s Inclusive Language: The Ideological Texture of Romans.” Pages 165–93 in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*. Edited by David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist and Duane F. Watson. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2003.
- . “The Rhetoric of Suffering in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: Socio-Rhetorical Reflections and Further Thoughts on a Post-Colonial Contribution to the Discussion.” *Theoforum* 35 (2004): 195–223.

- . “Rhetography and Topoi.” Email correspondence with Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity context group, 6 September 2007.
- . “Rhetoric, Culture, and Ideology: Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the Reading of New Testament Texts.” Pages 115–146 in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium*. Edited by James D. Hester and J. David Hester. New York: T&T Clark, 2010.
- . “Eyes wide open, seeing nothing: The challenge of the Gospel of John’s non-visualizable texture for readings using visible texture.” Paper presented at Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminars, Atlanta, 16 September 2014.
- . “Methodology Underlying the Presentation of Visual Textures in the Gospel of John.” Paper presented at Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminars, Atlanta, 20-30 September 2014.
- Boccaccini, Gabriel. *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991.
- Bonner, A. L. *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny*. London: Methuen, 1977.
- Bowman, Alan K., and Greg Woolf. *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Box, G.H. and W. O. E. Osterley. “Sirach.” Pages 268–517 in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. H. Charles. Oxford, Clarendon, 1965.
- Boys-Stones, George R. *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Braun, M. *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938.
- Bretschneider, Karl Gottlieb. *Liber Jesus Siracidae Graece Ad Fidem Codicum et Versionem Emendatus et Perpetua Annotatione Illustratus*. Jerusalem: Ratisbon, 1806.
- Bronner, Simon J. “Tradition.” Pages 420–422 in *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. vol. 8. 2nd edition. Edited by William A. Darity. Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2008.
- Brouwer, René. *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood, and Socrates*. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Brown, Raymond E., David W. Johnson, Kevin G. O’Connell. “Texts and Versions.” Pages 1100–1101 in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990.
- Bruch, Johann. *Weisheits-Lehre der Hebräer: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie*. Strassburg: Treuttel und Würtz, 1851.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997.
- Buccellati, Giorgio. “Wisdom and Not: The Case of Mesopotamia.” *JAOS* 101 (1981): 35–47.
- Buford, D. *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972.
- Calmet, Augustin. *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l’Ancien et du Nouveau Testament: L’Ecclésiastique*. Paris: Chez Pierre Emery, Fils à saint Benoit, 1714.
- Caminos, Ricardo A. *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*. Brown Egyptological Studies. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Campbell, Joseph, and Bill Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 1988.
- Carr, W., and S. Kimmins. *Becoming critical. Education knowledge and action research*. Washington: Falmer, 1986.
- Carr, David M. *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003.

- . *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- . “Torah On the Heart: Literary Jewish Textuality Within Its Near Eastern Context.” *Oral Tradition* 25 (2010): 17–40.
- Černý, Jaroslav. *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period*. Bibliothèque d'étude. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2001.
- Charles, Robert Henry. “Sirach.” Pages 268–517 in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English: With Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1968.
- Charles, Ronald. “Hybridity and the Letter of Aristeas.” *JSJ* 40 (2009): 242–259.
- Chesterman, Andrew. *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*. Benjamins Translation Library 22. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1997.
- Cicero. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Translated by Harry Caplan. LCL 403. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954.
- Clements, Ronald E. *Wisdom for a Changing World: Wisdom in Old Testament Theology*. Berkeley Lectures. Berkeley, CA: BIBAL, 1990.
- Coggins, Richard J. *Sirach*. Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998.
- Cohen, David. *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Cohen, Getzel M. *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*. Joan Palevsky Imprint in Classical Literature Hellenistic Culture and Society. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.
- Cohen, Shaye J. A. “The Political and Social History of the Jews in Greco-Roman Antiquity: The State of the Question.” Pages 33–56 in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*. Edited by Robert A. Craft and George W. E. Nicklesberg. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.
- Collins, John J. *Between Athens and Jerusalem*. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1983.
- . “The Sage in Apocalyptic and Pseudepigraphic Literature.” Pages 343–354 in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- . *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*. The Old Testament Library. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997.
- Cook, Arthur Bernard. *Zeus: God of the Dark Sky: (Thunder and Lightning)*. Vol. 2, Part 2 of *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925.
- Cook, Johann. “The Law of Moses in Septuagint Proverbs.” *VT* 49 (1999): 1–14.
- (ed.). *Septuagint and Reception: Essays prepared for the Association for the study of the Septuagint in South Africa*. VTSup 125. Boston: Brill, 2009.
- Corley, Jeremy. “Searching for Structure and Redaction in Ben Sira. An Investigation of Beginnings and Endings.” Pages 21–47 in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Edited by Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia. New York, NY: de Gruyter, 2008.
- Coulson, Seana. *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Crabtree, Robert Dale. “Leisure in Ancient Israel (Before 70 A.D).” Unpublished PhD diss., University Microfilms International: Texas A&M, 1982.

- Crenshaw, James L. "Prolegomenon." Pages 1–45 in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. Edited by James Crenshaw. New York: Ktav, 1976.
- . "Wisdom and Authority: Sapiential Rhetoric and Its Warrants." Pages 10–29 in *Congress Volume: Vienna, 1980*. Edited by J. A. Emerton. VTSup 72. Leiden: Brill, 1981.
- . *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom*. Macon, GA: Mercer, 1995.
- . "The Book of Sirach." Pages 603–865 in *New Interpreter's Bible V*. Edited by Leander Keck. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.
- . *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998.
- . *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
- Cribiore, Raffaella. *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Crisp, Roger ed. "Introduction." Pages vii–xl in Arsitotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated and edited by Roger Crisp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Crüseman, Frank. *The Torah, Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*. Translated by Allan W. Mahnke. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996.
- Davies, Graham I. *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991–2004.
- Day, John. *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth of the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Dähne, August Ferdinand. "Geschichte Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religions-Philosophie" in *Geschichte Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religions-Philosophie*. Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1837.
- De Crom, Dries. "Translation and Directionality in the Hebrew–Greek Tradition." Pages 77–87 in *Complicating the History of Western Translation*. Edited by Siobhán McElduff and Enrica Sciarrino. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2011.
- Dean, Margaret. "Textured Criticism." *JSNT* 70 (1998): 79–91.
- Ellis, Maria.de Jong "Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations." *JCS* 41 (1989): 127–186.
- Delcor, Mathias. "The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Hellenistic Period." Pages 409–50 in *The Hellenistic Age*. Vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Edited by William D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Delorme, Jean. *Gymnasion: Étude sur les monuments consacrés à l'éducation en Grèce (Des origines à l'empire Romain)*. Bibliothèque Des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome. Paris: De Boccard, 1960.
- deSilva, David A. "Seeing Things John's Way: Rhetography and Conceptual Blending in Revelation 14:6–13." *BBR* 18 (2008): 271–298.
- Di Lella, Alexander. "Shall not Be Found in Parables." *CBQ* 23 (1961): 40–41.
- . *A Text-Critical and Historical Study of the Hebrew Text of Sirach*. Studies in Classical Literature. The Hague: Mouton, 1966.
- . "The Meaning of Wisdom in Ben Sira." Pages 133–148 in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*. Edited by L. Perdue, B. B. Scott, and W. J. Wiseman. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993.

- Dillon, Matthew, and Lynda Garland. *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates (c. 800–399 BC)*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994.
- Diogenes Laërtius. “Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers.” In *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Translated by D. Hicks. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- Donlan, Walter. *The Aristocratic Ideal in Ancient Greece: Attitudes of Superiority from Homer to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* Lawrence, KS: Coronado, 1980.
- Doran, Robert. *Birth of a Worldview: Early Christianity in Its Jewish and Pagan Context*. Explorations. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995.
- Duling, Dennis C. *A Marginal Scribe: Studies of the Gospel of Matthew in Social-Scientific Perspective*. Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 7. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012.
- Edersheim, Alfred. “Ecclesiasticus: Introduction and Commentary,” in vol.2 of *Apocrypha*. Edited by H. Wace. London: Murray, 1888.
- Eichhorn, Johann Gottfried. *Einleitung in die apokryphischen Schriften des Alten Testaments*. Kritische Schriften. Leipzig: Weidmann, 1795.
- Eissfeldt, Otto. *The Old Testament: An Introduction, Including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and Also the Works of Similar Type from Qumran; the History of the Formation of the Old Testament*. Translated by Peter R. Ackroyd. Oxford: Blackwell, 1965.
- Elliott, John H. “Disgraced Yet Graced: The Gospel According to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame.” *BTB* 25 (1995): 166–178.
- Elizur, Sulimat and Randin Michael. Pages 200–205 in *Dead Sea Discoveries*, vol. 18, 2.
- Enos, Richard Leo. “Rhetorica Ad Herennium.” Pages 331–38 in *Classical Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources*. Edited by Michelle Ballif and Michael G. Moran. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005.
- Erman, Adolf. *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians; Poems, Narratives, and Manuals of Instruction, from the Third and Second Millennia B.C.* London: Methuen, 1927.
- Eyre, Christopher. *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Fauconnier, Gilles. *Mappings in Thought and Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Fauconnier, Gilles, and Mark Turner. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Fiensy, David A. *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land is Mine*. Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1991.
- Finkelberg, Marglit. “Virtue and Circumstances: On the City-State Concept of Arete.” *AJP* 123.1 (2002): 35–49.
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1983.
- . *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology*. London: SCM, 1995.
- Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Fleming, David J. “The Very Idea of a Progymnasmata.” Review of *RhetR* 22 (2003): 105–120.

- Fortenbaugh, William W. *Theophrastean Studies*. France: Steiner, 2001.
- Fowler, James. "Pluralism, Particularity and Paideia." *JLR* 2, (1984): 263–307.
- Fox, Michael V. "Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric." *Rhetorica* 1 (1989): 9–22.
- . "The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs." Pages 227–239 in *Texts, Temples and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*. Edited by Michael V. Fox. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996.
- Frankenberg, Wilhelm von. "Die Schrift Des Menander ein Produkt der Jüdischen Spruchweisheit." *Stade's Zeitschrift* XV (1895): 226–277.
- Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005.
- Fritzsche, Otto F. *Die Weisheit Jesus Sirach Erklärt und Überstetzt*. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1859.
- Gammie, John G. "The Sage in Sirach." Pages 355–372 in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by J. G. Gammie and L. G. Perdue. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraun, 1990.
- Gass, Susan M., and Larry Selinker. *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2008.
- George, A. R. *In search of the é.dub.ba.a: The ancient Mesopotamian school in literature and reality*. www.eprints.soas.ac.uk/1618/1/GeorgeEdubba.pdf.
- Gherardi, Sylvia. "Knowing as Desiring. Mythic Knowledge and the Knowledge Journey in Communities of Practitioners." *Journal of Workplace Learning* 15 (2003): 352–358.
- Gilbert, Maurice. "Methodological and Hermeneutical Trends in Modern Exegesis on the Book of Ben Sira." Pages 1–17 in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Edited by Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia. New York: de Gruyter, 2008.
- . "L'étude des livres sapientiaux à l'Institut Biblique." Pages 151–171 in *Biblical Exegesis in Progress. Old and New Testament Essays*. Edited by J. N. Aletti and J. L. Ska. AnBib 176. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2009.
- Ginsberg, Harold Louis. "The Original Hebrew of Ben Sira 12:10–14." *JBL* 74 (1955): 93–95.
- . "Psalms in the Inscription of Petitions and Acknowledgement." Pages 159–71 in *Louis Ginsberg Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*. Edited by Saul Liebermann. New York, NY: American Academy of Jewish Research, 1945.
- Goering, Greg Schmidt. *Wisdom's Root Revealed: Ben Sira and the Election of Israel*. JSJSup 139. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Goff, Matthew J. "Hellenistic Instruction in Palestine and Egypt: Ben Sira and Papyrus Insinger." *JSJ* 36 (2005): 147–172.
- . *4QInstruction*. Wisdom Literature from the Ancient World 2. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013.
- Goodman, Martin. "Texts, Scribes and Power in Roman Judea." Pages 99–108 in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*. Edited by Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Goren, Yuval, Israel Finkelstein, and Nadav Na'aman. *Inscribed in Clay: Provenance Study of the Amarna Tablets and Other Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. Contributions by Michal Artzy et al. Monograph Series. 23. Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2004.
- Gould, Paul. "An Essay on Academic Disciplines, Faithfulness and the Christian Scholar" *Christian Higher Education* 13 (2014): 167–182.

- Gowler, David B. "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and Its Reception." *JSNT* 33.2 (2010): 191–206.
- Grabbe, Lester L. "Review of Jesus Sirach 1–23." *Jesus Sirach 1–23*. Johannes Marböck. *JSOT* 37.5 (2013): 221.
- Gruca-Macaulay, Alexandra. "The Role and Function of Lydia as a Rhetorical Construct in Acts: A Sociorhetorical and Theological Interpretation." PhD diss., Saint Paul University, 2012.
- Gurley, Jennifer. "Platonic Paideia." *Philosophy and Literature* 23 (1999): 351–337.
- Guthrie, W. K. *A History of Greek Philosophy. Vol. 1, The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.
- Hadas, Moses. *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion*. The Norton Library. New York, NY: Norton, 1972.
- Haikal, F. M. "Private Collections and Temple Libraries in Ancient Egypt." Pages 39–54 in *What Happened to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?* Edited by Moustafa El-Abbadi and Omnia Mournir Fathallah. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Harris, Marvin. "History and Significance of the Emic/Etic Distinction." *ARA* 5 (1976): 329–350.
- Harvey, J. D. *Toward a Degree of Order in Ben Sira's Book*. ZAW 105. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993.
- Haspecker, Josef. *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach: Ihre religiöse Struktur und ihre literarische und doktrinaire Bedeutung*. AnBib. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967.
- Hawhee, Debra. "Agonism and Arete." *PR* 35 (2002): 185–207.
- Heaton, E. W. *The School Tradition of the Old Testament: The Bampton Lectures for 1994*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Heidel, Alexander. *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of the Creation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- Helck, Wolfgang von. *Die Lehre des Dua-Khety: Textzusammenstellung von Wolfgang Helck*. Kleine Ägyptische Texte. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970.
- Hengel, Martin. *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974.
- Herodotus. *The Histories*. Translated by A. D. Godley. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Hesiod. "Theogony." Pages 2–85 in *Hesiod I*. Edited and translated by Glen W. Most. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- . "Works and Days." Pages 86–153 in *Hesiod I*. Edited and translated by Glen W. Most. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Hicks, R. Lansing. "Delet and Mēgillah: A Fresh Approach to Jeremiah XXXVI." *VT* 33 (1983): 46–66.
- Hjelm, Ingrid. *The Samaritans and Early Judaism*. JSOTSup 303. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000.
- Hock, R. F., and E. N. O'Neill. *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric. I. The Progymnasmata*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.
- . *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises*. Writings from the Graeco-Roman World. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002.
- Holladay, Carl R. *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*. 4 vols. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.

- Homer. *Odyssey*. Translated by A. T. Murray. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919.
- . *Iliad*. Translated by A. T. Murray. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924.
- Horbury, William. “Jewish Inscriptions and Jewish Literature in Egypt, with Special Reference to Ecclesiasticus.” Page 11 in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*. Edited by J. W. Van Henten and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- , and David Noy. *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt: With an Index of the Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Horsley, Richard A. *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- , and Patrick Tiller. “Ben Sira and the Sociology of the Second Temple.” Pages 74–107 in *Second Temple Studies III: Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture*. Edited by Philip R. Davies and John M. Halligan. JSOTSup 340. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Horst, P. W. van der. *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*. Leiden: Brill, 1978.
- . “Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited.” *JSP* 3 (1988): 3–30.
- Hughes, J. Donald. “Sustainable Agriculture in Ancient Egypt.” *Agricultural History* 6 (1992): 12–22.
- Humbert, Paul. *Recherches sur les sources égyptiennes de la littérature sapientiale d’Israël*. Mémoires de l’Université de Neuchâtel. Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l’Université, 1929.
- Hunnicut, B. “Leisure and Play in Plato’s Teaching and Philosophy of Learning.” *Leisure Sciences* 12 (1990): 211–227.
- Hurowitz, Victor Avigdor. “Literary Observations on ‘In Praise of the Scribal Art’.” *JANES* 27 (2000): 49–56.
- . “Nursling, Advisor, Architect? אָמון and the Role of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22–31.” *Bib* 80 (1999): 391–400.
- Hutto, David. “Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric in the Old and Middle Kingdoms.” *Rhetorica* 20 (2004): 213–233.
- Hyatt, J. Philip. “The Writing of an Old Testament Book.” *BA* 6 (1943): 71–80.
- Instone-Brewer, David. “The Eighteen Benedictions and the Minim Before 70 CE.” *JTS* 54 (2003): 25–44.
- Isocrates. “Ad Demonicus.” Pages 2–35 in *Isocrates I*. Translated by George Norlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- . “To Nicocles.” Pages 38–113 in *Isocrates I*. Translated by George Norlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- . “Panegyricus.” Pages 116–241 in *Isocrates I*. Translated by George Norlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- . “To Philip.” Pages 244–339 in *Isocrates I*. Translated by George Norlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- Jaeger, Werner. *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*. Translated from the second German edition by Gilbert Highet. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Jeremias, Alfred. *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients: Handbuch zur biblisch-orientalischen Altertumskunde*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906.

- Jeremias, Joachim. *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu; Kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur neutestamentlichen zur Zeitgeschichte*. Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1923.
- Johnstone, Christopher Lyle. *Listening to the Logos: Speech and the Coming of Wisdom in Ancient Greece*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009.
- Jones, Arnold Hugh Martin. *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.
- Jonge, Marinus de. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of Their Text, Composition and Origin*. Leiden: Brill, 1978.
- Josephus, Flavius. "Against Apion." In *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston. Auburn: Beardsley, 1895.
- Jüngling, Hans-Winfried. "Der Bauplan des Buches Jesus Sirach." Pages 89–105 in *Den Armen eine frohe Botschaft: Festschrift für Bischof Franz Kamphaus zum 65. Geburtstag*. Edited by Joseph Hainz, Hans-Winfried Jüngling, and Reinhold Sebott. Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1997.
- Kaiser, Otto. "Begründung der Sittlichkeit." *ZTK* 55 (1958).
- . "Covenant and Law in Ben Sira." In *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honor of E. W. Nicholson*. Edited by A. D. H. Mayes and R. B. Salters. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Kasher, Aryeh. *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: The Struggle for Equal Rights*. Texte und Studien Zum Antiken Judentum. Tübingen: Mohr, 1985.
- Kennedy, George Alexander. *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World, 300 B.C.-A.D. 300*. History of Rhetoric. Princeton: NJ, Princeton University Press, 1972.
- . *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- . "The Evolution of a Theory of Artistic Prose." Pages 188–237 in vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. 6 vols. Edited by George A. Kennedy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- . *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. Writings from the Greco-Roman World 10. Atlanta,: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Kerferd, George B. "The Sage in Hellenistic Philosophical Literature." Pages 319–28 in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Edited by John Gammie and Leo Perdue. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Kidd, Bruce. "The Myth of the Ancient Games." *Sport in Society* 16 (2013): 416-426.
- Kieweler, Hans Volker. *Ben Sira zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Th. Middendorp*. BEATAJ 30. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1992.
- Kirk, Alan. "Some Compositional Conventions of Hellenistic Wisdom Texts and the Juxtaposition of 4:1–13; 6:20b-49; and 7:1–10 in Q." *JBL* 116 (1997): 235–257.
- Kirk, G.S., Raven, J. E., Schofield M. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Kostenberger, A. *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Krüger, Thomas. "Das 'Herz' in der alttestamentlichen Anthropologie," in Andreas Wagner, *Anthropologische Aufbrüche: alttestamentliche und interdisziplinäre Zugänge zur historischen Anthropologie*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009.

- Kugel, James L. *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- . *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Labendz, Jenny R. "The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature." *AJSR* 30:2 (2006): 347–392.
- Lambert, Wilfred G. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960.
- Lapide, Cornelius. *Commentaria in Ecclesiasticum*. Antwerp: I. Meursium, 1643.
- Leberecht de Wette, Wilhelm Martin. *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel Alten und Neuen* (Berlin: Reimer, 1852).
- Lemaire, André. *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël*. OBO. Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions universitaires, 1981.
- Lenski, Gerhard Emmanuel. *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*. McGraw-Hill Series in Sociology. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1966.
- . *Human Societies: A Macrolevel Introduction to Sociology*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1970.
- Lentz, Tony M. *Orality and Literacy in Hellenic Greece*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- Lesko, Leonard. "Some Comments on Ancient Egyptian Literacy and Literati." In vol. 1 of *Studies Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*. Edited by Sarah Israelit-Groll. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990.
- Leutsch, Ernst Ludwig von, and Friedrich Wilhelm Schneidewin. *Corpus Pseudoepigraphorum Graecorum*. Vol. 1. Hildesheim: Olms, 1958.
- Lewis, John. *Solon the Thinker. Political thought in Archaic Athens*. London: Duckworth, 2006.
- Libanius. *Selected Works*. Translated by A. F. Norman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969–91.
- Lichtheim, Miriam. *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies*. OBO 120. Fribourg, Switzerland: Academic Press, 1992.
- . "Dua-Khety or the Satire of the Trades." Pages 122–125 in *The Context of Scripture, Vol. 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*. Edited by W. W. Hallo and K.L. Younger. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- . *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume 1: The Old and Middle Kingdom*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.
- . *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume 2: The New Kingdom*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.
- Liddell, Henry, and Robert Scott. *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Revised by Sir Henry Stuart Jones. Oxford: Clarendon, 1973.
- Liebner, David L. "The Covenant and Election of Israel." In *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*. Edited by The Rabbinical Assembly. The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001.
- Liesen, Jan. *Full of Praise: An Exegetical Study of Sir. 39,12–35*. Boston: Brill, 2000.
- Lindenberger, James M. *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.
- Long, A. A. *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*. New York, NY: Scribner's Sons, 1986.
- Löhr, Martin. "Bildung aus dem Glauben: Beiträge zum Verständnis der Lehrreden des Buches Jesus Sirach." Unpublished PhD diss., University of Bonn, 1975.

- Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. Edited by Rondal B. Smith and Karen A. Munson. New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989.
- Lucian of Samosata. *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Translated by H. W. Fowler. Oxford: Clarendon, 1905.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
- Mack, Burton L. *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic: Ben Sira's Hymn in Praise of the Fathers*. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- . “Sirach (Ecclesiasticus).” Pages 65–86 in *The Books of the Bible II: The Apocrypha and the New Testament*. New York: Schribner's Sons, 1989.
- , and Roland E. Murphy. “Wisdom Literature.” In *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*. Edited by Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsberg. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.
- MacKenzie, R.A.F. *Sirach*. Old Testament Message. Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1983.
- Mailloux, Steven. “Articulation and Understanding: The Pragmatic Intimacy Between Rhetoric and Hermeneutics.” Pages 378–396 in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*. Edited by Walter Jost and Hyde J. Michael. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Malaty, Tadros Y. *The Epistle of James*. Edited by Ferial Moawad. Orange, CA: Coptic Christian Centre, 2001.
- Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993.
- Malkin, Irad. “Postcolonial Concepts and Ancient Greek Colonization.” *MLQ* 65 (2004): 341–364.
- Marböck, Johannes. “Gesetz und Weisheit: Zum Verständnis des Gesetzes bei Jesus ben Sirach.” *BZ* 20 (1976): 1–21.
- . *Weisheit im Wandel. Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira*. BBB 272. Bonn: Hanstein, 1971.
- . “Sir 38,24–39,11: Der Schriftgelehrte Weise.” In *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament: Nouvelle Édition Mise à Jour*. Edited by Maurice Gilbert. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990.
- . “Das Buch Jesus Sirach.” Pages 285–292 in *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*. Edited by E. Zenger, G. Braulik, H. Niehr, et al. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995.
- . “Structure and Redaction History in the Book of Ben Sira: Review and Prospects.” Pages 61–79 in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28–31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands*. Edited by Pancratius C. Beentjes. BZAW 255. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997.
- . *Jesus Sirach 1–23*. HThKAT. Friburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2010.
- Margoliouth, D.S. *The Origin of the 'Original Hebrew' of Ecclesiasticus*. London: James Parker, 1899.
- Marrou, Henri-Iréné. *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Translated by George Lamb. Wisconsin Studies in Classics. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956.
- Martin, C. J. “How to Write a Demotic Legal Document: P. BM EA 10648.” Pages 195–222 in *Actes du IXe Congrès international des études demotiques: Paris, 31 Août - 3 Septembre*

2005. Edited by Ghislaine Widmer and Didier Devauchelle. Cairo: Institut-Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2009.
- Martin, Michael W., and Whitlark Jason A. "Choosing What is Advantageous: The Relationship Between Epideictic and Deliberative Syncrisis in Hebrews." *NTS* 58 (2012): 379–460.
- Martone, Corrado. "Ben Sira Manuscripts from Qumran and Masada." Pages 81–94 in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28–31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands*. Edited by Pancratius C. Beentjes. BZAW 255. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997.
- Massey, Gerald. *Ancient Egypt, the Light of the World: A Work of Reclamation and Restitution in Twelve Books*. Mokolunne Hill, CA: Health Research, 1988.
- Matthews, Victor H. "Physical Space, Imagined Space and 'Lived Space' in Ancient Israel." *BTB* 33 (2003): 12–20.
- Mattila, Sharon Lea. "Ben Sira and the Stoics: A Reexamination of the Evidence." *JBL* 119 (2000): 474–501.
- Maurus, (H)rabanus. "Commentariorum In Ecclesiasticum Libri Decem." Cols. 0763–1126C in vol. 109 of *Patrologia Latina* [=Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina] 217 vols. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Heath Inc., 1996.
- McKechnie, Paul. "The Career of Joshua Ben Sira." *JTS* 51 (2000): 3–26.
- Mendelson, Alan. *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria*. Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 7. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982.
- Metzger, Bruce M., ed. *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Revised Standard Version: Expanded Edition Containing the Third and Fourth Books of the Maccabees and Psalm 151*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Meylaerts, Reine. *L'aventure flamande de la Revue Belge: Langues, littératures et cultures dans l'Entre-deux-guerres*. Documents pour l'histoire des Francophonies. Europe vol .5. Brussels: Lang, 2004.
- Middendorp, Theophil. *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*. BEATAJ 30. Leiden: Brill, 1973.
- Miller, Carolyn. "The Aristotelian Topos: Hunting for Novelty." Pages 130–146 in *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Edited by Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000.
- Minissale, Antonino. *La versione greca del Siracide: Confronto con il testo ebraico alla luce dell'attività midrascica e del metodo targumico*. AnBib 133. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1995.
- Mitchell, W. T. J. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1994.
- Modrzejewski, Joseph. *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*. Translated by Robert Cornman, with a foreword by Shaye J. D. Cohen. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1995.
- Moran, William L. *The Amarna Letters*. Edited and translated by William L. Moran. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Morgan, Teresa. *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

- Naiden, F. S. "Recent Study of Greek Religion in the Archaic Through Hellenistic Periods." *CurBR* 11 (2013): 388–427.
- Najman, Hindy. *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*. JSJSup 77. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- . *Past Renewals: Interpretative Authority, Renewed Revelation, and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity*. JSJSup 53. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Neibur, Karl-Wilhelm. *Gesetz und Paränese: Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1987.
- Nestle, Eberhard, and Kurt Aland. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. 28th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
- Neusner, Jacob. "Knowing God in the Torah." Pages 25–106 in *Revelation: The Torah and the Bible*. Edited by Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1995.
- Nickelsburg, George W.E., and Michael E. Stone. *Faith and Piety in Early Judaism: Texts and Documents*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.
- Niditch, Susan. *Oral World and Written Word*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- Nightingale, Andrea Wilson. *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Nissinen, Martti. *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*. Edited by Peter Machinist. Writings from the Ancient World. Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Nock, A. D., C. Roberts, and T. C. Skeats. "The Gild of Zeus Hypsistos." *HTR* 29 (1936): 39–90.
- Nuffelen, Peter van. *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period*. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Oakley, Todd. "The Human Rhetorical Potential." *Written Communication* 16 (1999): 93–128.
- Ober, Josiah. *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Oppenheim, Leo A. *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Orton, David E. *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal*. JSNTSup 25. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989.
- Ostwald, Martin. *Oligarchia: The Development of a Constitutional Form in Ancient Greece*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000.
- Parker, K. I. "Repetition as a Structuring Device in Kings 1–11." *JSOT* 42 (1988): 19–27.
- Parkinson, R.B. *Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt: A Dark Side to Perfection*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2002.
- Paivo, Allan. *Mind and its Evolution: A Dual Coding Methodological Approach*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2007.
- Penella, Robert J. "The Progymnasmata in Imperial Greek Education." *CW* 105 (2011): 77–90.
- Perdue, Leo G. *Wisdom and Cult: A Critical Analysis of the Views of Cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the Ancient Near East*. SBLDS 30. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977.
- . *Wisdom & Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994.

- . *Proverbs*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- . “Ben Sira and the Prophets.” Pages 132–154 in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella*. Edited by Jeremy Corley and Vincent T. M. Skemp. Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005.
- . *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007.
- Perelman, Chaïm. “The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning (1970).” Pages 1384–1409 in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001.
- . *The Realm of Rhetoric*. Translated by William Kluback. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982.
- , and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Translated by John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969.
- Peters, Norbert. *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus*. EHAT 25. Münster: Aschendorf, 1913.
- Pfeiffer, Rudolphus, ed. *Callimachus*. New York, NY: Arnos, 1979.
- Philo. “On Drunkenness.” Pages 308–435 in vol. 4 *Philo*. Translated by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. LCL247 Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960
- “De congressu eruditionis gratia” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, 4 vols. Translated by C. D. Yonge. London: Bohn, 1854.
- Pitt-Rivers, Julian. “Honour and Social Status.” Pages 21–77 in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*. Edited by J. G. Peristiany. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Plato. “The Apology.” Pages 329–366 in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1. Translated by B. Jowett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . *The Laws*. Penguin Classics. Translated by Trevor J. Saunders. London: Penguin Books, 1970.
- . “Laws.” Pages 1–544 in vol. 4 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . “Phaedrus.” Pages 107–189 in vol. 3 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . “Phaedo.” Pages 385–477 in vol. 1 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford, Clarendon, 1953.
- . “Philebus.” Pages 531–630 in vol. 3 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . “Protagoras.” Pages 119–191 in vol. 1 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . “Republic.” Pages 1–499 in vol.2 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . “Symposium.” Pages 479–555 in vol.1 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . “Theaetetus.” Pages 191–319 in vol. 3 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953.

- Plutarch. "Life of Solon." Pages 43–76 in *The Rise and Fall of Athens. Nine Greek Lives by Plutarch*. Edited and translated by I. Scott-Kilvert. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1968.
- . "Life of Solon" in vol. 1 of *Plutarch's Lives*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.
- . "Pericles" in vol. of *Plutarch's Lives*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.
- Pokorny, Julius. *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Bern: Francke, 1967.
- Polak, Frank H. "Book, Scribe and Bard: Oral Discourse and Written Text in Recent Biblical Scholarship." *Prooftexts* 31 (2011): 118–140.
- Pritchard, James Bennett. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955.
- Pym, Anthony. *Method in Translation History*. Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998.
- Quintilian, Marcus Fabius. *Institutio Oratoria*. Translated by Harold Edgeworth Butler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924.
- Quirke, S. G. "Archive." *CW* 105 (1996): 379–401.
- Raaflaub, Kurt. *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Rad, Gerhard von. *Wisdom in Israel*. Translated by James D. Marton. London: S.C.M., 1972.
- Ragazzoli, Chloé. "Weak Hands and Soft Mouths." *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 137 (2014): 157–170.
- Raglan, Fitzroy Richard Somerset. *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*. New York, NY: Vintage, 1956.
- Rahlf, Alfred, and Robert Hanhart, eds. *Septuaginta, Editio Altera*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 2006.
- Rajak, Tessa. *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible and the Jewish Diaspora*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Rank, Otto. *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Exploration of Myth*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Rea, J. R. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XLVI*. London: Egyptian Exploration Society, 1978.
- Reiterer, Friedrich V. "Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira." Pages 23–60 in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research; Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference, 28–31 July, 1996, Soesterberg, Netherlands*. Edited by Pancratius C. Beentjes. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996.
- Richards, Randolph E. *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul*. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1989.
- Rickenbacher, O. *Weisheits perikopen bei Ben Sira*. OBO 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation." Pages 75–85 in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Edited by Lewis S. Mudge. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980.
- Rieke, Richard D., and Malcolm O. Sillars. *Argumentation and Critical Decision Making*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993.
- Robb, Kevin. *Literacy and Paideia in Ancient Greece*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Robbins, Vernon K. "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation." Pages 27–65 in *Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the 2000 Lund Conference*. Edited by A. Erikson, T. H. Olbricht, and W. Übelacker. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2002.
- . "Beginnings and Developments in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation." www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/SNTSPretSocRhetfromBeginning.pdf
- . "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination." Pages 161–195 in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*. Edited by Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- . "The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse." *Scriptura* 59 (1996): 353–362.
- . "Enthymeme and Picture in the Gospel of Thomas." Pages 175–207 in *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*. Edited by Jon M. Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- . *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretations*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996.
- . *The Invention of Christian Discourse, Volume 1*. Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Series. Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009.
- . *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*. New York: Fortress, 1984.
- . "Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response." *Semeia* 65 (1994): 75–91.
- . "Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach." Pages 111–147 in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and New Literary Criticism*. Edited by Camille Focant. BETL 110. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993.
- . "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing Familiar Text." Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Seminar at the Annual Meeting of The Society of Biblical Literature. Washington, DC, 2006.
- . "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism." Pages 311–318 in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, Vol. 2. Edited by Steven L. McKenzie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- . *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- . "Where is Wuellner's Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us? From Schleiermacher to Thistleton and Beyond." Pages 105–125 in *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics: Wilhelm Wuellner and His Influence*. Edited by James D Hester and J. David Hester (Amador). New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004.
- . "Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels." Pages 142–168 in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honour of George A. Kennedy*. Edited by Duane F. Watson. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991.
- , and Burton L. Mack. *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1989.
- Roberts, Keith A. "Toward a Generic Concept of Counter-Culture." *Sociological Focus* 11:2 (1978): 111–126.
- Rochberg-Halton, Francesca. "Canonicity and Cuneiform Texts." *JCS* 36 (1984): 133.
- Rogers, Jessie. "It Overflows Like the Euphrates with Understanding: Another Look at the Relationship of Law and Wisdom in Sirach." Pages 114–121 in *Of Scribes and Sages*.

- Volume I Ancient Versions and Traditions*. Edited by Craig A. Evans. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004.
- . “Wisdom in Sirach.” *JNSL* 30 (2004): 61–79.
- Rollston, Christopher A. “Ben Sira 38:24–39:11 and the Egyptian Satire of the Trades: A Reconsideration.” *JBL* 120 (2001): 131–139.
- . *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age*. ABS 11. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010.
- Roochnik, David. *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato’s Understanding of Techne*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.
- Roth, Wolfgang. “On the Gnostic-Discursive Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach.” *Semeia* 17 (1980): 59–79.
- Saggs, H. W. F. *Civilization Before Greece and Rome*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Saldarini, Anthony J. “Scribes.” Pages 1012–1016 in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5. Edited by David Noel Freedman. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992.
- . *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Sanders, E. P. *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE*. Philadelphia, PA: Trinity, 1992.
- Sanders, J. A. “The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPsa).” Pages 79–85 in *DJD* 4. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Sanders, Jack T. *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*. SBLMS 28. Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983.
- Satran, David. “Hellenism.” Pages 331–338 in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements and Beliefs*. Edited by Arthur Allen Cohen. New York, NY: Schribner’s Sons, 1987.
- Sauer, Georg. *Jesus Sirach, Ben Sira*. Das Alte Testament Deutsch: Apokryphen, 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.
- Schams, Christine. *Jewish Scribes in the Second-Temple Period*. JSOTS 191. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998.
- Schechter, Solomon. *Avot de-Rabi Natan*. [Talmud. Minor Tractates. Avot de-Rabbi Nathan. 1887.] Vienna: Lippe, 1887.
- . “The Quotations from Ecclesiasticus in Rabbinic Literature.” *JQR* 3 (1891): 682–706.
- Schlatter, Adolf von. *Das neu gefundene hebräische Stück des Sirach: der Glossator des griechischen Sirach und seine Stellung in der Geschichte der jüdischen Theologie*. BFCT. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1897.
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition Historical Enquiry Into the Relation of Law, Wisdom, and Ethics*. WUNT II 16. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985.
- Schrader, Lutz. *Leiden und Gerechtigkeit: Studien zu Theologie und Textgeschichte des Sirachbuches*. BBET 27. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994.
- Schürer, Emil. *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesus Christi*. Leipzig: Hindrichs, 1886–1911.
- . *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–AD 135. A New English Translation)*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1885, reprinted 1924.
- . *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte*. Leipzig: Hindrichs, 1874.

- Schwartz, Hans. *The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013.
- Scott, Robert B. Y. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*. AB 18. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1965.
- . “Parables.” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. 15: 620–623.
- Segal, Moshe. *The Complete Book of Ben Sira*. Jerusalem: Bialik Foundation, 1958.
- . *Sefer Ben-Sîra’ Haššalem*. Jerusalem: Bialik Foundation, 1933.
- Sextus Empiricus. “Against the Professors” in *Philosophical works*, vol.4. Translated by R. Bury. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947.
- Sheppard, Gerald T. *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*. BZAW 151. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980.
- Shils, Edward. *Tradition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Silverman, David P., ed. *Ancient Egypt*. London: Piatkus, 1997.
- Simpson, William Kelly. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry*. Translated by R. O. Faulkner et al. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972.
- Sjöberg, Å. W. “The Old Babylonian Eduba.” Pages 159–179 in *Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen on His Seventieth Birthday, June 7, 1974*. Edited by Stephen J. Lieberman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Skehan, Patrick W., and Alexander Di Lella. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes*. AB 39. New York: Doubleday, 1987.
- Slater, Niall W. *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- Smend, Rudolf. *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach Erklärt: Hebräisch und Deutsch*. Berlin: Reimer, 1906.
- Smith, Lesley. *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*. Commentaria III. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Snaith, John G. “Ecclesiasticus: A Tract for the Times.” Pages 170–181 in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*. Edited by John Day, Gordon Robert, and H. G. M. Williamson. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- . *Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible. London: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Spicq, Ceslas. “L’Ecclésiastique.” Pages 553–554 in *La Sainte Bible*. Louis Pirot and Albert Clamer. Paris: Société Civile d’Études et de Publication non Commerciales, 1951.
- Stadelmann, Helge. *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter: Eine Untersuchung zum Berufsbild des vor-makkabäischen Sofer unter Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Priester-, Propheten- und Weisheitslehrertum*. WUNT 6. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980.
- Stegmüller, Fridericus. *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*. Matriti: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1940.
- Stephens, Susan. “Lessons of the Crocodile.” *Common Knowledge* 11 (2005): 215–239.
- Strack, Hermann L., and Paul Billerbeck. *Kommentar zum Alten Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. München: Beck, 1922.
- Streck, Maximilian. *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh’s*, 3 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916.
- Strong, James. “Greek Dictionary.” *New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1996.

- Swete, Henry Barclay. *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*. Revised by R. R. Ottley and an appendix containing the Letter of Aristeas Edited by H. St. J. Thackeray. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914.
- Sylvester, Charles. "The Classical Idea of Leisure: Cultural Ideal or Class Prejudice?" *Leisure Sciences* 21 (1999): 3–16.
- Tabakowska, Elzbieta. *Cognitive Linguistics and Poetics of Translation*. Tübingen: G. Narr, 1993.
- Tacheva-Hitova, Margarita. *Eastern Cults in Moesia Inferior and Thracia: 5th Century BC–4th Century AD*. Études Préliminaires Aux Religions Orientales dans l'Empire Romain. Leiden: Brill, 1983.
- Tcherikover, Victor. *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*. Translated by S. Applebaum. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959.
- , A. Fuks, and M. Stern. *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*. Cambridge: Magnes Press, 1957.
- Temmerman, Koen de. *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Thaden, Robert H. von. *Sex, Christ and Embodied Cognition: Paul's Wisdom for Corinth*. Emory Studies in Early Christianity. Dorset, UK: Deo, 2012.
- Thayer, Joseph H. *Thayer's Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Theognis. *Elegy and Iambus I*. Translated by J. M. Edmonds. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.
- Theon, Aelius. "Progymnasmata." Pages 253–262 In *Readings from Classical Rhetoric*. Edited and translated by Patricia P. Matsen. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.
- Thom, Johan C. *The Pythagorean "Golden Verses" with Introduction and Commentary*. RGRW 123. New York: Brill, 1995.
- Toorn, Karel van der. *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Toury, Gideon. *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Benjamins Translation Library 4. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995.
- Tov, Emanuel. *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*. STDJ 54. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- , and Frank Polak. *The Revised CATSS Hebrew/Greek Parallel Text*. Jerusalem, 2005. <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/catss.html>.
- Trebilco, Paul. "Paul and Silas: 'Servants of the Most High God' (Acts 16:16-18)." *JSNT* 39 (1989): 51–73.
- VanderKam, James C. "The Prophetic-Sapiential Origins of Apocalyptic Thought." Pages 163–176 in *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane*. Edited by James D. Martin and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986.
- Venuti, L. *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd edition. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Verhoogt, Arthur. *Regailing Officials in Ptolemaic Egypt: A Dramatic Reading of Official Accounts from the Menches Papers*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- . *Menches, Komogrammateus of Kerkeosiris: The Doings and Dealings of a Village Scribe in the Late Ptolemaic Period (120–110 B.C.)*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

- Vogels, Walter. *God's Universal Covenant: A Biblical Study*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979.
- Walbank, F. W. *The Hellenistic World*. Fontana History of the Ancient World. London: Fontana, 1992.
- Warnick, Barbara. "Two Systems of Inventions: The Topics in the Rhetoric and the New Rhetoric." Pages 107–129 in *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Edited by Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000.
- Webb, Kerry. "'The House of Books': Libraries and Archives in Ancient Egypt." *Libri* 63 (2013): 21–32.
- Wellhausen, Julius. *Prolegomena zur geschichte Israels*. Berlin: Reimer, 1895.
- Westbrook, Raymond, and Gary Beckman. *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section One, The Near and Middle East. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Wet, Chris de. "John Chrysostom's Use of the Book of Sirach in His Homilies on the New Testament." *Studia Historica Ecclesiasticae* XXXVI (2010): 1–10.
- Whybray, Roger Norman. *The Book of Proverbs: Commentary*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible. London: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Williams, D. S. "The Date of Ecclesiasticus." *VT* 44 (1994): 563–565.
- Wilson, Bryan R. "A Typology of Sects." Pages 361–83 in *Sociology of Religion*. Edited by Roland Robertson. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Wilson, Robert R. *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980.
- Wilson, Walter T. *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*. Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005.
- Winston, David. "Theodicy in Ben Sira and Stoic Philosophy." Pages 239–250 in *Of Scholars, Savants, and Their Texts: Studies in Philosophy and Religious Thought*. Edited by Ruth Link-Salinger. New York: Lang, 1989.
- Wolff, Hans Walter. *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*. Edited by S. Dean McBride. Translated by Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, and Charles A. Muenchow. Hermeneia: a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- . "Prophecy from the Eighth Through Fifth Century." Pages 14–26 in *Interpreting the Prophets*. Edited by James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.
- Wright, Benjamin G. *No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to Its Hebrew Parent Text*. SCS 26. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- . "B. Sanhedrin 100b and Rabbinic Knowledge of Ben Sira." Pages 41–50 in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*. Edited by N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeylen. Leuven: Peeters, 1999.
- . "Putting the Puzzle Together: Some Suggestions Concerning the Social Location of the Wisdom of Ben Sira." Pages 89–112 in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*. Edited by Benjamin G. Wright and Lawrence M. Wills. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.
- . "Ben Sira on the Sage as Exemplar." Pages 165–182 in *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction: Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint*. Edited by Benjamin Wright. JSJSup 131. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- . "Conflicted Boundaries: Ben Sira Sage and Seer." Pages 229–53 in *Congress Volume, Helsinki 2010*. Edited by Matti Nissinen. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

- Xenophon. "Cyropaedeia" Vols. 5 & 6 in *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*. Translated by Walter Miller. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 1.6.17; 2.1.16; 4.3.12.
- . "Oeconomicus." Vol. 4 in *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*. Translated by Carleton L. Brownson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Yadin, Yigael. *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1965.
- Zappan, James P. "US and Russian Traditions in Rhetoric, Education and Culture." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 44 (2012): 745–760.
- Ziegler, Joseph. *Sapientia Iesus Filii Sirach*. Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis Editum. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980.
- Zinn, K. "Libraries and Archives: The Organization of Collective Wisdom in Ancient Egypt." Pages 160–176 in *Current Research in Egyptology 2006: Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Symposium, University of Oxford 2006*. Edited by Maria Cannata and Christina Adams. Oxford: Oxbow, 2007.
- Zompetti, J. P. "The Value of Topoi." *Argumentation* 20 (2006): 15–28.
- Zuckermann, Moses Samuel. *Tosefta, Mischna und Boraitha in Ihrem Verhältnis zu Einander, oder, Palästinensische und Babylonische Halacha: Ein Beitrag Zur Kritik und Geschichte der Halacha*. Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1908–9.