
Theses

2016

A correlative study of the virtue of prudence in the Book of Proverbs and Thomistic moral thought

Joseph Tedesco

The University of Notre Dame Australia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses>



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

Publication Details

Tedesco, J. (2016). A correlative study of the virtue of prudence in the Book of Proverbs and Thomistic moral thought [Master of Theology (Thesis)]. The University of Notre Dame Australia. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/141>

This dissertation/thesis is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.



***A CORRELATIVE STUDY OF THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE
IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS AND
THOMISTIC MORAL THOUGHT***

By

Joseph Tedesco

Research Thesis Submitted for the Fulfilment of
Degree of Master of Theology

School of Philosophy and Theology

The University of Notre Dame Australia
19 Mouat Street
Fremantle
Western Australia 6959

June 2016

Supervisor
Dr Peter Black

Declaration of Authorship

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

Joseph Tedesco

Date

Contents

Declaration of Authorship	2
Contents.....	3
Abstract.....	5
Abbreviations Used and Other Notes.....	6
1. Overview: Moral Theory, Scripture and Virtues	8
1.1 Scripture and the Moral Framework of Virtue Ethics	8
1.1.1 <i>Overarching Approach to Scripture and Morality.....</i>	<i>8</i>
1.1.2 <i>Recent Approaches to Virtue-Based Ethical Exploration in Proverbs and the Virtue of Prudence.....</i>	<i>12</i>
1.2 The Virtues in the Thomistic Tradition and a Comparative Look at Biblical Wisdom..	18
1.2.1 <i>The Backdrop to Virtues: The Premise of Natural Law and Providential Creation ...</i>	<i>18</i>
1.2.2 <i>Morality in the Thomistic Tradition: The Place of the Virtues and Prudence.....</i>	<i>22</i>
1.2.3 <i>Theological Backdrop to Biblical Wisdom and its Relationship to Creation</i>	<i>29</i>
2. The Nature of Prudential Wisdom in Proverbs	40
2.1 Words for Wisdom.....	40
2.1.1 <i>Ḥokmāh/Ḥākam</i>	<i>41</i>
2.1.2 <i>Śēkel/Śākal</i>	<i>43</i>
2.1.3 <i>Bînāh/Mēbîn.....</i>	<i>45</i>
2.1.4 <i>Tēbûnâ</i>	<i>46</i>
2.1.5 <i>Mēzimmâ</i>	<i>47</i>
2.1.6 <i>Tûšiyyâ.....</i>	<i>48</i>
2.1.7 <i>‘ormâ</i>	<i>49</i>
2.1.8 <i>Mûsār.....</i>	<i>50</i>
2.1.9 <i>Da‘at.....</i>	<i>51</i>
2.2 Overall Composition of Proverbs	52
2.2.1 <i>Overarching Moral Framework of Proverbs.....</i>	<i>52</i>
2.2.2 <i>Social-Political Influence in Proverbs and the Political Dimension of Prudential Wisdom</i>	<i>58</i>
2.2.3 <i>The Particular and Universal Scope of Proverbs.....</i>	<i>66</i>
2.2.4 <i>Fullness of Life and Theological Imagery in Proverbs.....</i>	<i>73</i>
3. Truthful Vision and the Parts of Prudence that Aid It.....	82
3.1 Truthful Vision: Seeing Reality Rightly.....	82

3.2	<i>Memoria</i>	84
3.2.1	<i>'True-to-Being' and 'True-to-Self' Understanding</i>	84
3.2.2	<i>Proverbs and the Concept of Memoria</i>	86
3.3	<i>Docilitas</i>	90
3.3.1	<i>Docilitas: Acquiring the Virtues by Being Open and Teachable</i>	91
3.3.2	<i>Proverbs and the Concept of Docilitas</i>	94
3.4	<i>Solertia</i>	99
3.4.1	<i>Solertia: Timely Decisiveness</i>	100
3.4.2	<i>Proverbs and the Concept of Solertia</i>	102
4.	Thomas Aquinas in Dialogue with Proverbs: Socio-Political and Theological Dimensions of Prudence	107
4.1	Thomistic Political Prudence.....	107
4.2	Theological Imagery and the Infused Virtues.....	117
4.2.1	<i>Infused Prudence as a Hermeneutical Aid for Proverbs</i>	126
4.2.2	<i>The Natural and Supernatural in Proverbs</i>	130
	Concluding Remarks	135
	Bibliography	137

Abstract

The virtues are central to our understanding of character-based morality and in the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition at least, prudence is considered the first of all cardinal virtues – vital and necessary to the virtuous life. Similarly, the claim of this study is that prudence is a central feature of Proverbial wisdom and, as such, the book of Proverbs is a useful biblical source to allow Scripture to enrich our understanding of the virtuous life and of prudence in particular. In this vein, this thesis engages in a correlative study between an understanding of prudence informed by Thomistic thought and prudential wisdom found in the book of Proverbs. Part of this correlative study also takes in the broader context of the virtuous moral life, including notions such as the natural law and the virtues in general. This study highlights that wisdom as portrayed in the book of Proverbs can inform contemporary theological understandings of prudence, especially those with their roots in the Thomistic tradition. Further, the Thomistic understanding of the virtue of prudence provides a useful heuristic approach to interpreting Proverbs.

Abbreviations Used and Other Notes

General

BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
HALOT	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
LXX	Septuagint
MS	Masoretic text
NAB	The New American Bible
NABRE	The New American Bible Revised Edition
NIB	The New Interpreters Bible
NIV	The New International Version
NKJV	The New King James Version
NRSV	The New Revised Standard Version
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TWOT	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

Abbreviations for the Works of Aquinas

<i>Ethics</i>	Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics Aquinas, Thomas. <i>Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics</i> . Translated by Litzinger, C. I. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964.
<i>De veritate</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate</i> Aquinas, Thomas. <i>The Disputed Questions on Truth</i> . Translated by Mulligan, Robert William, Schmidt, Robert W. and McGlynn, James V. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954.
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> Aquinas, Thomas. <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> . Translated by English Dominican Fathers London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1924.
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> Aquinas, Thomas. <i>Summa Theologiae</i> . Translated by English Dominican Fathers. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.

Where noted, the 'Blackfriars Translation' is also used:
Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries*. London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1960-1974; reprinted by Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Abbreviations for the Works of Aristotle

NE **Nicomachean Ethics**
Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Irwin, Terence. 2nd ed.
Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999.

Bible Translation

The NRSV translation of the Bible is used unless otherwise stated:
The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson
Publishers, 1989

Transliteration

Biblical Hebrew and Greek are transliterated using the Society of Biblical
Literature's (SBL) academic standard as indicated in *The SBL Handbook of Style:
For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, (Second edition). Atlanta, Georgia SBL
Press, 2014.

Note: transliterations that form part of direct quotations maintain the formatting of
original source where possible.

1. Overview: Moral Theory, Scripture and Virtues

1.1 Scripture and the Moral Framework of Virtue Ethics

1.1.1 Overarching Approach to Scripture and Morality

Though the Second Vatican Council was not called in response to specific polemics or specific moral predicaments of the day, the Council Fathers nevertheless called for the renewal of moral theology that has helped shape moral enquiry significantly in the decades since. Part of that call was that greater stress be given to role of Scripture in moral theology.¹ This is most notably expressed in *Dei Verbum*² and, even more explicitly, in *Optatam Totius* which stated that moral theology should be ‘nourished’ by scriptural teaching as indeed the Bible sits as the “soul of all theology.”³ This leaning has continued through to more recent times where, for example, the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s document *The Bible and Morality* reminded theologians that “Holy Scripture is not only a source of revelation on which to ground one’s faith, it is also an indispensable reference point for morality.”⁴

An immediate question follows: how and in what manner can Scripture serve moral theology? This question is especially complex as any contemporary and reasonable analysis of Scripture quickly ascertains that the bible does not provide any ‘clean’ systematic moral construct or a tidy synthesis of principles and precepts.⁵ As such, the appropriate and beneficial use of Scripture in moral theology is not always as straightforward as it may seem. Further, the historical-critical scholarship of biblical literature has highlighted the distinct gap between our modern issues and contexts and that of both the Old and New Testaments. As the Pontifical Biblical Commission

¹ As Curran notes, the greater stress on Scripture in moral theology was a movement that pre-dates the Council. Nevertheless, Vatican II brought such sentiment into even greater focus in the Catholic context and the endorsement of the Council is regarded as a key moment in Catholic moral theology. Charles E. Curran, "The Role and Function of the Scriptures in Moral Theology," in *The Use of Scripture in Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, Readings in Moral Theology, vol. 4 (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 179.

² Second Vatican Council, "*Dei Verbum*: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1966), §21.

³ Second Vatican Council, "*OT*," §16.

⁴ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality: Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008), preface (p. 5).

⁵ Josef Fuchs discusses this notion in relation to the call of the use of Scripture by Vatican II. See *Human Values and Christian Morality*, trans., M. H. Heelan et al. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970), 28-29. Curran’s discussion on the use of Scripture in moral theology highlights this issue substantially in "The Role and Function of the Scriptures in Moral Theology," 178-212.

indicates, even a casual reading of Scripture illuminates the difficulties in applying biblical writings to contemporary moral situations given that they “were redacted at least nineteen hundred years ago and belong to epochs in which life conditions were very different from those of today.”⁶

The response to such issues in regard to the use of Scripture in moral theology starts with an appreciation for the need of sound exegetical scholarship which helps one to navigate the Scriptures and to understand them in their own situational contexts. Certainly, many scholars interested in the field of Scripture and morality note such a necessity.⁷ As such, a significant part of this project will utilise such tools of modern scholarship. However, it will not remain there. The aim is not simply to unpack historical data on selected texts as such, but to allow Scripture to illuminate truths that can help shape understandings of at least certain aspects of the moral life.⁸

To do so, however, one needs to ask a further question. The question on the use of Scripture in this or any other work of moral theology is not simply how a moral theory can use Scripture but, more accurately, what paradigm is witnessed in Scripture (in whole or in part) and, thus, able to most fruitfully speak to the moral life. In this sense, often the use of Scripture is bound to the prior paradigm of moral understanding that one brings to its reading. For example, one commonly understood paradigm is essentially deontological and sees Scripture providing certain articulations on moral norms and rules. Certainly under the heavily legalistic model employed by the ‘moral manuals’ between Trent and Vatican II, the use of Scripture was primarily in proof text fashion to support arguments on the sinfulness or otherwise of particular acts.⁹

⁶ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality*, preface (p. 6). See also Servais Pinckaers’ discussion on application of Scripture to ethical issues of today, “Scripture and the Renewal of Moral Theology,” in *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 59-62.

⁷ The aforementioned Fuchs being an example, *Human Values and Christian Morality*, 27.

⁸ This follows Pinckaers who notes that *both* a ‘positivist’ method of exegeses, which focuses on “facts” of historicity and related data, and the more interpretive “truthfulness” of the text itself are needed if Scripture is to engage successfully with moral deliberation, Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans., Mary Thomas Noble, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 73-74.

⁹ See Curran, “The Role and Function of the Scriptures in Moral Theology,” 179-180. On the development of the ‘moral manuals’ see John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: The Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1-36.

It should be pointed out that I do not want to suggest that Scripture cannot or should not be used for articulating moral norms or precepts but, rather, exclusively doing so, particularly in a strictly

More recently, other moral frameworks have come to the fore including virtue or character-based ethics. The revival of virtue-based ethics is often marked by the writings of such figures as Elizabeth Anscombe and various critics such as William Frankena, Philippa Foot and Alasdair MacIntyre¹⁰ while figures such as Stanley Hauerwas¹¹ and James Keenan¹² have performed a similar role in the more overtly theological context. They themselves base much of their understanding on Aristotle and Aquinas. Under such influence, many moral thinkers have found value in changing the fundamental basis of moral reflection away from acts as a means to a ‘utilitarian’ end or in considering the purity of the particular act itself (typical of deontological ethics) to the broader concept of character and virtues – a movement that focuses on the “kind of person one’s actions exhibits and requires one to be.”¹³ Within such a framework, there is a greater acknowledgment that actions do not sit as isolated and independent entities apart from the context of the fuller motivations and lived experiences of the agents who perform them. Such a paradigm holds that morality is better understood as one ‘being’ good rather than simply ‘doing’ good. As Klaus Demmer states in his defining of the moral life:

First and foremost, morality concerns the reality of our being good; in this sense, any good action represents a derivative dimension, the expression of a more fundamental condition ... Moral theologians are increasingly aware of the fact that actions are grounded in personal attitudes, that there exists something like permanent dispositions for whose cultivation the agent bears a particular responsibility.¹⁴

deontological framework, is not the fullest means in which the Scriptures can be utilised to inform the moral life.

¹⁰ The impetus for such philosophers to return to virtue-based ethics was essentially in response to dissatisfaction with the condition of modern moral philosophy built primarily on deontological or utilitarian frameworks. Harold Alderman, "By Virtue of Virtue," in *The Virtues: Contemporary Essays on Moral Character*, ed. Robert B. Kruschwitz and Robert C. Roberts (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1987), 47. MacIntyre in particular brought this dissatisfaction into sharp focus in his seminal work *After Virtue* where he illustrates the limitations of attempting to resolve moral dilemma based on competing rational arguments in the contemporary context. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 6-22 and passim.

¹¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1974), this being a seminal publication, though many more have followed since.

¹² His first work being: James F. Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992).

¹³ Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 115.

¹⁴ Klaus Demmer, *Shaping the Moral Life: An Approach to Moral Theology*, trans., Roberto Dell'Oro (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 2, 53.

It is in this context that an understanding of virtues (and corresponding vices) are framed, namely it is those traits that constitute the character of a person. They are classically understood, in the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas, as being dispositions which express the “pattern of choices an individual makes.”¹⁵ As such, a particular virtue not only renders good outcomes but “makes good he who has it.”¹⁶

This understanding of morality resting in the character of a person with their virtues and vices is one that is most suited to the Scriptures in general and to the wisdom literature in particular. In this vein, despite the traditional reliance on Scripture to articulate a deontological framework, particularly in the use of certain parts of the Hebrew Scriptures,¹⁷ the revival of virtue-based morality finds a corresponding renewal in biblical scholarship in general and wisdom literature in particular. William Brown makes the point that “concern for ethical character runs throughout the Bible ... but finds its most immediate home within a frequently neglected part of the biblical canon, the wisdom literature.”¹⁸ So though wisdom literature may struggle to supply “hard and fast principles” or codified laws on which moral norms can be based, it does supply “characterisations of character, that is to say, profiles of character embodied in certain lives of virtue.”¹⁹ Similarly Rodd, in his discussion of Proverbs, notes that as moral discussion is able to move beyond concepts such as that of the Kantian categorical imperative and the utilitarianism of Mill, so are we able to better capture the ethical framework of the Hebrew Scriptures more broadly. Rodd

¹⁵ William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 9. This sentiment is tied to notion of ‘habits’ to describe the enduring quality a person exhibits. The term habit is itself taken from the Latin *habitus* and Greek *hexis* and denotes more than mindless repetitive activity which the contemporary use may imply. The classic source for such understanding is found in Book II & III of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans., Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999). (Hereafter *NE*). Thomas Aquinas’s discussion on the same can be found in his *Summa Theologiae*, trans., English Dominican Fathers (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I-II, 49-54. (Hereafter *ST*). See also brief discussion in 3.3.1 below.

¹⁶ Jean Baechler, "Virtue: Its Nature, Exigency and Acquisition," in *Virtue*, ed. John W. Chapman and William A. Galston, Namos, vol. 34 (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 27.

¹⁷ Baumann, for example, notes the tendency of studies in Old Testament morality to focus on Israel’s confessions (the Decalogue or Law in general) or the prophetic texts. Gerlinde Baumann, "Wisdom and Ethics: The Contribution of Sapiential Ethics for Old Testament Ethics," *Verbum Et Ecclesia JRG* 30, no. 1 (2009): 16-17.

¹⁸ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, viii.

¹⁹ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 19. Citing Richard Bondi, "The Elements of Character," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 12, no. 2 (1984): 205.

states categorically that “the Greek concern for virtue, which seems to be receiving renewed interest among moral philosophers, is closer to the Old Testament ethics.”²⁰

With the above in mind, the aim of this project is to draw on two traditions and bring them into dialogue in a particular area of study – the teaching of Proverbial wisdom on the one hand and the virtue tradition informed by St. Thomas Aquinas and his interpreters on the other. As such, this project follows Aquinas himself who suggested that just as “other moral teachings of the Old Testament centred on the Ten Commandments and on their purpose, so it was appropriate that later books of the Old Testament should instruct us on the activity of prudence, which is about the things serving this purpose.”²¹ Of these “latter books” that Aquinas refers to, the current study’s specific concern is the book of Proverbs. Naturally the wisdom tradition is broader than this one work and one could draw on wisdom genre found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Nevertheless, Proverbs is the primary work of focus and its concerns help provide a boundary to this project. Proverbs is chosen for two reasons. Firstly, it is regarded as a foundational piece of the wisdom tradition; well organised and extensive in its focus and influence.²² Moreover, and this represents the central proposition of this thesis, there is an expression of morality within Proverbs that most readily speaks to a contemporary discussion on the virtue of prudence and its moral framework as found in the Thomistic tradition. What follows is an unpacking of this position.

1.1.2 Recent Approaches to Virtue-Based Ethical Exploration in Proverbs and the Virtue of Prudence

As alluded to above, attention given to the role of biblical wisdom in contemporary moral theology has increased in recent times, but is still relatively thin especially when compared to focus given to other parts of Scripture. The previously cited Biblical Commission’s *The Bible and Morality* is a reasonable illustration of this. In its second chapter which focusses on the Hebrew Scriptures and “the norms of human conduct,” the wisdom books are treated as somewhat of a footnote (covered in §39-40) to the broader discussion which itself is centred on the covenantal

²⁰ Cyril S. Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land: Studies in Old Testament Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 277.

²¹ *ST*, II-II, 56.1 ad 3.

²² Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 15.

relationship between God and humanity (§14-38).²³ Further, the sections referring to the wisdom books use Qoheleth and Ben Sira as their illustrative sources and Proverbs is given only a passing comment.²⁴ This is so because the Biblical Commission's document, as with many other examinations of Old Testament morality, tends to focus on the covenantal expressions of the Torah and the prophetic traditions which back them up. Proverbs, in this regard, struggles to have a natural influence as it has very little reference to Israel's national or cultic traditions.²⁵ Nevertheless, theological focus on Proverbs and related material has certainly increased in recent times. For example, Richard Clifford opened his *Book of Proverbs & Our Search for Wisdom* with a discussion on the lack of regard for Proverbs,²⁶ but within a decade of its publication most major scholarly commentaries had published significant works (or reworkings) on Proverbs.²⁷ In addition, over the same period "an embarrassment of riches" of articles and monographs on the wisdom genre including Proverbs has emerged.²⁸

With renewed interest in Wisdom literature in general and Proverbs in particular, there has naturally been a greater focus on the moral framework therein. As will be noted throughout this thesis, much scholarship has identified Proverbial wisdom with 'practical wisdom' which itself is akin to prudence as it is understood in the Thomistic virtue tradition. Nevertheless, there has been relatively little explicit exploration of this notion. There are some notable exceptions to this that, though not

²³ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality*, Part 1, Ch. 2, §14-40.

²⁴ It should be pointed out that, by its own admission, the Biblical Commission had no intention of presenting a complete biblical moral theology (Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality*, §3.), and where specific criteria are referred to, they are "representative rather than exhaustive" (p. 9). Nevertheless, it does illustrate how a significant discussion on biblical moral theology can be had with little reference to wisdom literature in general and to Proverbs in particular.

²⁵ An introduction to this is articulated in Tomas Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun: Examination of Proverbs and Qoheleth* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1-3. See 1.2.3 and 2.2.2 below for fuller discussion.

²⁶ Richard J. Clifford, *Book of Proverbs & Our Search for Wisdom* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), 1-2.

²⁷ For example: Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997); Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 18A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 18B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Catholic scholars responsible for reputed commentaries include Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. v. 22 (Dallas: Word Books, 1998). Such works are obviously invaluable to this present study and will be frequently drawn upon.

²⁸ James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 2. Crenshaw provides a comprehensive list of contemporary scholarship on biblical wisdom; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 1-3. See also R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

addressing prudence in the context of the Thomistic tradition explicitly, comes close to doing so or at least approaches Proverbs from a perspective that allows for direct correlation with the Thomistic notion of prudence. Two works of note are the already cited William Brown's *Character in Crisis*, which sees the moral dimension of Proverbs being essentially "a book of virtues" intent on forming the character of the young in particular,²⁹ and Ellen F. Davis who draws a direct dialogue between the work of Proverbs and the virtue of prudence as expressed in Thomistic thought.³⁰

Davis' work, though not extensive, bears the most correlation to the study presented here. In her essay she articulates the resurgence of virtue-based moral thought, its value to theological deliberation in general and, most notably, the value in drawing a virtue-based morality from the book of Proverbs in particular.³¹ In so doing, Davis notes the virtues of prudence and temperance are those given the most attention in the book of Proverbs,³² and it is the former that is due particular attention due to the conceptual relationship discernible between the 'wise one' of Proverbs and the virtue of prudence (and their opposite vice of folly). Davis, albeit briefly, expounds on this notion and draws some particular references and understandings from Proverbs that express notions of prudence as found in the Thomistic moral tradition. Various notions are touched on including an understanding of prudence that moves beyond 'self-referential care', as well as classical notions of *docilitas* and *sollicitudo*.³³ These later notions are taken directly from Thomistic thought and are identified as key elements of developing true cognisance of reality, what can be termed 'truthful vision'³⁴ and, thus, prudential living.

Similarly, the regard for 'truthful vision' or 'seeing reality rightly' is the heart of Davis' deliberations suggesting that the moral life is built on an ability to comprehend and participate in the created order as has been laid down by God and which is perceptible in creation itself. She does so by drawing on various parts of

²⁹ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 22-49.

³⁰ Ellen F. Davis, "Preserving Virtues: Renewing the Tradition of the Sages," in *Character & Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. William P. Brown (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002).

³¹ Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 183-189.

³² Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 186-187.

³³ Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 190-192.

³⁴ A term drawn from Paul J. Wadell's *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2002), 120-130. It pertains to seeing reality (in the broadest sense) rightly. It is a notion discussed in section 3 below. See also *ST*, II-II, 51.3; 53.4.

Proverbs, but most specifically on the cosmological expressions of 3:19-26 and in the words of ‘Woman Wisdom’ in chapter 8. Davis notes, for example, that “Virtue ... entails seeing ourselves as part of the pattern that God has woven into creation, and valuing ourselves accordingly.”³⁵ Thus, the teaching of Proverbs includes encouraging the reader to properly grasp the majestic reality of creation and to prudently act (in the particular circumstances of the day) in accordance with such vision. According to Davis, this has direct correlation to the classical understanding of prudence stating that “prudence means investing ourselves properly in creation, making decisions that demonstrate steady reflection on what God has done.”³⁶ Conversely, citing Proverbs 14:8, Davis notes that the heart of folly is deception.³⁷ Deception, or more specifically a poor grasp of reality in its broadest sense, is the heart of imprudence in particular and immorality in general. Similarly, Aquinas states the danger of ‘false prudence’ which is evident “when the purpose of reason is directed to an end which is good not in truth but in appearance ... or in order to obtain a certain end, whether good or evil, a man uses means that are not true but fictitious and counterfeit.”³⁸ Thus, according to both Proverbs and Aquinas, though one may have certain skills or abilities akin to prudence, such as shrewdness (*astutia*), unless one is able to hold ‘right vision’ of both the ends and the particulars of given circumstances, then one’s character is prone to fall to folly rather than prudence and thus to sin rather than to the healthy moral life. This notion will be revisited more closely later, particularly in section 3.1, but it is worth noting that Davis provides some key themes that will be taken up below.

Stepping away from prudence specifically, mention should also be made of studies in the linking of proverbs with virtue-based morality more broadly. In this regard, Christopher B. Ansberry recently published article is of significant value.³⁹ Ansberry references recent scholarship in virtue-based approaches to interpreting proverbs,⁴⁰ but draws special attention to virtue-based ethics in the Greek moral tradition and particularly as expressed by Aristotle. Ansberry does so by first examining a key

³⁵ Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 197.

³⁶ Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 198.

³⁷ Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 200.

³⁸ *ST*, II-II, 55.3.

³⁹ Christopher B. Ansberry, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens? The moral vision of the book of Proverbs and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics," *Hebrew Studies* 51, no. (2010).

⁴⁰ Ansberry, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?," 157, fn. 2.

work in this field produced by Michael V. Fox.⁴¹ Fox notes a correlation between Platonic moral concepts and that expressed in Proverbs on three levels; 1) virtue is knowledge, 2) no one does wrong willingly, and 3) all virtues are one.⁴² Ansberry, however, notes that a more fruitful hermeneutical approach is found in drawing Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* into dialogue with the writings of Proverbs.⁴³ The heart of Ansberry's article asks the question concerning the degree to which Aristotle's approach to ethics compares with the ethics of Proverbs.⁴⁴ The outcome of which is that "*Nicomachean Ethics* serves as a useful heuristic guide for understanding the moral vision of Proverbs. Similar to Aristotle's ethical theory, character and intellect are fundamental to the ethical vision of Proverbs."⁴⁵ Moreover, Ansberry notes that, unlike Fox's use of Plato who equates knowledge to virtue,⁴⁶ Aristotle articulates that the morally sound person needs more than 'knowledge of the good' in and of itself. As Ansberry states it, Aristotle emphasises an:

Organic relationship between moral and intellectual virtues ... Virtue is an activity that includes a person's moral and intellectual capacities: moral virtue identifies the goal, while practical wisdom determines the means for achieving the goal of virtuous activity in a particular situation.⁴⁷

Similarly, Ansberry notes, Proverbs articulates that the acquisition of wisdom (as knowledge) is a pre-condition for virtue, but must be accompanied by a 'virtuous disposition'.⁴⁸ The finer detail of Ansberry's study is not taken up at this point, but it is an important essay on two accounts. Firstly, though Ansberry does not tackle Thomistic prudence in particular, the reliance of Aquinas on Aristotle in building his moral framework provides for relevant material for the proposed study. Secondly, the heuristic model of comparing Aristotelian virtue-based ethics to Proverbs provides a valuable methodological insight for the current study of comparing Thomistic virtue

⁴¹ Michael V. Fox, "Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs," *Hebrew Studies* 48, no. (2007): 75-88; *Proverbs 10-31*, 934-945.

⁴² Fox, "Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs," 75.

⁴³ Ansberry, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?," 159-166.

⁴⁴ Ansberry, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?," 166.

⁴⁵ Ansberry, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?," 172.

⁴⁶ Fox, "Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs," 77-78. Cf. Plato, *Protogoras*, 352c-355d

⁴⁷ Ansberry, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?," 159. What Ansberry translates as 'practical wisdom' is more typically translated as prudence (from *phronesis*) based on his references to *NE*, 1142b33; 1144a7-9; 1144b15-18.

⁴⁸ Ansberry, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?," 161.

of prudence with Proverbs. In simple terms, whereas Ansberry asks the question of the degree to which Aristotle's approach to ethics compares with the moral theology of Proverbs, this thesis will be asking the question of the degree to which the Thomistic virtue of prudence and the underlying moral framework compares with that of Proverbs.

Given that, and returning to the starting point of this section, this comparative relationship between the wisdom of Proverbs and the virtue of prudence, as indicated above, hopes to provide a viable outworking (among many) on how Sacred Scripture might nourish moral theology, but it also helps build a bridge between earlier Thomistic thought that many have felt needed abandoning in the Post-Vatican II environment and scripturally nourished moral thought that has been encouraged since. There are a number of reasons why this has occurred at least in some circles. Most notable among them has been suspicion of the centrality placed in the role of natural law in Thomistic moral theology. More specifically, the particular understandings of natural law that has tended to marginalise the virtues on the one hand while exaggerating the notion of voluntarism and divine command theory (and a subsequent overemphasis on precepts and moral laws) on the other has tended to dominate such concerns. Further, there has been another level of suspicion of moral deliberation in the Thomistic tradition particularly in a theological context, that being that it leaves little room for particular Christian notions including, for example, the role of grace and revelation. These concerns, as will be demonstrated, are unfounded and are taken up presently. Doing so also opens up an overarching comparative framework between the virtue of prudence and the teachings of Proverbs (interpreted in the manner noted above).

1.2 The Virtues in the Thomistic Tradition and a Comparative Look at Biblical Wisdom

1.2.1 The Backdrop to Virtues: The Premise of Natural Law and Providential Creation

The aim of this section is to be able to identify the broad framework in which the virtue of prudence sits. To do so we need to trace, albeit briefly, the context, that being the notion of natural law, within which the notion of virtues in the Thomistic tradition sits. As will become apparent, this is not only useful for understanding prudence in itself, but gives a comparative basis for the teaching of Proverbs; both its cosmological and anthropological foundation on which right living and wisdom is based.

As alluded to above, in the post-Vatican II era, there was a sense that Thomistic moral thought, built primarily on a particular scholastic notion of natural law, needed to be abandoned if one was to engage fully with the broader resource of Christian revelation and speak intelligibly to our contemporary times. It is for this reason when entering into a discussion on moral matters that includes natural law, particularly that shaped by a Thomistic heritage, one needs to offer some clarification. Primarily this is so because there has been a shifting understanding of natural law theory built on the Thomistic tradition over time and, on this basis alone, one needs to explicate what one means by natural law theory – what are the main tenets one is holding when engaging with the notion. This ‘shifting understanding’ is chiefly so because there has been a highly refined engagement with Aquinas’s notion of natural law developed through the scholastic period and then the enlightenment period and, in many circles, a subsequent rejection of such notions on many counts. This rejection, as scholars such as Porter would suggest, is based on a limited utilisation and, at times, a misreading of Aquinas’s concept of natural law such that, for many, it has become a rather suspicious notion.⁴⁹ Typical of these suspicions is the idea that there

⁴⁹ Porter traces the development of natural law theory through the pre-medieval period and beyond in a number of works. Particularly useful is Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Novalis, 1999), 29-61; *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 1-52. Another useful resource that informs this research is Craig A. Boyd, *A Shared Morality: A Narrative Defense of Natural Law Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Publishing Group, 2007). Boyd traces the development and various guises of natural law theory from its pre-Christian origins through the

is a universal, ubiquitous and essentially unchanging notion of human nature from which the conception of the moral good can be derived. This rigid notion of the human person in the abstract sense with little or no reference to the dynamism of the person in history and in culture is one that concerns many moral theorists, theological and otherwise.⁵⁰ Further, in a specifically Christian context, Porter also highlights the issue that many have with this ‘traditional’ reading of natural law theory that leaves little room for key Christian notions, this critique is found most prominently in the post-reformation Protestant tradition which “tended to view the doctrine of the natural law as an expression of human pride, an effort to establish human righteousness apart from God’s law and God’s grace.”⁵¹

Porter refers to Karl Barth’s strong position on such but also to more recent thinkers such as Stanley Hauerwas.⁵² The latter provides a particularly noteworthy perspective on the ‘rejection’ of Thomistic natural law theory. As Boyd discusses, Hauerwas’ critique of natural law is not based on the theory in its entirety or on Aquinas’s formation of it but, rather, on “its Enlightenment (post-Grotius) manifestations.”⁵³ More specifically, Hauerwas’ critique is based primarily on two notions, firstly that morality must be understood within the particularity of the communities in which people live and the virtues they aspire to rather than precepts based on a universal rationality typical of Enlightenment thinking. Secondly, that if natural law is truly universal and a self-sufficient theory of morality, then it leaves no room for particular notions of grace.⁵⁴ The fear being that if we understand natural law to be entirely discernible through the power of human reason then morality, so developed, becomes an exercise bereft from any theological position properly speaking.

Catholic Scholastic development of the theory to the contemporary philosophical responses, Boyd, *A Shared Morality*, 35-77.

⁵⁰ Clifford Kossell, for example, when discussing this and other objections notes the works in Robert Geroge, ed. *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays* (Oxford: Claridon, 1992); cited in Clifford G. Kossell, "Natural Law and Human Law (Ia IIae, qq. 90-97)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 169-193, see n.18.

⁵¹ Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 30.

⁵² Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (London: Notre Dame Press, 1983), 50-71.

⁵³ Boyd, *A Shared Morality*, 235.

⁵⁴ Boyd’s response is to highlight that, though natural law theory necessarily acknowledges that there are some ‘goods’ (including virtues in the Thomistic tradition) that transcend particular social contexts, this does not preclude particular peoples constructing narratives in different ways appropriate to their history that, nonetheless, embody such universal virtues in particular frameworks. Boyd, *A Shared Morality*, 239. As such, there is room for the particular Christian narrative to be included in an understanding of the natural law. This is essentially what Aquinas did and what this project, at least in part, seeks to unpack.

Moreover, and for Barth this was particularly so, such a position is untenable as it is hubris to suggest that our human capacity to reason is sufficient without revelation or grace to recognise the truly good which only God knows. It is this approach that sees moral philosophy as a self-contained human enterprise that is Barth's (and thinkers that follow him) primary concern.⁵⁵

It is useful for this project to deal with the latter point here. Though some approaches to natural law (and speculation on moral matters more broadly) based on Aquinas have developed, by certain counts, as an exercise dominated by practical reasoning in and of itself apart from any theological context,⁵⁶ it is erroneous to suggest that it is, firstly, necessarily the case and, secondly, the position held by Aquinas in his construal of morality and natural law. It is true that Aquinas holds that the 'law of nature' cannot be removed from the human person, and this is so because it is intrinsic to the very created being of humanity itself.⁵⁷ However, he still holds that sin impacts the human person in the "particular action, in so far as reason is hindered from applying the general principle to a particular point of practice, on account of concupiscence or some other passion."⁵⁸ Further, "because human nature is not altogether corrupted by sin" the person can do some good, however "it cannot do all the good natural to it."⁵⁹ As Aquinas goes on to say, "thus in the state of perfect nature man needs a gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength."⁶⁰ As McNerny simply puts it, in Thomistic thought, "Grace builds on nature, but without grace nature's ability to attain its end is severely impaired."⁶¹ A fuller discussion on

⁵⁵ Barth's particular critique of natural law is found most prominently in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans., G.T. Thomson, vol. II (New York: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 528-535. However, as Porter notes, Barth critiques natural theology broadly speaking throughout his writings. For Porter's discussion of Barth's position see Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 168-172.

⁵⁶ An example in contemporary times is Anthony J. Lisska, *Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law: An Analytic Reconstruction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), esp. 116-138. Lisska stresses that Aquinas distinguishes between a eudaimonic vision that can be attained in heaven which necessarily requires God's grace from that which can be attained in this life; with the natural law pertaining entirely to the latter. This bifurcation of grace and natural law allows Lisska (and others) to see theological dimensions as secondary and dispensable in determining what is human nature and, thus, the good that serves it. For a brief discussion on this issue regarding Lisska see John I. Jenkins, review of *Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law: An Analytical Reconstruction* by Anthony J. Lisska, *The Journal of Religion* 78, no. 2 (1998).

⁵⁷ *ST*, I-II, 94.6.

⁵⁸ *ST*, I-II, 94.6.

⁵⁹ *ST*, I-II, 109.2.

⁶⁰ *ST*, I-II, 109.2.

⁶¹ Ralph McNerny, *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, Rev. ed. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 68.

the engagement between grace and nature will be had below,⁶² but suffice to say here that moral theology within the Thomistic tradition certainly holds an elevated vision of nature when compared to Barth, but not to the extent that the full expression of the human good and moral speculation that aids it necessarily excludes God's grace.⁶³

Given that, rather than seeing human nature apart from any theological context and deriving the notion of the moral from that philosophical standpoint on the one hand, or reverting to an entirely theistic image of the good on the other (leading to a rigid divine command theory for example), it is more useful to hold a correlative image of how theology relates to the understanding of nature that underpins Thomistic natural law. As Porter argues, it is this which characterised the scholastic approach to moral enquiry, an approach that was able to understand the possible overlap of Christian and secular morality without collapsing one into the other and, moreover, still remain fundamentally theological. As she notes, the idea that a sound theological account of morality will necessarily be a distinctively or uniquely Christian form of morality:

Has often been confused as if distinctiveness and theological soundness come to one and the same thing. They do not. It is true that the scholastic concept of the natural law implies continuities and areas of overlap between Christian morality and different forms of secular morality. Yet it does so precisely on theological grounds, including a commitment to the doctrine of creation and correlatively an insistence on the essential unity of revelation in the two Testaments. It is difficult to see how someone could argue for the uniqueness of Christian ethics without falling into corresponding theological errors: that is, failing to take the doctrine of the creation with full seriousness and truncating the scriptural witness to God as the one who creates and sustains the natural world.⁶⁴

Similarly, Leo Elders when discussing the link between philosophical enquiry and theology notes that in Thomistic thought, "faith is non-evident knowledge which uses concepts of the natural order to signify supernatural realities. This is possible, for there is an analogy between both orders, because God is the author of both."⁶⁵

⁶² See 4.2 below, also 2.2.4.

⁶³ For a recent discussion on the importance of grace in Aquinas's moral theology see Wm. Carter Aikin, *Moved by God to Act: An Ecumenical Ethic of Grace in Community* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 165-183.

⁶⁴ Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 166. Later in the same work Porter notes: "the theological concept of the natural law included the integrity and the revealed status of Scripture, and more particularly the Old Testament, which witnesses to God's work as Creator and provident Sustainer of the visible world." *Natural and Divine Law*, 305.

⁶⁵ L. Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), viii, n. 3. See also pp. 17-24 for broader discussion on this topic.

This analogous relationship between the natural order allows us to speak intelligibly about and from within our nature while also holding a thoroughly theological notion of the human moral good.

With that in mind, a certain framework of understanding nature (of human and creation as a whole) and its relationship to right reason becomes apparent. One is able to come to some sense of the moral right in keeping with human nature through reflection on created realities and with the power of reason. However, this is only possible if one is able to hold the *telos* of the human with God on the one hand and also recognise that the goodness which serves that end is discernible in the created world precisely because the notion of divine wisdom runs through it.

1.2.2 Morality in the Thomistic Tradition: The Place of the Virtues and Prudence

Touching on the notion of natural law sets the scene in a broad sense, but there is another common understanding of Thomistic thought that is worth examination to help understand the moral framework in which this thesis is working. As stated above, from the Renaissance until the middle of the 20th century, moral legalism predominated in both reformed and Roman Catholic moral theology. Catholic moral thought in particular employed a notion of natural law of sorts, but did so in such a manner that tended to sideline the place of the virtues in the fuller sense that modern scholarship has revisited (not to suggest that the virtues were sidelined all together, many Catholic scholars and particularly some religious orders maintained an ongoing and vibrant focus on the virtues).⁶⁶ Reference has already been made to the concerns of the likes of Barth who see natural law as essentially marginalising theological matters. However, there is another movement related to Thomistic thought, that being voluntarism, that is worth reflecting on particularly as it forms a contrast to the virtue-based morality which concerns this thesis.

The virtue-based morality that this thesis considers sits on the retrieval of an alternative convention to simple obedience to precepts in the categorical sense which became highly influential, in part at least, due to the significant contribution of the voluntarists during the late scholastic period. Among them is Francisco Suarez

⁶⁶ As pointed out by Thomas O'Meara in his survey discussion in "Virtues in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 2 (1997): 254-258.

whose work in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came to influence the later course of moral theology significantly.⁶⁷ Though Suarez did place an emphasis on the place of God in relation to the created order and acknowledges the place of the virtues in a certain sense, he did so in a manner that shifted the emphasis particularly to the role of the will as opposed to intellect within the conception of the moral good of rational creatures.

To briefly expound this notion, I will follow the work of Thomas Hibbs who unpacks Aquinas's teaching by comparing it to moral thinkers who followed, in particular Francisco Suarez and, to a lesser degree, Immanuel Kant.⁶⁸ In doing so, what is illuminated is a moderated concept of moral obligation than that expressed by Aquinas. As Hibbs states, "Throughout his writings, Thomas subordinates the questions of duty to the questions of ends perfective of and naturally pursued by human beings."⁶⁹ Hibbs proposes that this is discomfiting to Suarez who suggests that theory of moral obligation is necessary to conceiving the morally sound life, something essentially not present in Aquinas's work.

Suarez in a voluntarist mode (based on *De Legibus*, II, VI) suggests that one can have knowledge of a precept that is natural and good, but its obligation to obey can only derive in God's will apart from any natural conception. As such Suarez makes a distinction between the knowledge of the good and the source of obligation, suggesting that judgement of reason regarding the good does not impose obligation.⁷⁰ Hibbs suggests that Suarez has Aquinas's view in mind, for "Aquinas held that this judgment [of reason, *imperium rationis*] was a sufficient basis for the imposition of an obligation. Suarez thinks it insufficient."⁷¹ It is insufficient for Suarez because commending an action, which the intellect can grasp in the natural, is not the same as commanding to action. Moreover, Hibbs states that:

Suarez couples his analysis of command with the supposition that an obligation has some sort of efficacious force attached to it. In contrast to

⁶⁷ Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, 226. Mahoney's discussion on 'The Language of Law' provides valuable background to the discussion being had here in Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, 224-258.

⁶⁸ Thomas S. Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor: Wisdom, Prudence and the Human Good* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

⁶⁹ Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor*, 65.

⁷⁰ Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor*, 67, citing Suarez, *De Legibus*, II, VI, 6.

⁷¹ Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor*.

Thomas, who conceives of action primarily in terms of the final cause, Suarez construes human action in terms of efficient causality.⁷²

To illustrate the point, we can suggest that the command theory of Suarez and, by certain extension, the deontological Kantian categorical imperative that would develop later, works in compelling the person by *pushing* them towards a good, while Aquinas, who holds no distinction between the obligatory and the good, sees the teleological image of the good as the final cause which *pulls* the agent towards right action. One is drawn to good (and thus to right action) by an internal disposition towards the good and for the perfective of the agent. This approach to morality is important to hold as Proverbs similarly does not seem to rest on command to action on God's behalf, but a recognition of the good (both in a theological and natural sense, a notion that will be analysed later in this project) which the agent is called to respond to.

Returning to Aquinas, he posits such a position based on a key feature of his conception of natural law which sets the metaphysical and anthropological foundation for his position. Aquinas famously remarked that the “natural law is a participation of the eternal law.”⁷³ As Hibbs notes, this notion is itself Augustinian in origin⁷⁴ where he argues that “the eternal law is the rational pattern in the divine mind of all created things.”⁷⁵ Further, the eternal law, according to Aquinas, is the locus of divine providence:

Granted that divine providence rules the world, ... it follows that divine reason governs the entire community of the universe. The pattern itself of the governance of things, which exists in the divine mind as in the source of the universe, has the nature of law.⁷⁶

This providential law is described as “the pattern of divine wisdom, as moving all things to their appropriate ends, has the nature of law.”⁷⁷ However, as Hibbs states, divine causality does not erase or supplant secondary causality. Rather,

⁷² Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor*, 68.

⁷³ *ST*, I-II, 91.2.

⁷⁴ Though due credit should be given to the long tradition of referring to Romans 2:14 as a scriptural source of natural law theory. See Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 3-4ff. See also fn. 103 below.

⁷⁵ Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor*, 69.

⁷⁶ *ST*, I-II, 93.1.

⁷⁷ *ST*, I-II, 93.1.

God moves creatures by creating them and by endowing them with inclinations to ends congruent with their nature: “All things participate somewhat in the natural law, insofar as from its impression they receive inclinations to appropriate acts or ends.”⁷⁸

As such, in the Thomistic framework, natural law is not construed in a propositional or deontological sense; rather, it is defined in terms of natures and inclinations. These inclinations provide at least some trustworthiness in determining the good because, fundamentally, creation itself and persons as rational creatures have been created by God (the Good) with the good as its proper end.⁷⁹

However, as Porter’s reflection on the same passage from the *Summa Theologiae* (I-II, 91.2) illustrates, natural inclinations in themselves are not enough, the notion simply lays the ground work, as it were, of a fuller understanding of how and why the human person can live the moral life in the broadest sense. As Porter states:

As this passage indicates, the claim that the natural law represents the distinctively human mode of participation in the eternal law implies that it is also an expression of the principles of action, or the natural inclinations, proper to the human person. However, these must be pursued in a properly human fashion: that is, in accordance with reason or virtue.⁸⁰

In Porter’s later work, *Nature and Reason*, she notes that human persons as rational creatures have a particular expression of natural inclination that is mirrored in the providential nature of God himself,⁸¹ i.e. it is not determinate as it is for non-rational creatures. As Porter states, inclinations of the human person:

Can be expressed in ways that undermine the agent’s attainment of her good, as well as in ways that promote it. If the inclinations are to function in such a way as to promote the agent’s true good, they must be directed by appropriate dispositions toward action – and that is precisely what the virtues are.⁸²

⁷⁸ Hibbs, *Virtue’s Splendor*, 69. Citing *ST*, I-II, 91.2.

⁷⁹ Porter provides a fleshing out of how inclinations as described relates to natural law specifically; *Natural and Divine Law*, 92-98. See also, Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 71-103, particularly as it relates to the teleological image of the human nature.

⁸⁰ Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 164.

⁸¹ As Aquinas says, “Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others.” *ST*, I-II, 91.2.

⁸² Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 176. Porter’s discussion in that section tends to focus on the relationship between the virtues and the precepts formed within the concept of Thomistic natural law rather than

Importantly for our purposes it is prudence that has a particular place in respect to this. As Keenan states it, “prudence functions to perfect a person’s natural inclinations through integrating them into a coordinated way of acting and living in a right manner.”⁸³

How this is achieved within the particular virtue of prudence will be unpacked below. However, what is important to note here is that the virtues, and the virtue of prudence in particular, provide a bridging of a cosmological concept of order that underpins Thomistic morality, captured in the notion of natural law as discussed to this point, with the anthropological context of moral reasoning as persons experience it. Prudence relates to the whole life of a person and, exercised well, recognises the true nature of creation and the ends which humans are naturally inclined. As Aquinas states, “prudence is of good counsel about matters regarding man’s entire life, and the end of human life.”⁸⁴ Prudence recognises the end that is the moral good to be achieved, but, more importantly, brings that end to realization through virtuous activity within the lived reality of the moral agent. In this sense prudence as a virtue, simply put, is the virtue by which the other virtues can be acquired and exercised as virtues. It is in this vein that prudence is often placed as the first of the four classically defined cardinal virtues. As Pieper in his eminent work on virtues notes, the primary place of prudence among the virtues is no accident as “prudence is the *cause* of the other virtues’ being virtues at all. For example, there may be a kind of instinctive governance of instinctual cravings; but only prudence transforms this instinctive governance into the “virtue” of temperance.”⁸⁵

As such, when discussing the virtue of prudence in the Thomistic tradition at least, in the background sits a conception of the created order within which the virtues necessarily operate.⁸⁶ Indeed, the heart of the virtue of prudence and its chief feature

the virtues as they relate to ‘character’ of the human person more broadly speaking which is more in keeping with our biblical theological focus that follows.

⁸³ James F. Keenan, "The Virtue of Prudence (IIa IIae, qq. 49-70)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 259. Or in the words of Aquinas himself, “natural inclinations fail to have the complete character of virtue if prudence is lacking” *ST*, I-II, 65.1, ad1 (Blackfriars translation).

⁸⁴ *ST*, I-II, 57.4.

⁸⁵ Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 6.

⁸⁶ Keenan articulates a similar approach stating, “prudence is very much in the background of the relationship between natural law and virtue. As the principles of prudence are the ends of the moral

lies in recognising the truth of things such that one can recognise how the virtuous life might rightly operate. Pieper notes:

The intrinsic goodness of man – and that is the same as saying his true humanness – consists in this, that “reason perfected in the cognition of truth” shall inwardly shape and imprint his volition and action. In this fundamental principle of Thomas Aquinas is summed up the whole doctrine of prudence.⁸⁷

More importantly, as Pieper goes on to state, this notion of ‘reason’ being perfected in the cognition of truth is all encompassing, not simply an intellectual apprehension in its most simplest form (though it would include that). Rather, “‘Reason’ means to [Aquinas] nothing other than ‘regard for the openness to reality,’ and ‘acceptance of reality.’ And ‘truth’ is to him nothing other than the unveiling and revelation of reality, of both natural and supernatural reality.”⁸⁸

As can be seen then, though we might begin building an understanding of Thomistic morality with a broad understanding of natural law, its outworking need not be in the form akin to Kantian moral law simply speaking nor limited to voluntarist precept/command theory that can and has been its outworking. The place of virtues and prudence in particular becomes apparent and vital in engaging a fuller vision of realising the good in this sense. In this vein the image of natural law need not necessarily be bound to precept and command alone but, also, the context within which the formation of character is found. As noted above, character-based morality is based on the formation of the person as a whole. Drawing from the above discussion, and understanding moral formation in a Thomistic sense, such formation becomes one where character is formed in the acquiring of prudence which itself rests on experiencing and engaging with created reality in its fullest form.

Holding this approach provides an entryway in how wisdom in Proverbs and the Thomistic virtue of prudence can find correlative discourse on a fundamental level. As will be discussed in the following section, this understanding of providential creation that underpins a notion of natural law can also be found, in a certain sense at least, in the wisdom literature including Proverbs. Also found therein is a

virtue, so the principles of natural law are the ends of our natural inclinations.” Keenan, "The Virtue of Prudence," 261.

⁸⁷ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 8.

⁸⁸ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 9.

commitment to the formation of the virtuous character in concert with this sense of providence and created order. William Brown makes the point in the introductory sections of his examination of the wisdom literature:

The role of perception in the definition of character cannot be overemphasized, for the subject matter of character is in essence the *self in relation*, in relation to the perceived world, including God, and to the history and pattern of one's choices. The particular orientation espoused by the ancient sages involved nothing less than perceiving the world from the perspective of all things subject to and ordered by God's will, be it discernible or inscrutable. ... It is in appropriating and embodying truth rather than simply apprehending it, that creation functioned for the ancient sages. Specific creation texts of wisdom literature (e.g. Prov 8:22-31; Eccl 1:2-11; Job 38-41) are constructed in such a way so as to (re)construct the reader's perception of the world and God in accord with certain values, perspectives, and principles, the stuff of ethical character.⁸⁹

This correlation will be more fully fleshed out in the following. However, at this stage what can be held is that natural law, as a conceptual expression of God's creation and providence, provides a framework in which the formation of the human person towards the good can be couched and, importantly, it is something achievable within the experience of being human.⁹⁰ This is important because, as will be discussed below, the experience of being human and our relationship to creation is the dimension in which the book of Proverbs sits. As such, moral compulsion in Proverbs (and the rest of the wisdom literature) is not necessarily found in 'divine command' typical of much of the rest of the Old Testament. Often moral authority in the Hebrew Scriptures is found in special revelation in a Yahwistic sense and is typically precept-based or at least interpreted that way. Certainly, if we are to lean on a mode of understanding natural law that is voluntarist and deontological in nature, then Scripture is limited to supplying the details of 'the commands' of moral obligation. In contrast, the wisdom literature tends to have very little reference to moral obligation being found in that sense. It is with this in mind that we turn to

⁸⁹ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 7-8.

⁹⁰ As already noted above, 'being human' in this sense is not a non-theological concept because it necessarily involves a participation in God's creation. As Hibbs notes, "Thomas is careful to rule out the possibility of any creature creating autonomously. Strictly speaking, no creature creates at all, for we always presuppose something in our making. Yet Thomas speaks of stages of salvation history as creation, fall, and recreation. Although we could not have had anything to do with our initial creation, we can cooperate with God in our re-creation and in the providential re-creation of the natural order." Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor*, 24.

Proverbs and the wisdom literature tradition and examine a correlative understanding of how notions as discussed above might be found.

1.2.3 Theological Backdrop to Biblical Wisdom and its Relationship to Creation

This understanding of natural law built on the natural order of creation that is theologically informed has important correlative significance in our examination of the biblical wisdom and the book of Proverbs in particular. This will be unpacked more as this work unfolds, but is useful to touch on it here to help set the scene of what is to come. Just as moral thinkers using certain aspects of Thomistic teachings of virtues and natural law have led to an overemphasis of the capacity of the human person to use reason to navigate the good apart from any theological concern (such as grace and creation mentioned above), the interpretation of the wisdom literature (including Proverbs) in modern scholarship has borne out a similar, though not identical, dichotomy.

In short, there has been a reading of wisdom literature that sees it as inherently secular rather than revelatory and thus something of an invalid expression of Yahwistic faith that is proper to the Old Testament overall. Such an understanding is premised on a number of grounds, but significant among them is the understanding that the concerns of much of Proverbs and wisdom literature is in the day-to-day matters of the human person and, further, that the wisdom drawn therein can be detached from the rest of the Old Testament corpus and still remain intact, as it were, as a form of teaching. Moreover, within Proverbs there is very little reference to the revealed God found in the history of the people of Israel and the prophetic texts which attest to them. This has led to some considering the wisdom literature as a less than valid expression of Old Testament faith. Roland Murphy is one of many who have discussed this issue. As an example he refers to Horst Preuss as a “vigorous exponent of the theological illegitimacy of the Old Testament wisdom.”⁹¹ Preuss’ view is built on the understanding that the older parts of the wisdom literature in particular (e.g. Prov 10-29) are essentially a foreign import with their focus being on

⁹¹ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 121., citing Horst D. Preuss, *Einführung in die alttestamentliche Weisheitsliteratur*, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987).

the successful human life in itself apart from theistic concerns featured in the rest of the Scriptures. Preuss acknowledges that there is a divine image of sorts in the foreign influence within Proverbs, but it is not in keeping with the revealed Lord found in the rest of the Old Testament. As Murphy describes it, “Preuss considers the religion in Prov 10ff. a form of “Polyyahwism,” a contaminated faith in a God different from the Lord that is revealed in the rest of the Old Testament.”⁹²

There is no doubting the foreign influence in the development of Proverbs and biblical wisdom literature overall. However, the conclusion typified by Preuss and others, that biblical wisdom literature is “strongly secular in flavour” and is only “loosely connected with religious faith”⁹³ is only based on an interpretive approach which assumes that the only legitimate religious faith expressed in the Scripture (and the Old Testament in particular) is one that is revelatory in the Yahwist mode with the historical, prophetic and cultic narratives that go along with it. More recent responses to such issues in biblical theology has been to recognise a theological integrity of wisdom literature in its own right even if it does not hold to the revelatory mode in the same way as the rest of the Hebrew tradition. As such, there has been a revisiting of understanding wisdom as a theology within biblical scholarship in recent times.⁹⁴

Firstly, there is a recognition that it is only modern scholarly readings of wisdom literature that tend to see it as a distinct aspect of the Israelite experience from that found in the Old Testament overall. As Dell notes in regard to how Proverbs is perceived in particular:

The function of the Proverbs is largely seen as education and moral formation; and wisdom is seen as an area clearly distinct from other concerns of Israelite life such as law, worship, prophecy and story-telling

⁹² Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, citing Preuss, *Einführung*, 60, 161

⁹³ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans., J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1967 [Ger. 1933]), 81ff. cited in Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 121. See also Katharine Dell who similarly opens her work on the Social and Theological context of Proverbs examining the tendency in scholarship to stress the distinctive and marginal nature of biblical wisdom literature as a theological work. Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-17. She also focuses on Eichrodt as well others, Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 10-11.

⁹⁴ A useful discussion on the development of this topic is also had by Leo G. Perdue’s recent work *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 15-36.

... while this separation provides a helpful way of categorizing material, one wonders how far it was reality in the people's lives.⁹⁵

Further, there has been a heightened focus on the more central place of creation theology "whereby historical and ahistorical elements of Israelite faith are being recognized,"⁹⁶ the upshot being that wisdom found and experienced in created reality is neither an inherently secular notion nor an appendix to other more 'legitimate' faith expressions. As Murphy suggests, the wisdom experience *is* a faith experience in its own right, "the shaping of Israel's views of the world, and of the activity of God behind and in it, was done in an ambience of faith, and was characterized by trust and reliance on God."⁹⁷ So it may well be the case that the teachings of wisdom are steeped in the experience of humanity in creation and are also found in the experience of those outside of the tradition inherited by Christians and Jews. However, there is a recognition that such teachings are not an adjunct to revelation but, rather, that they represent a form of revelation in itself – and as with all forms of revelation, they rightly call a response from the human person, a calling back to right relationship as it were, to the Revealed. Murphy goes on to state:

Wisdom literature provides a biblical model for understanding divine revelation apart from the historical mode (salvation history) in which it is usually cast. We have portrayed the dialogue with divinity that takes place essentially via human experience and creation. It is also clear that the issues of life and salvation emerge in this dialogue, and especially in the invitation of personified Wisdom (Prov 8:35). On this level the Israelite encountered the Lord in a vital faith relationship that is as valid as the liturgical experience in the Temple, or the Exodus event itself.⁹⁸

The question can be asked then, in the context of wisdom writing, in what vein does one respond to God revealed in created reality? What mode does it take particularly as it relates to moral theology? The most common approach one can make here is to

⁹⁵ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 6-7. Dell does acknowledge that there is a distinctiveness to the wisdom literature, but argues that the distinction has been overly stressed. Even in the earlier wisdom writings (including much of Proverbs) with its 'secular' roots, Dell argues, there are "seeds of integration" that are not always noticed. See *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 125-154 for detailed analysis.

⁹⁶ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 11. Examples of influential sources that have stimulated discussion on the integrated vision of wisdom and creation theology include Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of Wisdom in The Framework of the Old Testament Theology," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1976); Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 62-73.

⁹⁷ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 125.

⁹⁸ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 126.

recognise the place of order within creation that underpins much of the wisdom literature but is particularly expressed in Proverbs. As with the notion of wisdom and theology discussed to this point, the place of order in relation to wisdom writings has not been a settled matter in scholarly circles. However, the general principle is built on a recognition that the wisdom enterprise, both in the Hebrew tradition and the non-biblical traditions that most likely influenced it,⁹⁹ seemed to be steeped in finding an ordering within creation (as laid out by God when a monotheistic mode is focused on) that, when properly recognised, provided the conduit onto which right (wise) living could be based.

Many scholars have explored such understandings and some, such as the often cited Koch for example, interpret Proverbs in a very tight deed/consequence mode where God has established creation in such a way that retribution for wickedness/foolishness is mechanically accounted for without any further engagement on God's behalf.¹⁰⁰ However, most contemporary scholars point out that such a mechanistic reading of Proverbs is neither accurate nor in keeping with the wider biblical tradition.¹⁰¹ As Dell states it, "The concept of order is a close companion to that of creation and can be held together with that doctrine as long as the concept does not become too deterministic."¹⁰² In any case, the concept of order as an outworking of creation and the ability for human beings to recognise such order and act in keeping with it presents a fundamental plank in understanding the moral framework of wisdom and Proverbial wisdom in particular. More the point for our purposes, it is not hard to see, then, how such an understanding becomes close to the

⁹⁹ Particularly the notion of *ma'at* found predominantly in Egyptian wisdom literature. Though it does not have a direct equivalent in the Hebrew, most argue that correlative expressions can be found in Proverbs. *Ma'at* does not translate easily but, as Brueggemann states, it rests on the principle "that man is meant for an orderly role in an orderly cosmos. His rightful destiny is to discern that order and find his responsible share in it. The order of life is characterized in wisdom in many ways. In Egypt it is *ma'at*. In Israel it may be called integrity (Prov. 10:9), instruction (10:17), fear of the Lord (10:27), righteousness (11:6), prudence (12:23), good sense (13:15), and it is referred to by many other terms." Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith* (Richmond, Va: John Knox Press, 1972), 22-23; Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 115-116. See also fn. 212 below.

¹⁰⁰ Klaus Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, Issues in Religion and Theology, vol. 4 (London: SPCK, 1983).

¹⁰¹ For example, Murphy states, "Koch's interpretation is in harmony with many biblical statements about retribution. But one must also recognize the biblical emphasis upon the *reaction* of God to human conduct ... In most cases the biblical text does not leave room for a hypothetical reconstruction of a mechanical law of retribution." *The Tree of Life*, 117. For a detailed study on this subject see also Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 90-140.

¹⁰² Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 134. See also Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 46-48.

concept of natural law as discussed above. Indeed, certain scholars have gone as far as to recognise this within the wisdom writings and beyond.

In a sense, this is nothing new. Though not always acknowledged, a close look at the natural law tradition does reveal that such thinking has long been informed by Scripture. Most notably, places such as Romans 1-2¹⁰³ as well Genesis 1 have been used to affirm natural law from the Patristic through to its more formal development in the Scholastic periods and beyond.¹⁰⁴ As Boyd in his discussion on the subject notes:

For Christians, the Genesis narrative of creation provides an account of the goodness of creation, the importance of human beings in the cosmos, and most importantly the idea that the entire created order is the contingent creation of a loving and wise God. The creation narrative also demonstrates that God has established an order to the creation. While Genesis affirms the goodness and orderliness of creation, we find in the Epistle to the Romans not only a reiteration of the Genesis account of created natures, but also an epistemological affirmation concerning the universal accessibility of the natural law.¹⁰⁵

In our contemporary setting, Barr is one in particular who, in a very polemical style, makes the point that contrary to Barthian approach (as mentioned in the previous section), Scripture itself attests to a natural theology.¹⁰⁶ Barr draws on Scripture as a whole in building his argument, however he does make a point on wisdom literature in particular that is worth noting. He states, for example, that:

With the Wisdom literature we widen our scope, for we are no longer discussing the individual classic passages, long used as evidences for natural theology, but are turning to large bands of literature, and few will question that, within the Old Testament, the Wisdom literature is the area with the largest similarity to the procedures of natural theology.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ In particularly Rom. 1:20 and, as mentioned previously, Augustine's use of Rom. 2:14-15 are key texts. *ST*, I-II, 91 & 93 are notable places where they are used by Aquinas.

¹⁰⁴ For extensive discussion on this see Jean Porter, "Natural Law as a Scriptural Concept: Theological Reflections on a Medieval Theme," *Theology Today* 59, no. 2 (2002); *Natural and Divine Law*, 121-146.

¹⁰⁵ Boyd, *A Shared Morality*, 49. N.B. that both the cited Boyd and Porter use the word 'affirm' to describe the relationship between such texts and natural law theory. This is so because both are aware of the issue where natural law is seen as being read into the Scriptures. Such a caution is noted and discussed below.

¹⁰⁶ James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford lectures for 1991, Delivered in the University of Edinburgh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). In particular 21-102.

¹⁰⁷ Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 91.

Of course, interpretations that expose a natural theology are not the same as natural law as understood in the Thomistic tradition, but they are closely related.¹⁰⁸ Barr himself notes that “natural law is in some respects the gateway to into natural theology.”¹⁰⁹ However, there have been others who have been more willing to identify ethics based on natural law in the Scriptures and name them as such. John Barton is one in particular who, on a number of fronts, suggest that:

Though obedience to God’s expressed will is no doubt present, it is not an exclusive view. Natural law, both in the weaker sense of moral principles supposed to be common to all men, and in the stronger sense of principles built into the structure of things, is also present.¹¹⁰

More recently Levering is another who, drawing on Barton among others, holds that natural theology is a viable concept within biblical theology broadly speaking. However, he critiques Barton on one particular ground; that being the over emphasis on the anthropocentric outworking of natural law morality that Barton seems to hold. Levering is wary of reducing biblically informed natural law to an approach in which human-reasoned ethical deliberation is seen in opposition to revealed positive law.¹¹¹ In so doing, Levering’s critique helps to highlight the thesis being explored in this project. He identifies that achieving an authentically Christian understanding of natural law can be informed by scripture by holding in firm view the teleological notion found in wisdom literature – one that is built on an image of the Creator’s relationship to divine wisdom. Levering relies primarily on the Wisdom of Solomon to illustrate the point, and in referring to Wisdom 7:22-8:1 he notes:

Personified wisdom thus fashions all things and ‘can do all things’ because she is ‘a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness’. Thanks to her, the created world that she ‘orders ...well’ possesses an intelligible order toward its proper flourishing. ... As Wisdom of Solomon states, God and God's personified wisdom make rationally accessible to human beings ‘the structure of the world and the activity of the elements; the beginning and end and middle of times, the alternations of the solstices and the changes of the seasons, the cycles of the year and the constellations of

¹⁰⁸ Porter makes this same point in reference to Barr in *Natural and Divine Law*, 167.

¹⁰⁹ Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 101.

¹¹⁰ John Barton, "Natural Law and Poetic Justice in the Old Testament," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30, no. 1 (1979): 13.

¹¹¹ Matthew Levering, *Biblical Natural Law: A Theocentric and Teleological Approach* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). This is argued throughout, but is particularly addressed pp. 43-66.

the stars, the natures of animals and the tempers of wild beasts' (Wisd. 7:17–20). Human beings thus discern an intelligible ordering of each thing toward its proper flourishing.¹¹²

Such reflections also apply to similar imagery found in Proverbs, particularly Prov 8. It points to the notion that there is an anthropological dimension to be had in the understanding of natural law, but it is one conceived in participating in created order by sharing in God's wisdom, which itself is discernible because wisdom bears witness to the very creation we are in (Prov 8:27-31).¹¹³ This is also evidenced in Aquinas's own writing where he cites Prov 8:23 as pointing to the existence of the 'eternal law'¹¹⁴ before unpacking the notion of natural law which, as discussed previously, is a participation in the eternal law.

As will become apparent in the discussion that follows, the wisdom that persons are called to share in is prudential in nature. However, the point that is important to hold here is that there is a fundamental framework of the virtues as understood in the Thomistic tradition that is also apparent within the wisdom literature including within Proverbs. It is a correlation that rests on a view of created order which both points to the teleological good (that is the Creator God) and, in certain ways at least, is also able to reveal the means to that good as humans experience that same creation.

A point should be made here on terminology and certain boundaries of understanding pertaining to natural law and the related notions of natural theology. Though authors such as Barton and Levering suggest that natural law is expressed throughout the Bible, it is unwise to categorise natural law as witnessed in the biblical literature as identical to that used by Aquinas and the moral tradition since. Rodd in his examination of Barton's understanding of natural law poses the question, "is it rightly termed 'natural law', a concept with a distinguished pedigree in moral philosophy, drawing its inspiration from the work of Augustine and Aquinas, and reaching back into classical philosophy?"¹¹⁵ Rodd's own response is that a classical

¹¹² Levering, *Biblical Natural Law*, 63.

¹¹³ Levering states: "By participating in God's wisdom, human beings are able to understand and do what is right. One cannot take this sharing in wisdom for granted; rather, given human tendency toward sin and idolatry, one must strive to share in God's wisdom, at whose heart is self-dispossession or *ecstasis*." Levering, *Biblical Natural Law*, 64.

¹¹⁴ *ST*, I-II, 91.1.

¹¹⁵ Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*, 63.

understanding of natural law, in particular its philosophical approach would be “far removed from anything which can be found in the Old Testament. The wisdom writers were not philosophers in the Greek and modern sense,”¹¹⁶ and though certain interpretations of the bible, particularly of the wisdom literature, can reveal elements akin to natural law, to describe it as such is “not fully in accord with the normal philosophical understanding of the term.”¹¹⁷ In this vein, the caution Rodd offers is warranted. Clearly the biblical authors and the Hebraic tradition in which it sits do not engage an exact understanding of natural law as classically defined. However, as already discussed above and noted by many scholars in the field, there is a correlation of a kind and understanding this allows one to find greater avenue in which the wisdom writings (and Proverbs in particular for our purposes) is able to inform a moral understanding in our contemporary context.

Murphy offers a similar reluctance in suggesting that the wisdom literature is underpinned by a natural theology as put forward by the aforementioned Barr.¹¹⁸ Murphy’s reluctance rests on a definition which would stress the distinction between supernatural and natural such that they are seen in opposition as it can (and has) been classically defined.¹¹⁹ Murphy suggests that a better definition to hold is one built on the theology of Karl Rahner which sees all of created order as a supernatural order within which any concept of the natural would be subsumed. As Murphy states:

The explicit history of salvation found in the Bible is, for Rahner, a special “official” history of revelation. There is no reason why so-called “natural theology,” which is only theoretically distinct from theology as it is usually understood, does not also have its roots in revelation. What is described as “natural” theology in the Bible is the product of supernatural revelation that calls for a faith response. It may also be something that could be known and apprehended by human reason, but that is irrelevant when we exist in a supernatural order.¹²⁰

Once again, this reflection has merit and is noted here as a caution. As already discussed above, the principle of natural order/theology/law that underpins Proverbs

¹¹⁶ Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*, 63.

¹¹⁷ Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*, 64.

¹¹⁸ Murphy, 2002, 224-225, 276-277

¹¹⁹ Murphy describes this succinctly in 2002, 276

¹²⁰ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 276-277. Contra to Murphy, it can be argued that such a position as held by Murphy is only necessary if one feels that the natural is unnecessarily downplayed in relation to the theological (graced) reality of all existence. As will be discussed below (section 2.2.4 and 4.2), such a downplaying need not be necessary when examining Proverbs or the virtue of prudence informed by Thomistic thought. Cf. Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 383-398.

and the rest of the wisdom literature is necessarily theological and, in some form at least, supernatural. As such, it is stretching the concept of natural theology too far to suggest the underpinning of order to which one is called in the wisdom tradition can be conceived fully and faithfully apart from the Creator and, thus, be conceived as an entirely natural (i.e. human) concept. In any case, technicalities of definitions aside, the concept of an underpinning created order being party to moral concepts that can be gleaned from the wisdom literature is nevertheless valid and Murphy, on this level, agrees.¹²¹ Moreover, Murphy reminds us that the teachings of the sages are built on the experience of engaging in the world and not simply on pondering the origins of existence in some abstract sense. As he points out, “the world is the showcase for divine activity ... It is not a cosmos that works mechanically, but a happening that occurs over and over for all its inhabitants (Ps 104). Hence the human *experience* of the world is so important.”¹²²

Drawing from our starting point of this section, and to summarise, though both the sources and teaching of wisdom literature do point to a mode of understanding that is found outside of the revealed faith of Israel, this does not preclude a theological dimension that then calls a particular response. As with Thomistic notions on natural law broadly speaking, there is an understanding prevalent in the wisdom writings, particularly in certain parts of Proverbs, that the power of reason allows one to find the good apart from theological frameworks explicitly stated, but that does not preclude a theological dimension proper to it. In Thomistic language we might say that the good found by human reason is only good in the first place because it is proper to our nature as God created it. In the language of biblical wisdom, the good that is found in the sage exploration of wisdom is only the good/wise in the first place because it is proper to God’s creative order. Of course such an expression is only illustrative rather than technical and the two frameworks cannot be entirely interchanged (except perhaps on a meta-ethical level) but the principle is still apparent; that the experience of being human in creation is potentially morally

¹²¹ As Murphy states, the “thrust” of Barr’s position is one that he agrees with. *The Tree of Life*, 224.

¹²² Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 119. Murphy notes that there are two dimensions to understanding creation in wisdom theology. One is as “beginnings” (based on the poems of Wisdom such as that found in Prov 8) and the other the “arena of experience.” He suggests that emphasis tends to go with the former, however, it is the latter which is ultimately the concern of the wisdom literature. See Roland E. Murphy, “Wisdom and Creation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 1 (1985): 3-11.

trustworthy because one is able to find, within the experience itself, the goodness of God.

Thus the correlation between virtues in the Thomistic tradition and the moral vision of wisdom in Proverbs becomes more apparent. As just stated, the experience of being human in creation is *potentially* morally trustworthy, but, according to Proverbs, to realise that potential one needs to acquire wisdom. In a similar vein, the *inclination*, apparent in Thomistic anthropological dimension of nature realises its potential in the virtues in general which are governed by the virtue of prudence in particular.¹²³ What can be held here is, though we might talk of created order or natural law setting the framework of moral deliberation in the wisdom writings or Thomistic traditions respectively, ultimately the concern in both contexts is most fully realised in the anthropological dimension of the formation of person in light of and in relation to that order.

It is this sense that is the concern of Proverbs; it is not interested in understanding the world for its own sake but, rather, it is to understand the place of the human person within and in relation to creation and it is this notion that sets the moral framework of Proverbs.¹²⁴ The aforementioned William Brown is one who takes this point and engages with it by utilising a character-based ethical language. Brown sees Proverbs and the other wisdom writings being interested in the formation of character in conformity with a fuller worldview. As he states:

The particular orientation espoused by the ancient sages involved nothing less than perceiving the world from the perspective of all things subject to and ordered by God's will, be it discernible or inscrutable. ... It is within the purposeful context of living, in appropriating and embodying truth rather than simply apprehending it, that creation functioned for the ancient sages. Specific creation texts of wisdom literature (e.g. Prov. 8:33-31, Eccl. 1:2-11; Job 38-41) are contextualized in such a way as to (re)construct the reader's perception of the world and God in accord with certain values, perspectives, and principles, the stuff of ethical character.

¹²³ As Keenan states it, "Without prudence, the moral virtues are merely "habits" or "inclinations." It is the virtue of prudence that allows the other moral virtues to be actualised as moral virtues at all. Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*, 101. See section 1.2.2 above for brief discussion in this regard.

¹²⁴ As Crenshaw, for example, notes "Israel's sages seem to have discerned a fundamental order hidden within the universe, this ruling principle applied both to nature and to humans. ... The primary concern, however, is moral development, not knowledge of the universe." Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 61, 88 n1.

Simply put, to alter one's perception of God and the word is to shape and reshape character, the goal of sapiential rhetoric.¹²⁵

There are two points that are worth highlighting in Brown's quote and provides an apt way to conclude this section. Firstly, he points to the understanding, as already stated, that the wisdom of Proverbs is necessarily prudential. It is so because prudence is concerned with forming the agent in such a way that they are able to perceive existence accurately. This then allows one to employ the other virtues appropriately to the reality of one's situation as they experience the world. Seeing the world rightly, which includes what Aquinas calls 'sound judgment',¹²⁶ is the heart of the virtue of prudence. As will be discussed below, and particularly in section 3.1, it is in developing this capacity where Proverbs perhaps has the most to teach us in the virtue ethics tradition. Secondly, prudence needs to be understood fundamentally as resting in the formation of character. Brown uses the terms "appropriating and embodying truth rather than simply apprehending it," and this captures the understanding of both the virtues in the Thomistic tradition and the teachings of Proverbs well, for they are both concerned with a 'knowing' that is not simply cognitive in the simplest sense. 'Smartness', though undoubtedly valuable, does not lead to the full life, to the *eudemonic* fulfilment of the moral agent. To draw on language used above, the virtuous life is essentially tied to the formation of character and it is out of a formed character that one moves from an *inclination* to the good to the *actuality* of the good.

In this vein, what follows is a close look at Proverbs in particular and the nature of prudential wisdom found therein as it pertains to formation of character. The moral life in both the Thomistic tradition and in Proverbs does not rest primarily on particular laws as legal codes as an expression of natural law or created order (though they don't deny them either), but on the formation of the person in harmonious prudential engagement with this order.

¹²⁵ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 8. Another useful example is Sun Myung Lyu's more recently published study on Righteousness in Proverbs. He notes that the concept of righteousness as a biblical concept at times suffers from being misconceived in that it can erroneously be considered as "being right" by which he means doing right actions. Lyu explains that, "a fundamental difference between being right and being righteous is that the former can be applied to describe human actions in isolation without considering their contexts whereas the latter refers to the overall characteristic of a person." Sun Myung Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 12, see also pp.5-9.

¹²⁶ *ST*, II-II, 51.3.

2. The Nature of Prudential Wisdom in Proverbs

The above sets a ‘meta-ethical’ framework of how both Thomistic thought and the wisdom of Proverbs can interact in a shared discussion on prudential wisdom. In this section the focus shifts to Proverbs in particular before moving more overtly back to Thomistic thought in sections 3 and 4 that follow. Though an examination of Proverbs using methodology typical of modern biblical scholarship will be had, the starting point will be to look at key terms that help identify both significant principles of wisdom as it pertains to the virtue of prudence as well as unpacking an understanding of the virtue itself.

2.1 Words for Wisdom

The understanding of prudence as part of a family of intellectual virtues in the Thomistic tradition is one couched in relatively precise technical language, which itself sits in a precise understanding of the human person. In contrast, the teachings of Proverbs (and the Hebrew Scriptures in general) are not written in the same systematic style found in Aquinas or Aristotle and its word usage, particularly with key terms such as ‘wisdom’, is loaded in its expressions and uses. Further, as will be discussed below, the composition of Proverbs is such that many sources spanning a number of times and places have left their mark, further colouring certain understandings that might be gleaned. As such, the following examination of the words for wisdom is an important focus.

Here we wish to engage with what Whybray termed the “slippery word” of wisdom as found in the Hebrew Scriptures and in Proverbs in particular.¹²⁷ The ‘slipperiness’ of the usage of wisdom in Proverbs is based on two points which in part will be dealt with here. Firstly, there is no single Hebrew word that encapsulates its every use. Certainly the most common Hebrew term is *ḥokmāh*,¹²⁸ but other terms are used and examining their lexical meaning helps illuminate the fuller understanding of wisdom that Proverbs edifies. Secondly, as is common with many Hebrew concepts, there is rarely an English word that can be used to exactly translate a Hebrew equivalent. As such, more than one meaning may be construed with any particular term. With this in

¹²⁷ R. N. Whybray, "Slippery Words: IV. Wisdom," in *Wisdom: The Collected Articles of Norman Whybray*, ed. Katharine J. Dell and Margaret Barker (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 6-9.

¹²⁸ Whybray, "Slippery Words," 6.

mind, I will follow the framework of Fox's study and touch on a number of key terms for wisdom.¹²⁹ However, unlike Fox I will not examine every term where the concept of wisdom might be implied. Rather, for the sake of space, included here are only those terms most pertinent to the present study which attempts to elucidate the notion of prudence as found in Proverbs.

2.1.1 *Hokmāh/Hākām*

Derived from the verb root *hākām*, it is the word translated most commonly to the adjective or noun 'wise' and, as the verb, to be wise. The meaning of *hākām*, as used throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, can be broadly placed into two categories. The first is the more general sense referring to a person possessing certain ability, often a cognitive one, though not exclusively. In this sense it is often translated to the term 'skill' (e.g. Ez 27:8). In that sense it is ethically neutral. As Frydrych notes, "It denotes a proficiency, which can be put to both good and bad use, although the former is more common."¹³⁰ The second use is better understood in the adjectival sense to describe the 'wise one'. In its plural form (*hākāmîm*) it is associated with the professional position of royal advisors in Israelite and foreign courts (e.g. Jer 18:18).¹³¹ Such uses do tend to have more moral weight implied. For example, it includes an ability to understand the implications of situations and interpret signs and texts – what could be termed "perceptiveness", "astuteness" and "reasoning ability" (eg. Jer 9:11-12, Ecc 8:1),¹³² or good judgment in practical and interpersonal matters; i.e. "good sense" or "prudence". As Fox notes, these may not necessarily entail moral virtue, but they do overlap into the concept of wisdom as "knowledge of right living

¹²⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 28-43. Similar examinations are also had by Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 23-35; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 94-100. Fox's study itself is based on Nili Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom be Found?* (Fribourg: University Press, 1993).

¹³⁰ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 25.

¹³¹ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 25-26. Frydrych here discusses the understanding of the *hākām* in the professional sense, finding a middle ground between that held by W. McKane (1965), who suggests the term is exclusively associated with the professional court setting, and Whybrary (1974) who suggests there not being any professional use of the term as such. In so doing, Frydrych notes that the term, particularly when seen in the context of Proverbs, moves the availability of wisdom away from the domain of the professional 'sage' class to anybody who shows interest. The content of Proverbs "is almost generally applicable, with no exclusive focus on any social class or otherwise defined group." Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 27-28. Cf. William McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* (London: SCM, 1965). R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974). See also discussion had below, particularly 2.2.2.

¹³² Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 33.

– ‘right’ in both the ethical and pragmatic senses.”¹³³ This understanding finds even more purchase when examined in the particular context of Proverbs.

Some occurrences of *ḥokmāh* do refer to ‘skill’ but closer examination of its actual use in Proverbs renders it significantly tighter to its moral sense. Most occurrences of the word in this technical sense are in a context of describing what *ḥākām* does, i.e., the thrust of the book is to define what it means to be wise. The adjective then does not designate a person with just any skill, but someone who lives according to the principles expressed in Proverbs, and has an understanding of the consequences of human actions that agree with its perspective (e.g. Prov 10:14; 13:20; 14:3,16; 15:31-32). Further, even though *ḥokmāh* is associated with knowledge (e.g. Prov 10:14), it is not so much about intellectual knowledge or abilities but, rather, it is a commitment to a way of life, one which is often depicted by the metaphor of walking along a path (eg. Prov 4:10-19; 15:10; 23:19). This metaphor captures an important characteristic of Proverbial wisdom; for being wise is not merely a present static state, but it is a continual dynamic process.¹³⁴ Fox’s study on the use of the word in Proverbs states it as such, “*Hokmah* is not inert knowledge. You could memorize the book of Proverbs and not have *ḥokmah*. *Hokmah* always implies ability to carry out what one knows. But it is never an innate talent devoid of knowledge.”¹³⁵ More specifically still:

Proverbs consistently applies the word *ḥokmah* to wisdom as manifest in the skill and knowledge of *right living in the enriched sense*. This is because the sages are making strong claims for the powers of human expertise. Wisdom of this sort may be manifest in numerous aspects of behaviour ... But these distinctions are matters of emphasis, and usually, *ḥokmah* refers to these qualities *all together*.¹³⁶

This brief analysis shows that there are a number of features of *ḥokmāh* that are prevalent to this study. Firstly, it implies a way of life rather than an articulated set of instructions or a particular skill set (though it might include those). One is wise (*ḥokmāh*) in character rather than in arbitrary or even practical knowledge. Related to this, one does not drift in and out of ‘being wise’ in this sense. Rather, if one is truly *ḥākām* (a wise one), then it is formed through and out of a fuller sense of the self, i.e.

¹³³ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 33.

¹³⁴ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 26-27.

¹³⁵ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 33.

¹³⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*. My emphasis

their character. Secondly, there is an essential link to wisdom and living life well in a moral sense. Taking the use of *ḥokmāh* in Prov 4:10–19 as an example, we see here a coupling of the term *ḥokmāh* with *yōšer* (righteousness) and how *ḥokmāh* will thus serve the ongoing moral life of listener (if heeded, of course). Thirdly, the one who is of wise character is able to hold many aspects of the term in a balance. One is not simply wise in particular matters, e.g. in interpersonal matters (Prov 11:30), or cleverly aware of their situation (Prov 14:8), or in theological/ethical matters (Prov 9:10) but, rather, *ḥokmāh* refers to these and other qualities as a whole, and the ability to hold and apply them in right measure. As Fox states in discussing the term, “Proverbs teaches that there is a global intellectual power – wisdom – that can be called upon in all endeavours that is inherently righteous and almost always effective.”¹³⁷

As can be seen then, *ḥokmāh* includes a sense of what we understand as prudence held in the Thomistic tradition. It refers to a wisdom that is not purely speculative (knowledge for its own sake) but about actively living the moral life. Further, it is found in the character of a person and allows one to negotiate the varieties of circumstances that life entails. This ability to hold in balance other virtuous notions is a key feature of prudence and one that *ḥokmāh* captures.

2.1.2 *Šēkel/Šākal*

Šēkel is the term that would most resemble prudence in the narrow sense of the term and, in Proverbs, is rendered as such numerous times in major translations such as the NRSV (e.g. 1:5). On other occasions it is translated as, ‘sense’ (13:15) or ‘good sense’ (3:4). When the root *Šākal* is used, its core meaning is insight; an ability to grasp the fuller meaning or implications of situations. TWOT states that:

In many instances *šākal* is synonymous with *bîn*, ... but there is a fine distinction. While *bîn* indicates “distinguishing between,” *šākal* relates to an intelligent knowledge of the reason. There is the process of thinking through a complex arrangement of thoughts resulting in a wise dealing and use of good practical common sense. Another end result is the emphasis upon being successful.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 33.

¹³⁸ R. L. Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 877.

Thus, it can be understood not only in terms of good judgment, but more accurately what could be understood as discernment; the ability to understand practical matters and interpersonal relations and come to good decisions.¹³⁹

The term is not always used in a way that implies inherent ethical virtue, however most times it is.¹⁴⁰ A man's *śēkel* gives him patience and allows him to avoid unnecessary conflict (Prov 19:11). The prudent person (*maśkīl*) is one who stores up provisions during Summer (Prov 10:5), one who is reserved in speech (Prov 10:19), or a good wife (Prov 19:14).¹⁴¹ In the latter reference we also see that encountering the *maśkīl* is akin to a gift from God, something greater than the material wellbeing that can be provided by benevolent parents. Interestingly, in later Hebraic writing *śēkel* becomes associated more overtly with intellectual understanding. In Daniel, for example, the *maśkīl* is one able to teach many (Dan 11:33), yet it maintains its moral association (e.g. Dan 12:10). In addition, the TDOT's analysis stresses that *śēkel* is strongly associated with successful living.¹⁴² As such, it holds the notion of 'good sense' leading to good outcomes.

This notion of 'good sense' helps flesh out an understanding of practical wisdom that Proverbs invites the reader to consolidate into one's life. Though the term captures an intellectual ability of sorts, as with *hokmāh*, it is not a 'book smarts' concept but a good sense that anybody of good character will exhibit for their own good and the good of those around them. The term 'good sense' is one that at least one recent moral theologian (Herbet McCabe) uses to describe prudence and captures a similar notion being described here. A concept of sound intellectual ability is included but, moreover, it is an ability to capture the fullness of a situation and find pragmatic methods of responding well for the sake of the good.¹⁴³ As such, *śēkel* is probably the term that most directly resembles prudence in our wider study. However, one should still be wary in seeing it as a direct equivalent. As already noted, the tapestry of Proverbial wisdom is rich as is the Thomistic concept of prudence. As such,

¹³⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 36.

¹⁴⁰ Fox suggests, for example, the addition of *ṭob* (good) in Prov 13:15 implies that *śēkel* is not always used for the best, though such a conclusion is not definitive. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 36.

¹⁴¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 36.

¹⁴² K. Koenen, "שֵׁקֶל," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (2004), 113-127.

¹⁴³ Herbert McCabe, *God Still Matters* (London: Continuum, 2002), 152-165.

prudence as a virtue might be one that includes *śēkel*, but it would not be limited to it.

2.1.3 *Bînāh/Mēbîn*

Bînāh, from the root *bîn*, refers to the faculty of intellectual understanding as well as the outworking of such intelligence in action and in oral discourse. Its etymology is particularly associated with ‘distinguishing between’ and so is also associated with discernment in that sense. Though it is not necessarily concerned with practical matters in itself, in Proverbs in particular it is often placed with *tēbûnâ* (also derived from the root *bîn*) which has a notion of pragmatic outworking of good sense. Nevertheless, more broadly speaking, as Fox puts it, “the raw faculty of *bînāh*, insofar as it is possessed by an individual apart from application, is similar to the modern concept of intelligence.”¹⁴⁴ As such, in itself, it does not necessarily hold moral significance. However, it is a necessary aspect if one is going to have a sound grasp of reality, to perceive it well, which allows one to employ other faculties towards prudential living (see section 3 below for further discussion).¹⁴⁵

As such, the *mēbîn* (understanding, perceptive or intelligent person) is one who is able to more readily discern the fullness of a situation. For example, the *mēbîn* is able to see through men’s facades (Prov 28:11) and quickly understands why they might face rebuke (Prov 17:10). This latter example also points to the moral standing of a *mēbîn*. They may not necessarily be perfectly sinless and would thus be deserving of correction, however, they are virtuous enough to be aware of their limitation and see value in holding a teachable spirit.¹⁴⁶

Fox highlights a particular form of *bîn* in the form of *nābôn* which typically refers to one who has *bînāh* or *tēbûnâ*. However, a key example of its use is in Prov 16:21 where it is the wise heart (*hākām lēb*) that is called *nābôn*.¹⁴⁷ In other words, what is implied is that one is *nābôn* not because they have a certain knowledge as such (though they might), but because they have an astuteness to finding right knowledge in the first place (e.g. Prov 14:6). As such, and taking the concept as a whole,

¹⁴⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 30.

¹⁴⁵ In this sense *bînāh* draws some parallel to the part of prudence that Aquinas calls *intellectus* (intelligence or understanding). Prudence is “right reasoning in human deeds” and so the start (though not the all) of any prudent activity begins with insight or understanding. *ST*, II-II, 49.2.

¹⁴⁶ See section 3.3 below.

¹⁴⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 30.

bînāh/mēbîn can be understood as both an innate capacity on the one hand, but also a character trait that can be developed on the other.

2.1.4 *Tēbûnâ*

Though related etymologically to *bînāh*, *tēbûnâ* according to Fox has a distinct sense of being more practically oriented. He states:

T^ebunah is the pragmatic, applied aspect of thought, operating in the realm of action; it aims at efficacy and accomplishment, whereas *binah* is the conceptual, interpretive activity of thought. ... *T^ebunah* is the competence to deal with the exigencies of life, and it generally implies a follow-up action, or at least the expectation of one.¹⁴⁸

Fox cites uses such as in Prov 14:29 and 17:27 where one with *tēbûnâ* is patient and measured in human relations. He does not engage in folly (Prov 15:21) and conducts himself wisely (Prov 10:23). Fox suggests that “these virtues are in the realm of attitudes and social skills rather than intellectual penetration and comprehension.”¹⁴⁹

The term is used heavily in Proverbs, more so than anywhere else in the Hebrew canon (nineteen times in Proverbs, seventeen more than any other book), and is clearly an important feature of what the ‘wise one’ would characterise. It is particularly heavily used in ch. 2 where the listener is implored to accept the words that follow, to “attend their heart” and “incline their ear to *tēbûnâ*” (2:2). If they recognise its value (v. 3) they will “find knowledge of God” (v. 5) no less and, indeed, it is from God that *tēbûnâ* comes (v. 6). The outworking of this is that one is able to recognise and actualise moral virtues including righteousness, justice and equity and of “every good path” (v. 9).

This passage will be revisited at a later point,¹⁵⁰ but what can be gleaned here is a sense that *tēbûnâ* is an expression of wisdom that has right vision and right action imbued therein. In this sense, *tēbûnâ* has some parallel to the Thomistic virtue of prudence which is able to bridge the intellectual virtues which deal with speculative knowledge and the moral virtues which seek the perfection of the agent in character and action.

¹⁴⁸ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 37-38.

¹⁴⁹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 38.

¹⁵⁰ See 2.2.4.

2.1.5 *Mězimmâ*

The term *mězimmâ* is a curious one in the context of this study. In the wider Hebrew canon nominally the notion is used mostly in reference to God who carries out his purposes and plans (noun form *mězimmôt*) “against wicked nations or of wicked men who devise schemes against God and the righteous.”¹⁵¹ As such, it has the notion of discreet execution of judgement. When referring to humans, the term tends to have an air of secret scheming often with a view to immoral or harmful ends. This is particularly evident in the Psalms (eg. Ps 10:2, 37:7), but the negative sense is also seen in Proverbs (eg. 30:32, where the NRSV translates the term to being “devilishly evil”, though perhaps “prideful scheming” would be closer to its meaning given the context).

However, *mězimmâ* need not be negative and is certainly not intrinsically evil, especially as it is used in Proverbs. As mentioned above, God’s own plans are considered *mězimmôt*. This is true particularly according to Proverbs where in the singular form (*mězimmâ*) it expresses a consistently positive and morally sound meaning. It is found only five times in the Hebrew Canon in this form and all five occurrences are in Proverbs (1:4; 2:11; 3:21; 5:2; 8:12). In all cases the NRSV translates the term to prudence and, on a more detailed level, is associated with discretion of being able to recognise the good and truly valuable and thus walk confidently through the course of life (3:21-26ff).

The morphological closeness of the negative and positive sense of the term provides a point of interest. As a verb, one can scheme (*zammôtā*) to evil ends (Prov 30:32) or, on the other hand, consider (*zommâ*) and execute toward the good (31:16). However, the one who truly has the noun *mězimmâ* in the singular sense used in Proverbs knows and takes the path of righteousness. For the purposes of this project, it is useful to highlight this distinction. There is shrewd scheming and devising, but this is not necessarily a good. One can work towards good ends only if one has the wisdom of *mězimmâ* that Proverbs entreats. As with other notions of wisdom discussed above, it certainly has a moral outlook. Further, it has particular relevance to the Thomistic notion of prudence because it is associated with internal recognition of the

¹⁵¹ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 244.

truly good as opposed to the apparently good and, further, uses such recognition towards deliberating well in the activity of life.¹⁵²

2.1.6 *Tûšiyā*

Tûšiyā is a relatively technical term for wisdom that is found almost exclusively in Proverbs and the Book of Job. Like *tēbûnâ*, it has a pragmatic outworking and encapsulates the ability to deal with difficulties and navigate courses of action therein. TWOT describes it as a “sound efficient wisdom, i.e. sound judgment, wisdom that leads to practical success.”¹⁵³ More simply, the NRSV translates the term in Proverbs to ‘sound wisdom’. Its general use in context, again like *tēbûnâ*, is associated with an ability to recognize and live life well in the broadly moral sense.

Of note, given the focus of this study, is that one of its only two uses outside of the wisdom literature is in Is 28:29 where it expresses the type of wisdom that denotes God’s providential control of history. This finds its way into Proverbs as well, though with a distinct nuance. The Lord’s providence is acknowledged in Proverbs; however, it is mediated to humans through wisdom. As such, *tûšiyā* is a particular form of wisdom available to humans that allows them to successfully negotiate creation as ordered by God. For example, in concert with other forms of wisdom, it is *tûšiyā* that affords protection from harm (3:13-35). It does so not by removing points of difficulty or confusion outright but, rather, by allowing those who acquire it to navigate times of confusion or vulnerability successfully (3:21-26). The link to God’s providential dimension is expressed in this pericope in the verses that follow (3:27-28). As Van Leeuwen states it, these verses point to God acting as the ultimate “guarantor” behind such notions of practical wisdom.¹⁵⁴ As noted above, the Thomistic notion of prudence is linked to providence¹⁵⁵ and, though it would be a stretch to consider it a directly equivocal term, the conceptual expression of *tûšiyā* clearly expresses moral weight tied to living within God’s providential creative order which, when grasped, leads to just and life-affirming outcomes.

¹⁵² *ST*, II-II, 51.3; I, 17.4. In Proverbs see 5:1-4 as an example.

¹⁵³ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 413.

¹⁵⁴ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 54.

¹⁵⁵ See 1.2.2 above. Also *ST*, I, 22.2.

2.1.7 'ormâ

As used in Proverbs, 'ormâ is another term that more easily translates directly to the English prudence and is translated as such by the NRSV on two of the three occasions it appears in Proverbs (8:5, 12). On the other occasion it is translated to “shrewdness” (1:4), though here, as suggested by Brown who ties it with the term *mēzimmâ*, prudence would be the more appropriate.¹⁵⁶ Outside of Proverbs, 'ormâ signifies a talent to attain one's goals by cunning and wily means. The goal in that sense might be arbitrary. However, in Proverbs it is exclusively seen as an ability to use such skills towards ends that are morally sound.

Nevertheless, this notion of 'ormâ as 'cunning' or 'cleverness'¹⁵⁷ points to an ability that can potentially be used towards illicit ends and bears interesting reflection when compared to a sin of 'cunning' (*astutia*) as held by Aquinas. For Aquinas, cunning as a vice (like many vices)¹⁵⁸ has much in common with its equivalent virtue in prudence but is distinct in two ways. Firstly, those who exercise cunning as opposed to prudence use sound reasoning (a necessary aspect of prudence), but towards an end that is not good or good only in appearance. Secondly, cunning is also evidenced when pursuing an end that may be good, but is done so by means that is “not genuine, but feigned and specious.”¹⁵⁹ The latter in particular is what Aquinas calls “the sin of cunning.” Such notion of cunning, which is often tied to guile (*dolus*) which can be understood as the activity of trickery and deceit,¹⁶⁰ may use certain skills found in prudence but is, in fact, false prudence. Though not articulated in Proverbs as such, it certainly seems that such a notion sits behind *ormâ*, however, it is used carefully by the sages to refer to a morally licit understanding of this human capacity.

Further, in Proverbs *ormâ* is particularly associated with moral sophistication. In Prov 8, 'ormâ is one of the qualities that Lady Wisdom has to offer and it is the simple and naive (*petî*) that lack it (8:5). Further, it is the simple that do not pay due consideration to their ways (Prov 14:15) and are unable to recognise a disastrous way of life when walking it (Prov 22:3). In this sense, 'ormâ is a prudential wisdom

¹⁵⁶ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 26-27.

¹⁵⁷ Terms favoured by Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 35, 61-62 and Murphy, *Proverbs*, 3 respectively.

¹⁵⁸ *ST*, II-II, 21.3.

¹⁵⁹ *ST*, II-II, 55.3.

¹⁶⁰ *ST*, II-II, 55.4.

associated with maturity; that is, an ability to move one from naivety to right or truthful vision found in the morally mature.¹⁶¹

2.1.8 *Mûsār*

Along with *da‘at*, which will be discussed below, *mûsār* represents a term for wisdom that has least resemblance to prudence, but is worthy of focus nonetheless. Seen in context with its root meaning, *mûsār* is commonly associated with discipline or punishment and is at times translated as such. However, particular when taking in its equivalency in the LXX (*paideuo*), it is understood to entail the notion of education or instruction in a broader sense. In Proverbs at least, this would be its more common understanding. However, it should be pointed out that it is used in both senses throughout and commonly, even when used in the sense of instruction, it is nonetheless linked to reprimand through terms such as ‘rebuke’ and ‘reproof’ (e.g. 10:17, 13:18). In any case, as Fox notes, the goal of *mûsār* is always towards providing moral insight or a quality of moral character. Further, “it is always given by a superior to an inferior, who is morally obliged, but not forcibly compelled to listen and learn.”¹⁶²

It is not surprising then that the term is so frequently used in Proverbs which has, at its heart, the task of instructing the young and immature, in a formal and informal sense, in the ways of wisdom and righteousness. This notion of instruction will be returned to more fully in section 3.3 below, but it is of use to pick up key points here in how Proverbs uses *mûsār*.

Firstly, the moral instruction (*mûsār*) of Proverbs is often tied to an accentuation of the stance of humble reception that the listener must have (e.g. Prov 15:33). It is a notion akin to the *docilitas* so important to the Thomistic understanding of the virtue of prudence. Secondly, when Proverbs warns of the consequences of rejection of *mûsār*, in virtually all cases the source of negative consequence that would follow is arbitrary (e.g. Prov 5:23, 10:17); it is not, for example, sourced from the instructor or even from God. This is not to say that Proverbs suggests that rightful reproach cannot come from a superior, a teacher or from God. Indeed the wise person is able to both heed and utilise such reproach when it is necessary (e.g. 13:1). However, when

¹⁶¹ See 2.2.1, 3.2 and 3.3 below.

¹⁶² Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 34.

righteous admonition is present, and particularly when one takes the path of rejecting such wisdom and good teaching, then no additional reproof is necessary; the rejection itself creates the situation in which negative (including evil) consequences will follow. The implication here is that there is a natural course of consequence to one who rejects the ‘teaching’ (*mūsār*) on offer. One actualises the good in their seeking and heeding of wisdom found in *mūsār*, or actualises the bad on its rejection. As such, Proverbs does not present a simple punitive moral framework even where reproach associated with *mūsār* is evoked.

2.1.9 *Da‘at*

Simply translated as the noun ‘knowledge’, *da‘at* expresses “a multitude of shades of knowledge gained by the senses.”¹⁶³ As such, it is the broadest of the wisdom words used extensively throughout the OT and strictly speaking is not, literally at least, a word for wisdom at all. Because of its scope, *da‘at* can refer to cognition too elementary to be called wisdom in the mode associated with the terms discussed above. However, particularly in Proverbs (and throughout the Wisdom literature), it is associated with wisdom properly understood and so bears some relevance here. In this sense, Proverbs seems to present *da‘at* in what Fox terms “the high end of the spectrum” where it begins to “overlap *ḥokmāh*, both as erudition and as sagacity in living.”¹⁶⁴

Its use in Proverbs then has a particular sense. It certainly suggests that the one of mature and wise character will value knowledge but, more specifically, Proverbs clearly expresses that true knowledge is prudential in nature. One who seeks *da‘at* is of virtuous character, able to avoid folly (e.g. Prov 15:12), to temper blind desire (Prov 19:2) and understand “the rights of the poor” (Prov 29:7). As such, knowledge (*da‘at*) in Proverbs of any kind is always valuable but it is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it is a means to finding and maintaining a wise character, to act prudently and journey on the path to righteousness.

¹⁶³ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 366.

¹⁶⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 31.

Taken as a whole, the terms examined above provide weight to the prudential nature of wisdom as expressed in Proverbs. Fox provides a useful summary of the lexical leaning of the words that are commonly translated or associated with ‘wisdom’:

Wisdom is always prudential, conducive to the individual’s well-being, but it weighs the effect of an action on others as well. It is an ethical quality, never merely instrumental. It is also a quality of character, for it entails not only the knowledge of the right ends but also the will to pursue them.¹⁶⁵

2.2 Overall Composition of Proverbs

The above lexical analysis focuses on some key words associated with wisdom in Proverbs and highlights the prudential nature of many concepts raised therein. The aim of this section is to broaden the scope and to begin to take in Proverbs as a whole whilst also allowing the individual parts and sayings to speak for themselves. As such, general themes and concepts found in the book of Proverbs will be examined. However, the backdrop of the wider discussion of virtue-based morality in the Thomistic tradition and the virtue of prudence in particular is still held. With that in mind, exegetical analysis is included in this section and a broad appreciation of Proverbs is held; however, the aim is not to provide a detailed analysis of Proverbs in its own right but, rather, to focus on that which helps inform the wider discussion most directly.

2.2.1 Overarching Moral Framework of Proverbs

Michael Fox makes the point in his opening to *Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs* that the unity of Proverbs “allows us to discuss various topics in the book as a whole.”¹⁶⁶ It is this unity which allows Fox and others to find key moral themes in Proverbs. By briefly examining how this unity is established and what it says about the nature of Proverbs, we can witness how some aspects of these themes relate to the virtuous life and the virtue of prudence in particular.

The distinct parts that form Proverbs, particularly its short self-contained pithy sayings which constitutes the bulk of the work and their diverse form and places of

¹⁶⁵ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 29.

¹⁶⁶ Fox, "Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs," 75.

contextual origin has, at times, led many scholars to suggest that there is no overall organisational intent within the work.¹⁶⁷ As Van Leeuwen suggests, there is a long held position “which takes the actual arrangements of proverbs in the collections as being quite haphazard and thus virtually irrelevant for their interpretation.”¹⁶⁸ However, there are problems to this approach. Though one may well find utility in an atomised reading, it risks missing an overall narrative that can be gleaned and, moreover, individual sayings and expressions may lose their intended impact when pulled out of context in this manner; a typical atomised reading alone may diminish the moral weight and direction that can be found within Proverbs.

It is in response to such issues that the aforementioned Fox recognises a more unified reading.¹⁶⁹ Underpinning Fox’s approach is the notion that wisdom “is not only a genre of literature, it is a *process*, a dialectic in which thinkers of different times mediated on ideas they had learned from their predecessors and shaped them in new ways.”¹⁷⁰ In Proverbs, this dynamism is reflected in three stages which are identifiable in their literary form and topical concern. In a very general sense, Fox articulates a development of wisdom and the type of morality that this wisdom presents from one more overtly pragmatic in the first stage, to one more interested in moral character in the second, to the more abstract and universal in the third. Fox stresses that one stage does not displace the previous but, rather, that each stage builds on the previous, extending and enriching them. This highly developmental approach is one that is not overly popular among some scholars.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, it

¹⁶⁷ Though the focus of such discussions is often on chs. 10-29, the notion of a unifying structure in Prov 1-9 is also debated, though it is generally filled with less conjecture. A survey discussion in this regard can be found in Bálint Károly Zabán, *The Pillar Function of the Speeches of Wisdom: Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:1-36 and 9:1-6 in the Structural Framework of Proverbs 1-9* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 8-18.

¹⁶⁸ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 7. Van Leeuwen here is referring primarily to an often cited proponent of this view in William McKane. Van Leeuwen also cites other authors and provides a detailed discussion of the topic in Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27*, 6-17. McKane’s primary work on this topic is found in *Proverbs: A New Approach* (London: SCM Press, 1970), esp. 10-11, 413-414. See also Whybray’s survey of this topic in *The Book of Proverbs*, 54-61; *Proverbs: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible Commentary (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 62-92.

¹⁶⁹ Primarily found in his essay Michael V. Fox, “The Growth of Wisdom,” in *Proverbs 10-31*, ed. Michael V. Fox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁷⁰ Fox, “The Growth of Wisdom,” 923.

¹⁷¹ As Dell points out briefly in her review, “A Heap of Proverbial Jewels,” review of *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* by Michael V. Fox, *The Expository Times* 121, no. 12 (2010): 627.

provides a valuable examination of the overall unity that can be found in Proverbs and something of the overarching teaching that the book seeks to impart.

Another example of an approach that traces a unifying arc over the work of Proverbs, and one that will be looked at more closely, is found in William Brown's piece *The Pedagogy of Proverbs*.¹⁷² Brown also regrets the lack of attention given to Proverbs' overarching literary organisation. He notes that even where attention to literary form is made, there is often little attention given to the overall arrangement and direction exhibited by the work as a whole and the interpretive value found therein. Brown responds by examining the discernible movement in both textual form and theme from beginning to end which expresses certain messages.¹⁷³ Obviously Brown's study focuses on 10:1-31:9 of Proverbs, the sections most commonly noted as being disparate and disorganised. However, Brown does place the central bulk of the book in relation to Proverbs 1-9 and 31:10-31.

As is commonly held, chs.1-9 introduces the book and provides a "guide to how it is to be read and used." Brown further notes that:

Indeed, Proverbs 1-9 and 31:10-31 have been deliberately placed to exemplify the formation of moral character. The development of Wisdom's character, for example, from irritated teacher in 1:20-33 to child of God and hostess in chapters 8 and 9, and ultimately her association with the *'ēšet-ḥayil* ("woman of strength") in the concluding acrostic poem of 31:10-31, suggests an overarching movement from beginning to end. ... In short, the bookends of Proverbs trace the formation of moral character that culminates in the union between Wisdom and her student, a movement that spans the process of maturation from receptive child to responsible adult, from dependent to patriarch.¹⁷⁴

Further, within Prov 1-9, the very opening section of 1:1-7 acts as an introduction to the work overall. Whybray, for example, states that, "1:1-7 reads like a preface, not merely to chapters 1-9, but to the whole book."¹⁷⁵ Contained therein are a number of terms addressed in the previous section that have significant intellectual and moral

¹⁷² William P. Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," in *Character & Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. William P. Brown (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

¹⁷³ Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 151-152.

¹⁷⁴ Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 153.

¹⁷⁵ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 16-17. In his earlier work, Brown refers to the opening verses as a "purpose statement" and an "ancient 'course objective'." Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 24.

weight; the inference being that what follows will confer on the attentive reader/listener a tremendous array of virtuous qualities. Among them, the notion of prudential wisdom is brought to the fore suggesting that a key concern of the work to follow is:

To teach shrewdness (*'ormâ*) to the simple,
knowledge (*da'at*) and prudence (*mēzimmâ*) to the young. (1:4)

This verse sits in a prologue highlighting the value of wisdom (*ḥākmâ*) (v. 2) and does so with a leaning towards ethical virtues of righteousness, justice and equity (v. 3). As such, present in this very foundational introduction is a linking of wisdom properly understood and ethical living. Further, this linking is not built on speculative thinking but on the concrete reality of prudential living highlighted with terms such as *mēzimmâ* above and others such as discerning (*nābôn*)¹⁷⁶ and skill (*taḥbulôt*) (v. 5).¹⁷⁷

As such, this opening stanza anticipates the movement that is to be encouraged in Proverbs proper, from the gullible and immature (captured in the notion of ‘simple one’ (*petî*) in v. 4) to the well-formed character imbued with the virtues as described. This overarching movement, Brown suggests, is not only intentional and evident in the ‘instructional’ bookends of Proverbs, it is also evident in the bulk of the work found in the intervening sections (10:1-31:9) that would “sustain this overall movement.”¹⁷⁸

Brown’s essay traces through a number of identifiable topics that are developed throughout the work based on literary structures and thematic focus. Of particular interest is the development he notes through the two Solomonic collections (10:1-22:16. Part 1 being 10:1-15:32, part 2 being 15:33-22:16). Within the collection of sayings, Brown notes a movement on a number of levels. He outlines this movement as one from terse antithetical sayings to more poetic verse forms suggesting that this “*may* indicate greater complexity of learning, particularly a move from a strictly

¹⁷⁶ Literally “the discerning man” from the root *bîn*.

¹⁷⁷ Von Rad suggests that, though the terms are distinct, the various concepts overlap too, indicating that the ensemble of many terms “seems to aim at something larger, something more comprehensive which could not be expressed satisfactorily by means of any one of the terms used.” Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 13. As such, the various virtuous notions are not compartmentalised points of character; their efficaciousness is tied to their integration. A relevant point given the integrative function of prudence as it is understood in Thomistic thought.

¹⁷⁸ Brown, “The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9,” 153.

binary mode of moral understanding to more synthetic modes.”¹⁷⁹ To explain, the sentences tend to be dominated by proverbial sayings that paint the world in a moral dichotomy of the right and wrong; one is either wise or foolish, righteous or wicked with little room for ambiguity or mitigation beyond that paradigm. However, the movement that Brown highlights points out that the teaching of Proverbs does not remain there. Proverbs, particularly in the later part of the Solomonic collection and even more so in the later sections overall (22:17-31:9), nuances this position in both form and theme. Naturally, righteousness and wisdom are still held in high regard and wickedness and foolishness as evils to be avoided, but there is a greater complexity introduced, so much so that even when a way may *seem* right it may, in fact, lead to ultimate destruction (16:25).¹⁸⁰ Without going into great detail at this point, what is being taught here is that being wise and living rightly is more complex than what is immediately apparent and certainly not as basic as blindly following a prescribed rule or principle in the simple sense. Further, when we consider the nature of the instructional material found in 1-9 (as noted above), we see that the very structural flow of Proverbs implies that prudence is not only a virtuous character trait being encouraged in its own right but, also, necessary if one is going to find full meaning and right application of the collection of sayings themselves.

Brown also highlights other thematic progressions. For example, there appears a movement in the settings of the instructions which progress from the familial home to the more abstract communal and political sphere – particularly the setting of the royal court which underpins the Hezekian collection (25:1-29:27) and the Words of Agur (30:1-33). As Brown notes, in the first part of the Solomonic collection there are only two references to the royal context (14:28, 35), whereas there are twelve in the second half. Further, within the identity of the ruler himself (where he is present) there is a movement of sorts. In the Solomonic collection, the position of kingship is

¹⁷⁹ Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 164. It should be pointed out that Brown shows caution with such interpretation indicating that the movement is not categorical or absolute. For example, he notes that antithetical sayings that form the bulk of 10:1-15:32 are also found in 15:33-22:16, but the number of them diminishes markedly in the latter section compared to the first, (Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 156-157). Thus, the movement in Proverbs is, at times, subtle and gradual.

¹⁸⁰ Van Leeuwen notes a movement in a similar vein to Brown stating that, “the contrast between righteous and wicked in chapters 10-15 is typical of the first Solomonic subcollection. It creates an orderly view of reality and justice in which good and bad actions are met with corresponding consequences. In contrast, the second Solomonic subcollection (16:1-22:16) presents a more complex view of acts and consequences.” Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 23.

made akin to that of God himself and a king can hold such office when embodying virtues such as loyalty and faithfulness (20:28) and deep righteousness (16:12). In this section, there is an implication that a king can be of poor character, wicked and unjust, but it is not explicitly noted. However, this shifts in the Hezekian and Agur sections where the vulnerability of the position of kingship is more overtly exposed. To illustrate, in 25:2 Proverbs notes that the role of the king is to pursue wisdom which is hidden by the very glory of God no less. Later, in 28:16, an abject warning is given where the leader who lacks prudence will inherently be a cruel (i.e. morally corrupt) oppressor.¹⁸¹ The ultimate conclusion to this is that, as Brown identifies it, there is a pedagogical direction within Proverbs to move one from the naïve son to the wise (prudent) king, something that requires one to constantly hold a character trait of being teachable and humble. As Brown summates, “the main body of Proverbs illustrates a certain advancement of sapiential instruction. As the king becomes an object of critique, so the reader must cultivate self-criticism.”¹⁸²

Moreover, speaking more generally on Brown’s approach, he notes that:

The pedagogy of wisdom, in sum, begins with the basic staple and proceeds to more advanced, variegated fare. Although many of the proverbial sayings and instructions seem simplistic in isolation, together they build up a substantive and sophisticated level of moral instruction.¹⁸³

In other words, the pedagogical outlook of Proverbs is to move the implied reader and would-be student towards maturity. This process involves holding certain disposition and virtues in the first place (captured in Prov 1-9), then being able to negotiate and interpret the familial and sometimes simple proverbial notions, building on them to develop the sophistication implied in the later sections of Proverbs. As will be discussed in section 3.3 below, this concept of movement from immaturity to maturity is a key dimension of prudence in general. As such, this unifying theme of growth in maturity in Proverbs also points to a theme of how one acquires prudence.

The approach that Brown makes is useful in many respects. However, a point should be made here on the position this study makes in relation to the overall arrangement

¹⁸¹ Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 171-172.

¹⁸² Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 181. This also touches on the notion of ‘political prudence’ which is taken up in the following section.

¹⁸³ Brown, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 181-182.

and themes of Proverbs; are they a collection of disparate sayings (in regard to chapters 10-22) and slightly larger but still independent lectures (1-8, 31) or a homogenous work of tightly organised material? The simple response is something of a middle ground. Frydrych, though ultimately underlining the disparity of the work, notes that:

The whole is more than the sum of its parts. At the same time, this new perception of the book should not obscure the fact that the nature of the petty sayings is such that they have to be understandable in relative autonomy, i.e. the primary source of meaning in the collections is the individual saying.¹⁸⁴

In other words, taking in the overall whole has useful implications for using Proverbs in a study such as this one, but the individual units and even particular short sentence sayings inherently must have discernible worth in and of themselves. As has been discussed above, it is this approach which allows one to identify the moral framework of Proverbs resting on the formation of character overall even when individual isolated sayings may seem particularly casuistic or situational in their expression.¹⁸⁵ The interpretive analysis which follows holds this in mind. Even when individual sayings are examined, it is acknowledged that a larger framework of moral formation of the reader is implied. This moral formation is found in a number of dimensions, some of which will be unpacked in the following.

2.2.2 Social-Political Influence in Proverbs and the Political Dimension of Prudential Wisdom

A common approach when dealing with a particular work of Scripture is to focus on something of its exegetical framework by examining such things as its social context, authorship and historical influences. A fuller appreciation of Proverbs, particularly as it pertains to the virtues and prudence, can be had in this process. It is one already started in the previous sections, but an interpretive analysis using such exegetical tools is taken up more overtly here.

As a starting point, we can consider the notion of authorship. Though authorship of Proverbs has traditionally been attributed to Solomon, usually based on the opening

¹⁸⁴ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ As Murphy states, “the goal of the teaching [in Proverbs] is formation of character, and this transcends the casuistry that forms a necessary part of ethical thought.” Murphy, *Proverbs*, 276.

line in 1:1,¹⁸⁶ it is generally held by most scholars that the final form of Proverbs is unlikely to have been composed by the historical figure. Though some would argue that certain parts that have found their way into the final form of Proverbs trace their origin to the historical figure, the connection between the historical Solomon, or even his court, to the literal authorship of Proverbs as we have them today is an improbable one.¹⁸⁷ There are a number of reasons why this is so. Firstly, there are numerous discernible sections within Proverbs that are quite distinct in style and content that suggest disparate authorship. Further, certain collections within Proverbs bear distinct relationship to non-Israelite ANE wisdom literature in general. This relationship came to the fore and has been explored to various degrees since the publication of the *Teachings of Amenemope* by W.E. Budge in 1923. These ancient Egyptian sources evidently bear particular resemblance to Proverbs 22:17-24:22.¹⁸⁸ However, later scholarship has also shown links in the ten lectures or instructions that form the bulk of the first nine chapters of Proverbs.¹⁸⁹ Though there is no fixed understanding as to how much non-Israelite influence there is in Proverbs, or even the direction of that influence,¹⁹⁰ there is little argument that certain parts at least were not unique to the Israelite tradition much less a unique product of the Solomonic context. Adding to the complexity of this issue has been the additional and more recent analysis of non-Egyptian ANE wisdom literature, particularly that of Semitic regions of Mesopotamia.¹⁹¹ Taken as a whole, what this broadening contextual perspective undoubtedly indicates is the international character of the

¹⁸⁶ As well as other appellations in 10:1 and 25:1.

¹⁸⁷ Fox provides a brief but lucid discussion on “Solomon and the Title of Proverbs” in Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 56-58. See also James L. Crenshaw, “Proverbs,” in *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1995), 355-357. It should be pointed out that there is no universal agreement on the historical influence of Solomon on Proverbs. Some, such as Fox, would suggest it is “improbable” that any were written by Solomon, while others such as Clifford would offer a counter view, Clifford, *Proverbs*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ E. W. Budge, *Second Series of Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1923), Plates I-XIV. Cited in Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, 6. The ancient documents themselves were discovered in 1888.

¹⁸⁹ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 22-24. A useful and relatively concise discussion on this topic is also had by Bruce K. Waltke, “The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136, no. 543 (1979).

¹⁹⁰ As Whybray states it, “the nature of the relationship between the two texts was disputed from the first; and that dispute has never been settled.” Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, 6, discussing ‘Teachings of Amenemope’ in particular.

¹⁹¹ Richard J. Clifford, ed. *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, SBL (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

wisdom tradition, one that seemed to influence Israel's surrounding cultures as much as it influenced Israel's.¹⁹²

Moreover, this 'foreign interaction' is only part of the story in the formation of Proverbs. It is but one part of many influences that seem to have shaped the final form. A very important one nonetheless, particularly for our concern, because it indicates that the redactor sages certainly saw an appreciation in wisdom that went beyond the exclusive domain of the Israelite community. It indicates that the wisdom teachings of Proverbs, including its prudential aspects, were witnessed and stretched out into the wider reality in which the Hebrew people found themselves and points to a universal conception of wisdom. As noted above, the Pontifical Biblical Commissions recent document on the bible and morality does not refer to the wisdom literature at length, but it does make reference to this universal notion:

The sages contemplate the world God created in all its beauty, order and harmony. These reveal something about their Creator. Through wisdom Israel meets her Lord in a living relationship open also to other peoples. The openness of Israelite wisdom to the nations and the clearly international character of the sages' movement provides a biblical basis for dialogue with other religions and the search for a global ethic. The Saviour God of Jews and Christians is also the Creator who reveals himself in his creation.¹⁹³

Foreign influence aside, the material in Proverbs also bears evidence of multi-faceted influence in terms of social setting. For example, there are significant parts of the collection that have a familial 'folksy' nature to them in both syntax (references to 'father/mother and son') and, on occasions, their topical focus.¹⁹⁴ This is particularly so with the sayings of 10:1-22:16 which appear to have the 'pre-history' at least of being common oral sayings – short self-contained adages that bear the hallmarks of popular proverbial aphorisms common across most cultures and times.¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, there is clear inference that other parts of Proverbs were compiled within an aristocratic or courtly environment and certainly the non-Israelite sourced material

¹⁹² cf. 1 Kings 4:29-34

¹⁹³ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality*, §40.

¹⁹⁴ See R. N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, JSOTS (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 73, 113-114; Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 63-64.

¹⁹⁵ Dell provides a summary of such thinking in Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 52-56. Cf. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, 68-69.

noted above seems set for the instruction of the courtly elite.¹⁹⁶ Christopher Ansberry taking in the work overall suggests that, though Proverbs was compiled from a variety of social settings and periods, ultimately the work is set for the audience of those in or aspiring to leadership in the courtly environment.¹⁹⁷ Most scholars would agree with this position to at least some degree, and certainly that the final redactors were scribal sages of a courtly status is quite likely. However, the role of the ‘family environment’ and the place of the ‘father and son instruction’ should not be underestimated. As Dell succinctly states it, particularly in reference to Prov 1-9, “why, if they were intended for the education of officials or even as school instruction, was the primary address from father (and sometimes mother – Prov 1:8; 6:20) to son?”¹⁹⁸ This point will be returned to shortly, but if the various contextual influences that can be discerned within Proverbs are acknowledged, they highlight the diasporic origin of the collections and hints to the broadness of intent of the final work as we have it. As Crenshaw states it, “The book therefore takes the shape of an anthology, its various components coming from various periods of Israel’s history.”¹⁹⁹ The upshot is that the intended audience, as far as what can be gleaned from the text itself, could be of any place and time and, more the point, the moral teachings it contains could be rightly imbued into people’s lives of varying backgrounds and of varying standings – from the common peasantry, to the courtly elite of potentially many cultural contexts. Whybray notes as much in one of his many introductory discussions on Proverbs, stating that, “the reader, who is addressed almost exclusively as an individual, might, it seems, be of any nationality.”²⁰⁰

Given the eclectic and nebulous contextual setting evident in Proverbs, dating and discussing authorship of the work with any certainty becomes problematic. As Fox states it, “the notion of “dating” a text, a traditional concern in Bible studies, is not quite germane to the book of Proverbs.”²⁰¹ The best that can be achieved is broad

¹⁹⁶ Particularly regarding the second Solomonic collection (25:1-29:27). Fox, for example, describes Chapters 25-28 as forming a “sort of manual for a monarch.” Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 10.

¹⁹⁷ Christopher B. Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 126-161.

¹⁹⁸ Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 24.

¹⁹⁹ Crenshaw, "Proverbs," 355. See also Roland E. Murphy’s discussion on the ‘pre-history’ sources of Proverbs in "Form Criticism and Wisdom Literature," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1969): especially pp.481-483.

²⁰⁰ Whybray, *Proverbs*, 5.

²⁰¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 6.

allusion to the boundaries of when certain sections may have been composed, which itself would be full of conjecture where any specifics were to be applied. Having said that, though certain parts may be difficult to pin down, there is a general consensus that the final redaction took place in the post-exilic environment, and this point does have some bearing on interpretation as will be noted presently.²⁰²

With the above in mind, the focus of many biblical scholars has shifted to the final form of the work and what can be gleaned from any discernible processes the redactors may have employed. Fox makes the point as such:

While the sayings in Proverbs are drawn from different social groups, including the “folk” and the literati, it was a series of editors who ultimately determined what was included and what was excluded ... in the end it is *their* work and *their* idea of wisdom that we are reading, and it is, not surprisingly, ideologically quite coherent.²⁰³

Returning to the notion of Solomon’s authorship touched on at the start of this section, and if we are to take on board Fox’s suggestion that the final redactors compiled their work with clear intent and purpose, then clearly Solomon’s attribution was not an arbitrary inclusion. Its inclusion draws into focus an aspect of wisdom and the virtue of prudence that makes for noteworthy correlative comparison to the Thomistic teaching that informs this project.

As discussed above, the multi-faceted (including multi-authored) influences of Proverbs gives it a certain flavour of universality and, at the same time, the significance of Solomon’s authorship as a matter of historical fact becomes less important to interpreting the work. Having said that, the attribution of Proverbs to Solomon can bear importance in understanding the work overall and the nature of wisdom taught therein. Alan Moss is one recent scholar who has attempted to

²⁰² As Dermot Cox notes in his discussion on dating Proverbs, one needs to be aware of the distinction between the actual date of the material itself (for example when some of the oldest oral sayings were first documented) and the editorial project which led to the final product. To that end, Cox states that “while much of the material, and indeed some of the collections, are old, the actual Book of Proverbs as we have it was put together, and in part modified, at a quite late period, and reflects a post-exilic editorial intention to some degree.” Dermot Cox, *Proverbs: With an Introduction to Sapiential Books*, ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller and Martin McNamara, OTM (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982), 89-92. See also Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, 17-22, 56-64. Though there is still conjecture particularly where specifics are concerned (see for example Clifford, *Proverbs*, 3-6. who would favour an earlier dating), more recent scholarship has tended to correlate with Cox’s position.

²⁰³ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 11.

examine the place of Solomon in this sense.²⁰⁴ He notes that the attributing of Solomon as author of at least significant sections of Proverbs has traditionally (i.e. in the scholarly environment pre-dating the historical-critical approach) given it a certain sense of authority²⁰⁵ and most contemporary scholars agree that the superscription of Proverbs 1:1 at least is placed in memory of some sense of special authority assumed of Solomon.²⁰⁶ In the historical-critical environment, the place of this authority has been questioned, not only historically as already stated, but also in terms of the lack of congruency between the Solomon as depicted in Kings (particularly 1 Kings 1-11) and the Solomon given attribution of the various books and parts of books of the wisdom canon. Most strikingly is the ultimate unfaithfulness of Solomon and the subsequent decline of the monarchy (1 Kings 11) in contrast to the unity and safety that his reign promised and, to a certain extent at least, delivered (1 Kings 4:24-25) – a successful reign attributed at least in part to Solomon being particularly gifted in understanding (*bînāh*) and wisdom (*ḥokmāh*) (1 Kings 3:9), key character traits also esteemed in Proverbs.²⁰⁷ The incongruence between Solomon's ultimate demise and the wisdom writing that is attributed to him in later works is captured particularly so in the contrast between the teaching of Proverbs, which warns the young son to avoid the 'strange woman' (e.g. Prov 2:16-22),²⁰⁸ and the recording of 1 Kings 11:1, which states categorically that Solomon in fact "loved many foreign women."

It is beyond the scope of this work to expound such issues at length, but it is worth positing, as Moss does, that the contrast points to a particular need of the post-exilic

²⁰⁴ Alan Moss, "Proverbs with Solomon: A Critical Revision of the Pre-Critical Commentary Tradition in the Light of a Biblical Intertextual Study," *Heythrop Journal* 43, no. 2 (2002). Though Moss' work is drawn upon here, there have been a number of scholars who have focused on the connection between Solomonic imagery and wisdom as it pertains to political theory. Two others include Walter Brueggemann, "The Social Significance of Solomon as a Patron of Wisdom," in *The Sage in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990); Vladimir Wozniuk, "The Wisdom of Solomon as Political Theology," *Journal of Church and State* 39, no. 4 (1997).

²⁰⁵ Moss, "Proverbs with Solomon," 202-204.

²⁰⁶ Both to his productivity of "three thousand proverbs" stated in 1 Kings 4:32 and his particularly gifted embodiment of wisdom (1 Kings 3:11-12). For a succinct but useful survey of Solomon's connection to the Wisdom tradition see Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 42-50.

²⁰⁷ See section 2.1 for discussion on the significance of such terms.

²⁰⁸ 2:16-22 is a poignant example as it draws on the prophetic imagery of being 'cut off from the land' (v. 22). See also Prov 5:1-20, 6:20-35, 7:1-27, 23:27. The character of the 'strange woman' has drawn much attention and is beyond the scope of this discussion to unpack. The term is used by convention, but represents a complex notion. A surveyed discussion on this concept is well made by Fox in *Proverbs 1-9*, 134-141; 252-262.

Israelite community in which the final work of Proverbs was compiled and, at the same time, to a particular kind of moral outlook. In short, there is a shift in focus on wisdom and, to the degree it can be discerned, a corresponding shift in the characterisation of Solomon. 1 Kings clearly presents wisdom in the context of a political and administrative setting, where its outworking is prudential, but governmental in nature. In Proverbs, the social setting and the image of ‘Solomon’s teaching’ tends to focus on sustaining the community in the familial context compared to the more particularly political-governmental one that typifies 1 Kings. This shift is necessary because the latter proved to be ultimately inadequate in maintaining social and communal good. Moss explains it as such:

In Proverbs 1–9 Solomon enacts no political and administrative reforms. Indeed the society implied in Proverbs 1–9 is a family-centred world. Wisdom consists more in avoiding too much contact with the wider world than in engaging explicitly in that society. True, kings reign by Solomon’s wisdom (8:15–16) and temple offerings are due (3:9). However, the rituals lead to the household’s prosperity (3:10). As I have argued elsewhere, the Wisdom who instructs kings personifies Solomon’s domestic instruction.²⁰⁹ In 1 Kings Solomon’s political and administrative programme caused division of his kingdom (1 Kgs 12:1–20). On the other hand, Solomon’s family-based and nonpolitical wisdom programme in Proverbs consolidated Jewish society after the exile.²¹⁰

Brown similarly notes, in reference to the opening nine chapters in particular, that:

Proverbs addresses a situation of social distress, a dissolute age in the eyes of some. To be sure, much of the attention is focused upon the family with the silent son listening at the feet of his parents. Why the family? Because it is seen as the invincible bastion of ideological innocence by virtue of the fact that everyone has or has had a family ... Hence, of all social domains, the family provides the strongest appeal and basis for shaping and reorientating the praxis of the community.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Moss refers in particular to "Wisdom as Parental Teaching in Proverbs 1-9," *Heythrop Journal* 38, no. 2 (1997).

²¹⁰ Moss, "Proverbs with Solomon," 206. It should be pointed out, as already discussed above, that the familial focus of the call to wisdom in Proverbs is clearly not the only one, particularly when taking in examples such as Prov 25:1-7 where the epitaph of Solomon is explicitly tied to the kingly houses of Hezekiah and Judah and the focal point is the monarch himself (see fn. 196 and 197). In that regard, I would disagree with Moss’ suggestion that it is entirely ‘non-political’. However, on the other hand, overall the focus of wisdom is certainly widened in Proverbs and the prudential wisdom being taught is not limited to a political mechanism. That is essentially the point being made here.

²¹¹ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 45. Even beyond Proverbs and the particular emphasis being noted here, the family represents arguably the most important social unit in the Israelite tradition. See Leo G. Perdue et al., eds., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

The point being made here is twofold. Firstly, it reiterates the already noted understanding that any moral outworking that Proverbs might make leans to a universal appeal. Though those in positions of power are called to exercise it particularly, including in matters of state and for the sake of justice (Prov 8:15) and prudential wisdom is inherently important for good leadership because by it rulers “govern rightly” (8:16), it is also the same prudential wisdom that is meant for those on every street, the town squares, the busy corners and the city gates (1:20-21). Further, and by extension, as discussed previously, the call to prudential wisdom serves to realise a created order and that order has a social-ethical dimension, however, it is erroneous to assume that it is purely the place of the political elites to seek and maintain such a dimension. The assumption that the created order setting the backdrop to wisdom equates to a socio-political order that requires mandating by political leadership (prudential or otherwise) does not seem to necessarily hold in Proverbs. It is clear, and often documented, that parts of Proverbs are directed to forming the young aspirant to leadership by the ways of wisdom such that the societies they rule find life-giving cohesion and stability in keeping with the order woven into creation itself.²¹² However, if we are to draw on Moss’ reflections noted above, the idea that prudential wisdom exercised at the governing level is enough to ensure a staying off of chaos and destruction (which is the antithesis of order) seems to be evidently not true. A social order is required, but it is to be sought and found at a more fundamental level – in the individual in relationship to their familial community and thus to their community at large. Von Rad’s seminal work on Israelite wisdom speaks to this. He notes that:

Both good and evil create social conditions; in a completely ‘outward’ sense they can build up or destroy the community, property, happiness, reputation, welfare of children and much more besides. Here, then it is a question not only of movements and tendencies inside a man’s heart, but of life-forming forces whose power was obvious to all.²¹³

²¹² This notion comes through particularly strongly in the Egyptian influence, especially in the concept of *ma’at* (world order) and is a central theme of wisdom deliberated upon in the courtly context (see Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*, 41-42; 54-55). It is a notion that bears some correlation with the understanding of the natural law as discussed previously; expressing the order that can be found in creation and in the human world in all its many dimensions (civic, familial, professional, relational, etc.). Thus, it was particularly important that those in political authority exercise their office in keeping with *ma’at*. See also fn. 99 above.

²¹³ Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 77.

Von Rad later asks whether this concept of attaining wisdom for good ends and for the avoidance of evil socially expressed pertain only to a ruling class. He answers:

Seen as a whole, this question is certainly to be answered in the negative. It is impossible to establish a particular interest in the sphere of life of the upper civil servants, nor any, of course, in the sphere of life of the enslaved or even those who were socially or culturally of the lower classes. In the foreground there appear the relationships of a relatively well-placed middle class. The decisive factor is, however, that here orders are described which not only have their validity in a specific social group but which are, in principle, valid for all men.²¹⁴

Thus, it can be said that, in part at least, Proverbs does seem to hold in mind an audience that is courtly and thus concerned with prudential leadership that is typical of the wisdom enterprise understood in other ANE contexts, and the Solomonic attribution attests to this in some sense. However, Proverbs also presents a notion of wisdom that is clearly wider in its scope. Succinctly put, the virtues that Proverbs encourage can and should be taken up by anybody seeking the good life. How this can be witnessed in Proverbs will be unpacked in the following. However, it also points to a certain political-communal dimension of prudential wisdom that has strong correlation to the notion of political prudence found in the Thomistic moral tradition. This latter point will be examined in the final section of this thesis,²¹⁵ but suffice to point out here that Proverbs does not leave the exercising of prudential wisdom for the sake of the communal good in the place of a distinct ruling class. Rather, it sees all members' adoption of such wisdom as being necessary for the good of the society overall.

2.2.3 The Particular and Universal Scope of Proverbs

It has been noted that Proverbs seems to address a reader who could be of any nationality and from any strata of society. The same could be said of the chronological placement of the intended audience. Though the final redaction of proverbs occurs in the context of Israel's post-exilic experience and this naturally influences its composition, Proverb's sourced material and articulation is such that the teachings it enshrines are meant for an audience of any time and place. Crenshaw indicates as much when discussing the dating of Proverbs. He notes that the "sages

²¹⁴ Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 82.

²¹⁵ In particular 4.1 below.

endeavoured to communicate insights that transcend space and time. Their teachings aimed at universal assent by any intelligent individual, Israelite or non-Israelite.”²¹⁶ Rather than dwelling on the “specifics of national history” which is obviously important to the majority of the Old Testament as it is in the course of historical events that God’s salvation and ongoing relationship with His people is established, the authors of Proverbs “remained silent about the specifics of national history, choosing rather to dwell on things accessible to every human being.”²¹⁷

Waldemar Janzen makes a similar point in his *Old Testament Ethics*.²¹⁸ Citing the work of Hans Schmid, Janzen nuances the notion that Proverbs is intentionally ‘non-historical’, suggesting that it does bear a relationship to history, but one that is an interplay between the concrete experience within history properly speaking and the timeless and universal principles that we see associated with wisdom within Proverbs. The interplay is expressed as a three step process articulated by Janzen as such:

- (1) Very concrete (historical) experiences are observed and sifted. (2) These are handed down from father to son, teacher to student, in poetic generalized formulations (proverbs) that in themselves seem timeless and universal. (3) They are, however, meant to be received in a particular historical situation and applied judiciously to it, to see whether they can become new historical reality at this new time and in this new place.²¹⁹

Expounding this a little, there appears embedded in Proverbs an appreciation of the importance of lived experience in the process of discerning what actually constitutes good teaching on wisdom.²²⁰ The lived experiences of both the parent/teacher, who is often the narrator, but also the generations that precede him/her are the fundamental building blocks of Proverbs. Whether that be the sagacity gleaned in a more formal context of a courtly school or ‘informally’ in the intergenerational interaction in the

²¹⁶ Crenshaw, "Proverbs," 358.

²¹⁷ Crenshaw, "Proverbs," 358. See also Ansberry who makes a similar observation while discussing the original historical context of Proverbs surmising that “in essence, proverbs are situationally oriented, open-ended sayings that cut across social barriers and remain relevant to a wide variety of people.” Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad*, 2.

²¹⁸ Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

²¹⁹ Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 123, citing Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit: eine Untersuchung zur altorientalischen und israelitischen Weisheitsliteratur*, BZAW (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), 79-84.

²²⁰ This point is made even more poignantly when looking at some of the proverbs which speak to life experience in particular. See section 3.3 below.

village circle, the ‘words of the wise’ (Prov 22:17a) were collected and laid out not only for a particular generation, class or vocation, but with an eye for an arbitrary future. This process is impossible but for an understanding that wisdom has a necessarily universal appeal. This is evidently true not only by taking in Proverbs as a work itself but, also, how it sits in the broad wisdom tradition. Fox, for example, notes that:

Proverbs is a slice of tradition that precedes ancient Israel and continued beyond it. This tradition comprised the creation, reshaping, and transmission of wise sayings and teachings about how to live a righteous, productive, and happy life. The Israelite tradition had predecessors in the ancient Near East and successors in Jewish Wisdom texts.²²¹

Ronald Clements in his *Wisdom in Theology* is another author who addresses the relationship between the particular and the universal as presented in Proverbs.²²² In a mode typical of modern biblical scholarship, Clement draws his theological reflections through the lens of the historical context in which the wisdom tradition came to prominence in the Israelite history. In particular, in the post-exilic environment, the concept of ‘world order’ comes to supplement the Israelite faith that was previously built on the centrality of the nation state and the temple cult.²²³ Some significance of this has already been discussed above, but Clement’s focus points out that such a notion of ‘world order’ that underpins Israelite world-view necessarily is imbued with a universal ethic. Clement, in a similar vein as Fox, notes that a key development in this ‘universal principle’ is found in the process that the early sages undertook in collecting and redacting the writings of Proverbs. In short, as the proverbial tradition moved from more folk and essentially oral to a written one, a more universal appreciation of them emerges. He states, “Once sayings were written down they could be compared and contrasted with each other and more universal truths deduced from them” and, as such, isolated truths and perceptions became “coordinated into a more universal body of truth.”²²⁴ However, the ultimate purpose of such a collation does not remain there. Ultimately they are recorded with

²²¹ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 11. See also, pp. 17-27.

²²² Ronald E. Clements, *Wisdom in Theology*, The Didsbury Lectures (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992).

²²³ Clements, *Wisdom in Theology*, 12-39.

²²⁴ Clements, *Wisdom in Theology*, 44-45.

the intent that the future reader would be able to apply universal notions of wisdom captured therein to the particulars of his or her individual life.

It is this latter point that is particularly pertinent to our discussion. Returning to Janzen who again cites Schmid, he makes the observation that the temptation to “freeze” wisdom at the second level (seeing Proverbial wisdom as timeless and universal) as a problematic interpretive inclination – suggesting that allowing “individual formulation [from Proverbs] to become contextless absolutes” misses their intended use.²²⁵

What is being implied here is that Proverbs does not present timeless and universal deeds which must be ‘re-enacted’. Nor is the heart of what Proverbs might impart found in simply finding ways to ‘reinterpret’ certain aphorisms to a corresponding present day situation in a narrow sense. It is, rather, deeper than that and is found in the character formation that lies at the heart of the moral framework of Proverbs. Clifford makes this point stating in his commentary, “Proverbs is concerned with wisdom as a fundamental option in life rather than specific wise actions.”²²⁶ It is important to note here that this does not mean that the sages were not interested in actions at all. Rather, he is stressing that Proverbs does not present a formulaic list of maxims that must be followed if one is to be wise. As such, the teachings of Proverbs proposes a disposition that must be captured and directed such that one is able to recognise what wise living looks like in the activity of a particular life.

We see this elaborated elsewhere by Clifford when discussing the relationship of the lectures of Prov 1-9 with the sentences of 10-22. He notes:

The narrative in Prov 1-9 locates the pursuit and practice of wisdom with the formation of the human person in all of his or her responsibilities ... Karl Rahner has helpfully coined the term “fundamental option.” It is the outgrowth of God’s encounter with people: the attractiveness of divine love draws humans into orienting themselves and their choices [and thus their actions] toward God. In Proverbs, the instructions of Woman Wisdom and the parents are not very specific. They inculcate receptivity to trustworthy authorities and fidelity to basic relationships. Counter-

²²⁵ Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 123, citing Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, 79-84.

²²⁶ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 32.

voices mimic the genuine call and must be rejected for the primary invitation to be properly received.”²²⁷

This notion of “receptivity”, which will be discussed at greater length below,²²⁸ is not only necessary to gaining wisdom in general, but also to navigating the bulk of the work of Proverbs, being the sayings themselves (Prov 10-29) and the concluding appendices (Prov 30-31). The Solomonic section in particular (10:1–22:16) is drawn from and seeks to espouse concrete actions, but actions, nonetheless, that are the outworking of a virtuous character, and especially a prudential one. As Clifford goes on to note, “since the book conceives life largely as action, it comes close to equating knowing the good with doing the good. The ignorance of the fool is not a simple lack of knowledge but an active aversion to it.”²²⁹ An illustrative example among many is Prov 12:11;

Those who till their land will have plenty of food,
but those who follow worthless pursuits have no sense.

This verse forms part of a triplet of proverbs rooted in agricultural activity (12:9-11), but as Fox discusses in his commentary, it is not praise of physical labouring of the land which is the heart of the message (though it would be dismissive to ignore it either). Rather, “the couplet juxtaposes images of fullness and emptiness: The worker is rewarded with satiety, while they who pursue trifles – lit., “empty things” – are mindless.”²³⁰ The word *rêqîm* which is translated as “worthless pursuit” in the NRSV is the key here. NIV uses perhaps a more accurate word of “fantasies” which rightly evokes the image of ‘mindlessness’ that Fox alludes to. Taken as a whole, what is captured here is that he who has good sense will work their land – importantly it is *their* land i.e. what they are able to work in the particular, not an arbitrary notion of working *the* land as an abstract concept.²³¹ Conversely, he who lacks good sense is lost in ‘fantasy’ and ‘frivolous thought’ and will go without because of it. The concept is not literal, but it is not purely allegorical either. Rather, it is attitudinal and virtue-based. It points to the quite typical imagery in Proverbs where the tangible

²²⁷ Richard J. Clifford, "Reading Proverbs 10-22," *Interpretation* 63, no. 3 (2009): 245.

²²⁸ See section 3.3.

²²⁹ Clifford, "Reading Proverbs 10-22," 248.

²³⁰ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 552.

²³¹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 552. It should be pointed out, in contrast to Fox’s observations, that manual labour in the abstract does seem to be esteemed elsewhere depending on how one translates/interprets certain texts, e.g. Prov 12:14; 14:23; 18:9.

activity that is observable in the real world of the ‘ordinary person’ points to the sort of character one is to hold such that they will find sustenance in the total sense. This is captured here and many times throughout Proverbs in the Hebrew *lēb* (or in this case the lacking of it; *ḥāsar-lēb* – lit. lack heart) which in the NRSV quoted above is translated as ‘sense’. It is imbued with holding the concept of the totality of one’s inner life – including their intellect, dispositions and emotions i.e. what we understand as pertaining to character. Van Leeuwen in the NIB captures this well in his commentary on Prov 12:11:

Not to work with what is ours is to flee the real to chase the unreal. To lack judgment is literally to lack heart, without which one cannot acquire wisdom (17:16; see Pss 51:6; 90:12). The heart, in OT psychology, is the burning centre of our humanity from which flow our thoughts, words, and deeds.²³²

There are a number of points which can be gleaned from this which are important for our purposes here. Firstly, as with wisdom in Proverbs, the virtue of prudence is concerned with the relationship between the universal principles of goodness and the lived reality of how it looks in the activity of our lives at any given point in time. In other words it is properly ethical in its concern. However, it is so in a particular manner; Proverbs builds the moral framework around the character of person rather than the specifics of particular acts themselves. Further, this interplay between the ‘concrete experience’ and the timeless universal principles that can be gleaned therein implies a certain trust of creation that underpins the sapiential tradition in general, but particularly so in Proverbs.

This is an important theme that has already been discussed above, and is a reminder of the basic premise that Proverbs inherently sees created reality as essentially capable of revealing the right way to be and act. As discussed in section 1.2, though technically this does not directly equate to a form of ‘natural law’ that underpins Thomistic virtue ethics, there is a correlation on the fundamental level which sees human participation in creation (as well as creation itself more broadly speaking) as inherently good. It is therefore capable of illuminating the proper ends of human nature and, thus, of human conduct – particularly so when right observation and reflection on such participation is made.

²³² Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 126.

Moreover, this focus on the nature of human affairs and creation leads to understanding the universal appeal of this ‘right living’. As was noted previously, there is modern day conjecture on how an appeal to nature can truly be understood as ‘universal’ given the myriad of understandings of ‘nature’ that have been borne out of the scholastic tradition into the modern era.²³³ Certainly there are philosophical issues to this approach in the modern context. Nevertheless, there is something useful to be had in drawing on the basic premise held in both Proverbs and in a traditional understanding of natural law.²³⁴ The wisdom teaching of Proverbs builds from particulars to universal and then asks the reader to apply the universal back to the particular. Though steeped in the human capacity for right reasoning and a trust in the goodness of creation, the process also recognises limits; that being, that we are not creators of our own world of moral meaning. Prudential wisdom taught in Proverbs asks the student of wisdom to discover moral truths and ends and then find means to attaining those ends, not to determine what those ends are. Such a notion is also found in the traditional scholastic understanding of natural law that Porter identifies as a useful import even in our contemporary context. She states that such an understanding reminds us of a “pride of assuming that we can create our own world of meaning, within which we can take refuge from the ambiguities of human society and the stark inhumanity of the physical universe.” Rather, the scholastics, and I would add the sage author of Proverbs, remind us that:

We live in a world that we did not make, under the sovereignty of a Creator whose goodness we can trust but whose designs will always be to some extent opaque to us ... what the scholastic concept of natural law provides is not an absolutely reliable guide to determining what is natural, but a framework within which to reflect on the moral significance of the pre-conventional roots of human practices, in accordance with our best efforts at any given point to discern what these are.²³⁵

To summarise, the interpretive approach to Proverbs discussed above suggests that the ultimate call of Proverbs is not simply to establish a sense of ‘universal order’ in itself but, rather, to draw the reader to navigate their experience of creation such that they can discern how right living looks in the particulars of their lived experience in

²³³ Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 29-33.

²³⁴ ‘Traditional understanding of natural law’ and its benefits refers to that identified by Porter in *Natural and Divine Law*, 305-318.

²³⁵ Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 308.

keeping with that sense of the universal which is implicit in a notion of created order. In this sense, the call of Proverbs is prudential in that the virtue of prudence, similarly, draws the person to find the means in the particulars of their circumstance towards realising a universal notion of the good. The noteworthy feature of Proverbs is its movement from the particular (of a given admonition, for example) to the universal and then the implication for the reader to find application to their particular lives from there. This is only possible, however, if one takes on the call of wisdom itself; and this is the key to what Proverbs attests to. Simply careful examination of created reality is not enough, one can easily be deceived. To successfully recognise what right living looks like, one needs to do so by cultivating and maintaining a certain character. As Proverbs points out, it is the one who has a discerning and perceptive character (*mēbîn*) that finds wisdom in their very midst, but the fool can search all of creation and not find it (17:24).

In the teaching of Proverbs, however, being of wise character is more than a form of human moral deliberation in the natural order of things. There is a limitation, as has been alluded to above, in the human capacity to employ prudential wisdom; however, Proverbs does not leave the formation of prudential wisdom at that. There is a theological dimension that engages with this limitation that is explicitly addressed which is vital to understanding prudential wisdom in its fullest form. This is taken up in the following section.

2.2.4 Fullness of Life and Theological Imagery in Proverbs

In both Proverbs and the virtue ethics tradition, there is the potential to understand prudence and the virtuous life in general as an intrinsically secular activity. That is to say that one can simply apply human intellectual faculties (of prudence or otherwise) to carefully observe the goings on of the world and employ such observations in deducing how to live the morally good life. One level of addressing this has already been made in highlighting the importance of the theological dimension of creation that underpins both the natural law tradition and the concept of wisdom in Proverbs. It has been well noted that God, as the author of creation and one that has proclaimed it ‘good’ (Gen 1), has inherently created a world that is able to witness to the good in itself. However, there is a further theological thought to be held which is captured in Proverbs in particular ways. In both the book of Proverbs and in the Thomistic

tradition there is an understanding that, though there is a human capacity to navigate to the teleological good, we struggle to actually recognise what that entirely is and so, for humans to achieve the truly good, something outside of itself is needed. It is Proverbs that will be the particular focus here, but it will be a notion returned to in the final stage of this thesis.

A starting point to this topic can be found in returning to Prov 12:11 mentioned in the previous section. It points to the idea that the reward for ‘good sense’ and right living is sustenance. However, a closer look at this and the rewards of wise living in general, as is done by Murphy, reveals that the good to be had is not limited to physical sustenance in the simple sense but a fullness of life in all its facets – and it is this which represents the *telos* of wisdom. Murphy states it most emphatically, “the kerygma of wisdom can be summed up in one word: *life*.”²³⁶ He comes to this point within an examination of the introductory opening of Prov 1:1-6²³⁷ and of Proverbs 8; in particular vv. 32-36 where Wisdom speaking in the first person cries out:

“And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.
Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD;
but those who miss me injure themselves;
all who hate me love death.”

As is found in numerous places in Proverbs and throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, a pathway is set out for life and death.²³⁸ Read at face value the options are very simple and stark, seek and find wisdom and you find the end of searching that is life, hate wisdom (and all it entails) and you will necessarily gravitate to death. It is this stark expression of gaining life and avoiding death which is the ultimate aim of wisdom, but life here needs to be understood with a certain depth. It does refer to ‘the good

²³⁶ Roland E. Murphy, "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," *Interpretation* 20, no. 1 (1966): 9. For a useful discussion see Cox's chapter on the "Goodness of Life" in Cox, *Proverbs*, 58-66.

²³⁷ Murphy, "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," 3-5. See also brief reflection in 2.2.1.

²³⁸ The list of relevant references in Proverbs can be found in Murphy's discussion (Murphy, "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," 10). It is reiterated again in his later work Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 28-29. Note also the similar concept found in Deuteronomy in particular, *The Tree of Life*, 104-106.

things of life' as would typically be understood and this is iterated in Proverbs in various ways; longevity (3:16; 28:16), reputation (10:7; 22:1), nourishment (28:19) and material wealth (8:18; 24:4) are all identified as good things of life in Proverbs. However, as Murphy warns, "life is a very elastic concept"²³⁹ and these materially-based goods have a greater depth of meaning than we might immediately give them. As he points out, "life is more than material goods; these are seen as sacramental, signs of the Lord's blessings (Prov 10:22)."²⁴⁰

This is particularly notable when the antithesis of life is looked at, that being death.²⁴¹ Death in the context of Proverbs is undermining to the person and community and it entails not so much a ceasing of earthly existence that we might typically associate with the term (though it might include that), but an existence where we animate as if alive but are less than living at the same time. It is captured in the image of Sheol which is synonymous with the place of death (Prov 7:27; Ps 49:14)²⁴² and certainly the pathway towards which one will head if they are not able to be wise (Prov 15:24). It is a state where one exists, but is never complete or whole; a state of forever seeking, a place of constant want (Prov 30:16). Guillet (who Murphy also cites)²⁴³ captures the notion when reflecting on various Proverbs (Prov 10:16; 27; 11:19 among others) and notes that there is something more than the "naïve belief" that simple enumeration of length of life is at stake. Rather,

there is a profoundly moral conviction: that sin is, in man, a principle of corruption, an evil which undermines his being. The sinner may appear prosperous, but this is an illusion. At [the] bottom, he is a sick man whose equilibrium has been affected.²⁴⁴

Thus, in contrast, we can say that life, as the *telos* of wisdom, is encompassing of the full being of the person. Brueggemann describes it as all the assets associated with being human; "emotional, physical, psychical, social, spiritual – which permit joy

²³⁹ Murphy, "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," 10.

²⁴⁰ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 29.

²⁴¹ Murphy, "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," 11.

²⁴² Not to be confused with the distinctly Christian image of Hell that is often read into such texts. Nevertheless, the notions do naturally share a relationship of sorts and certainly the later Old Testament literature and the development of relevant early Christian theology drew from imagery of Sheol as presented in such texts. Theodore J. Lewis, "Abode of the Dead," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 104-105.

²⁴³ Murphy, "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," 11.

²⁴⁴ Jacques Guillet, *Themes of the Bible*, trans., Albert J. LaMothe (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers, 1960), 172-173.

and security and wholeness. It includes ‘all these things’ which let a person reach his full capacity.”²⁴⁵

With such a lofty image of the sort of life that is offered in the enterprise of wisdom, it is not surprising that attaining it becomes a difficult prospect. On the one hand, the way to ‘life’ is ever present, woven into the very stuff of existence; of human activity and natural occurrence alike. It is witnessed in as common an endeavour as how one goes about building an abode (Prov 24:27) and in the natural activity of ants, badgers, locusts and lizards (30:25-28). Yet the ways of wisdom are inherently difficult and the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 captures this. The image of wisdom being tied to the act of creation has already been touched on, and her call to the listener to find life through her is repeated throughout the work, but what is also highlighted in this section is the chasm between the human experience and wisdom in her totality. Frydrych is one who focuses on this. Starting with an attentive reading of 8:22-31, he notes that “this passage shows that the divine sphere has an existence which is entirely independent of the human world, for God [and Wisdom] is active before the human world is brought into being by this creative work.”²⁴⁶ The countering forces of the chaotic enter the cosmology of Proverbs without any clear indication of its origin, but its presence reflects what Frydrych describes as a ‘dualistic battle’ between the forces of creative wisdom and destructive chaos, one played out within creation but which has its origins and end beyond it as well.²⁴⁷ However, this is not to deny the monotheistic imagery of God, and the primacy of God over any image of wisdom (personified or otherwise), plus both God and wisdom’s superiority over chaos and folly maintains that monotheistic stance of God as creator absolute.²⁴⁸ It is thus that the locale of wisdom is very much in creation

²⁴⁵ Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, 15.

²⁴⁶ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 87. Frydrych discusses the figure of Wisdom and notes how she maintains her God-likeness yet independence from God while still not being ascribed a god in the polytheistic mode. She is also not considered of God in the hypostatic mode as would be later drawn; where Wisdom’s identity is found in Christ (e.g. 1Cor 1:24). This is not addressed in this project as such, except to note that there has been an evolving understanding of personified wisdom throughout the history of the Hebraic then Christian faiths. Further, as Murphy suggests, by certain understanding, it is possible to be fair to the historical meaning of the text as it sits within the OT as well as allowing for its continual development in the NT and beyond. Murphy, "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," 5-6; *The Tree of Life*, 146-147.

²⁴⁷ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 88-93.

²⁴⁸ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 92-94.

and in the ongoing activity of creation, but it is beyond it as well and, further, its fullest expressions and rewards are found in God alone.²⁴⁹

This conception is important as it lays the groundwork for a thoroughly theological aspect of wisdom. Central to this thesis is the notion that wisdom in Proverbs is inherently prudential, however, this does not make it entirely a human activity apart from any theological conception. It necessarily (according to Proverbs) cannot be – if one is to grasp the truth of things, then one is going to have to apply a certain attentiveness to created reality, the world we live in, that is intrinsically theistic. In a sense this is a re-iteration of what has been stated earlier (particularly section 1.2). However, the stress here is the more overt attention to the theistic dimension that can be gleaned in the scope of prudential wisdom. Proverbs explicitly states on a number of occasions and at key points, predominantly through the ‘fear of the Lord’ idiom,²⁵⁰ that the search for wisdom originates and ends in God. Most notably the all-important introductory stanzas of 1:1-7 have at their crown such a statement:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.²⁵¹

Given the discussion had to this point, and the cosmology put forward by Proverbs, such a notion is entirely logical. The introductory stanza mentions a number of prudential aspects of wisdom such as discretion, vision and knowledge (Prov 1:2), and Proverbs encourages that ‘learning and skill’ in such things can be gained (1:3), but the complete depth of such learnings can only be found if such tasks are found in God. As Van Leeuwen states it, Prov 1:3 “is the book’s motto and states its theological theme.”²⁵² Brown points out this verse is a “*leitmotif* of proverbial wisdom” and “is presented as a comprehensive intellectual virtue. It marks the

²⁴⁹ As Frydrych reminds us, wisdom mediates true understanding, but does not generate its consequences. Yahweh alone is responsible for the nature of the blessings that comes from accepting wisdom. Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 91. It is this sentiment which is also found in the cry of Job 28:12.

²⁵⁰ The phrase occurs fourteen times throughout Proverbs. In addition, there are a lengthy number of statements of what the Lord loves and abhors which also points to the importance of Yahweh in the compression of proverbial wisdom. A comprehensive list can be found in Michael V. Fox, "The Epistemology of the Book of Proverbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 4 (2007): 679.

²⁵¹ It can also be pointed out that the conclusion of Proverbs also has the ‘good Woman’ being praised for ‘fearing the Lord’ (Prov 31:30). As Perdue states it, such a bracketing forms a “major inclusio for the entire book of Proverbs.” Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*, 49.

²⁵² Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 33. See also Whybray who points to v. 7 being a “‘motto’ summing up the teaching of the whole book.” *Proverbs*, 17.

starting point as well as the end point of the journey of wisdom.”²⁵³ As is Brown’s outlook overall, he highlights that such an assertion points to the disposition one must hold if they are going to appropriate the “repertoire of virtues”²⁵⁴ that are made on offer. This disposition, Brown highlights, sits in a relational dimension and speaks to the totality of the person. He states:

“The fear of the Lord” introduces a relational dimension to the list of virtues that grounds this catalogue squarely within the parameters of normative character. Whereas the list of virtues delineates the external contours of ethical character, the “fear” of God deals fundamentally with the heart and center of character, namely the position of the person *in relation* to God. A position of humble, receptive reverence, an acknowledgement that all wisdom is divinely generated.²⁵⁵

Another key expression of the same sentiment is found in the very next chapter, particularly 2:1-6. The chapter starts with the familiar call from the parent/teacher for the attentive youth to take heed of his words which provide both the pathway to wisdom and includes wisdom itself (2:1-2). Verses 3-4 point to a disposition of character that one is to attain and the language and tense is conditional;

if you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding [good sense];
if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden treasures²⁵⁶

These verses clearly express the attitude the pupil should have, one that not only seeks out the things of wisdom, but does so with a depth of awareness of the sort of value it entails. Further, being like ‘hidden treasure’, it will require activity built on that disposition to find. What is the outcome of such conditional statements? In the words of Prov 2:5, it is a grasp of “fear of the Lord” and “knowledge of God.” Fox in his examination of this chapter makes the point that, “whereas we would expect the quest for wisdom to culminate in the finding of wisdom, this verse makes an even greater claim. The promised outcome is religious enlightenment: the understanding

²⁵³ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 28.

²⁵⁴ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 28.

²⁵⁵ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 28-29 (emphasis in the original).

²⁵⁶ My emphasis. Squared bracket translation my own based on word study in section 2.1.

of the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God.”²⁵⁷ Fox’s comments on the verse that follows is particularly illuminating. Proverbs states in 2:6:

For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding [good sense].

As Fox notes “Wisdom engenders mature piety because God is the source of wisdom, and in seeking it you are in effect seeking him.”²⁵⁸ He goes on to state that, as is typical of Proverbs and the wisdom literature in general, this does not equate to a form of verbal revelation as one would witness, for example, among the Prophets.²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, there is a meeting between human and divine and it is one that advances to a mature form of “reasoned, cognitive conscience.”²⁶⁰ Fox continues, “hence fear of God ... is the object of understanding (2:5a) and is defined by the parallel as a form of knowledge (2:5b). With wisdom, fear of God becomes conscience, and inner sense of right and wrong and a desire to do what is right.”²⁶¹ Fox goes on to cite the Franciscan Dermot Cox who provides a point of view that is particularly pertinent to our discussion. He states that ‘fear of God’ is:

A form of conscience that calls for an intellectual adhesion to a principle, the divine order, the concept of goodness of life, and this is a guarantee of ‘success’. ... It is a state of mind, not an action; it is almost synonymous with knowledge (especially in Prov 1-9).²⁶²

That said, it should be pointed out that this notion of ‘fear of the Lord’ is not simply an inner state of mind or character trait with no outward expression. Clifford is one who seems to stress a more ritualistic image of the ‘fear of the Lord’ motif. According to Clifford, and based on the conception found in the ANE broadly,²⁶³ he states that “‘fear of a god’ does not refer primarily to an emotion or a general

²⁵⁷ Michael V. Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 2 (1994): 237-238.

²⁵⁸ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 238.

²⁵⁹ Here one needs to be aware of what is meant by ‘revelation’. I hold that the lack of explicit verbal revelation does not deny revelation, that being a form of divine disclosure, entirely. As is being articulated both here and above, though it is not always an easy concept to capture in Proverbs, the divine is revealed in the very fabric of created reality and in the virtuous formation of character. For similar discussion see Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 218-225. Fox is more circumspect in his understanding of revelation in this mode, but seems to fundamentally hold the same premise. For fuller reflection on revelation in particular see Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 946-962.

²⁶⁰ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 238.

²⁶¹ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 238.

²⁶² Dermot Cox, "Fear of Conscience?: *Yir'at YHWH* in Proverbs 1-9," in *Studia Hierosolymitana III*, ed. Giovanni C. Bottini (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1982), 89.

²⁶³ Based on Clifford’s premises as articulated in his introduction, *Proverbs*, 8-19.

reverent attitude. Rather it means revering a particular deity by performing the god's rituals and obeying the god's commands." He then warns that the "modern readers need to recall that ancient religion was regarded as something one did rather than something one felt. Doing one's duties were part of fearing God."²⁶⁴ This perspective is duly noted, and it is fair to say that Proverbs, though it does not say much regarding cultic activity, does nonetheless acknowledge it. However, and contra to Clifford's observation, it does so only in a certain way. Prov 21:3 is a particularly pertinent example which simply states that "to do what is righteous and just" is preferable to Yahweh than cultic sacrifice.²⁶⁵ Not that religious activity in and of itself is unimportant to Proverbs,²⁶⁶ but the moral disposition of the person is vital. In this case we are also reminded that 'righteousness' itself, which tends to be used in such references, is not simply a state of simple external piety either. Lyu's study on the concept of righteousness within the context of Proverbs specifically provides an excellent definition:

Righteousness is the all-encompassing quality of human or divine character in toto above and beyond specific behaviours, which is actualized as rectitude in moral choices and fairness and benevolence in social transactions. A righteousness person embodies righteousness as an internalized and pervasive character trait, cultivates the desire to be righteous, and finds pleasure when that desire is met.²⁶⁷

To bring the above together and into the wider discussion, it can be seen that the end that is *life* in its total goodness will be found by those who acquire prudential wisdom. Further, such wisdom belongs to the human but is beyond it as well. Moreover, the person's ability to follow such a path is not entirely within the human capacity and, more the issue, it is not a given that what might seem like the 'right path' to humans is in fact so. As Prov 14:12 warns; "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death." Drawing on this, Frydrych well warns, "the sage who acquires wisdom using his God-given senses should not think that

²⁶⁴ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 35-36.

²⁶⁵ Also 15:8-9; 15:29; 21:27. This also echoes a sentiment found elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Isa 1:11-15; Amos 5:22; Mal 1:12)

²⁶⁶ As Frydrych states in his discussion on such verses, "at least on one occasion (Prov 3:9) the sages encourage involvement with the cult, and this, in combination with the earlier observed systematic use of Yahweh, renders the simple conclusion that the sages rejected the cult untenable." *Living Under the Sun*, 95.

²⁶⁷ Lyu, *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, 13-14. See also fn. 125 above.

such wisdom can make God dispensable.”²⁶⁸ Frydrych, citing Prov 16:2; 16:9; 20:24 as well as the aforementioned 14:12, suggests that such expressions point to “general limits” to human capacities, “consequently the wise person is never entirely self-reliant ... it is from this basic anthropological perspective that the *fear of Yahweh* emerges as a cornerstone of proverbial wisdom.”²⁶⁹ It is a cornerstone that is necessary because, though there is tremendous capacity for the good in the human being, it will not automatically reach that potential without formation in wise living that, according to Proverbs at least, can only be conceived as truly wise when the theological conception is imbued in it.

This allows the makeup of the moral outlook of Proverbs to be further identified. Firstly, it is teleological in that the ultimate aim of acquiring wisdom, both its prudential facets as well as the other virtues that work in concert with it, is life in its fullest. Secondly, this notion of *fullness of life* can include that which pertains to ‘natural’ goods, but an appreciation of the theological imagery of Proverbs recognises that the fullness of this *telos* is necessarily theistic as well. How this can be more fruitfully interpreted will be discussed in section 4.2 below where the notion of infused virtues is taken up. In anticipation of that discussion, what can be noted here is that Proverbs presents an elevation of what would appear as prudential pursuit of ‘natural goods’ (such as good familial and political relationships, adequate sustenance, just dealings in business) to a good which serves and is served by the human relationship to God.

²⁶⁸ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 129.

²⁶⁹ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 129.

3. Truthful Vision and the Parts of Prudence that Aid It

3.1 Truthful Vision: Seeing Reality Rightly

One common thread running through the discussion to this point rests on the importance of seeing reality right. It was noted at the beginning of this project that the heart of the moral life rests on a truthful grasp of reality, which can be termed ‘truthful vision’. We recall again what was quoted there from Pieper:

The intrinsic goodness of man – and that is the same as saying his true humanness – consists in this, that “reason perfected in the cognition of truth” shall inwardly shape and imprint his volition and action. In this fundamental principle of Thomas Aquinas is summed up the whole doctrine of prudence.²⁷⁰

The contemporary theologian Paul Wadell, from whom the term ‘truthful vision’ has been borrowed, likewise states that “there is an intrinsic connection between truthful vision and virtuous action because we cannot *act rightly* unless we first *see rightly*.”²⁷¹ Doing so, however, is not as easy as it may seem. Wadell continues by pointing out that seeing truthfully is not as straightforward as “opening one’s eyes, because we can open our eyes and still fail to see;”²⁷² what is needed is a depth of attentiveness that takes in the whole human fabric and thus pertains to the formation of character in the fullest sense. Similarly, Proverbs invites the reader to form right vision of the world, but also points to the notion that to fully apprehend reality is not necessarily straightforward and we can be easily deceived. It is thus that Clifford observes that, “Proverbs assumes the existence of a world created by God with a certain order or inherent dynamism. People perforce live in God’s world, but they do not by that fact know *how to live* in that world. There is much they do not know, much that is hidden.”²⁷³ That fuller knowledge necessary for the fullness of life is not simply a technical or empirical apprehension of things, but an appropriation of the

²⁷⁰ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 8.

²⁷¹ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 122.

²⁷² Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 122. Wadell draws on Iris Murdoch to inform such conclusions; “The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts” in *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 77-104. Also referred to is Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*, 30-47.

²⁷³ Richard J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 50.

truth of how the world, as created by God, is. Thus, as Clifford adds, “knowledge in Proverbs is not information but a way of seeing reality.”²⁷⁴

Aquinas himself likewise notes that right apprehension of reality is an important aspect of prudence. This is captured particularly in his description of the various parts of prudence and allied virtues that are bound to it (what can also be called ‘sub-virtues’).²⁷⁵ He also, in a similar vein to Proverbs, points out that our natural existence gives us a certain propensity towards seeing reality rightly and thus developing prudence, but doing so does not occur by effortless course. In describing one of these parts of prudence, that being memory (*memoria*), Aquinas, citing Cicero, states: “The aptitude for prudence is from nature, yet its perfection is from practice or from grace. And so Cicero observes that memory is not developed by nature alone, but owes much to art and diligence.”²⁷⁶ This observation pertaining to the sub-virtue of *memoria* is the first of three parts of prudence that will be examined. Here I will follow Pieper in taking three of the more significant parts of prudence as outlined by Aquinas, that being memory (*memoria*), teachability (*docilitas*) and nimble decisiveness (*solertia*).²⁷⁷ In each of the three areas I will address an understanding of the ‘sub-virtue’ as understood in the Thomistic mode, highlight some key features of it and address its relationship to the virtue of prudence in general. Secondly, I will look at how this concept is expressed in Proverbs. In doing so, the benefit of the aspect of prudence in question will be unpacked while also allowing the teachings of Proverbs to enrich such an understanding.

²⁷⁴ Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature*, 50. See also Fox’s discussion on the construal of knowledge in Proverbs which expounds on this in Fox, “The Epistemology of the Book of Proverbs.” A newer version of the same article appears in *Proverbs 10-31*, 963-976.

²⁷⁵ Aquinas develops a rather technical understanding of ‘part’ in *ST*, II-II, 48. Later, while still referring to prudence as a virtue, he describes a list of 3 ‘allies’ (*adiunctus*) of prudence being well-advisedness (*euboulia*), sound judgment (*synesis*) and a sharpness of mind to deal with exceptional circumstances (*gnome*); *ST*, II-II, 51. These three concepts in particular capture the notion of a right apprehension of reality, but also find expression within eight ‘parts’ of prudence found in II-II, 49. For the sake of staying consistent with Aquinas, both terms are noted here. However, for the sake of simplicity, ‘sub-virtue’, ‘part’ and similar will be used interchangeably to refer to such principles.

²⁷⁶ *ST*, II-II, 49.1 ad 2 (Blackfriars translation).

²⁷⁷ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 10-20. Direct literal translation of the Latin terms can be problematic as the concept being held within them might be lost in its modern usage. For this reason the Latin will be generally referred to. The translations used here are based on Blackfriars translation of the *Summa* and Pieper himself. The term *solertia* is the more difficult of the three. Pieper states it as being the virtue of “objectivity in unexpected situations.” Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 16. The notion will be unpacked below.

3.2 *Memoria*

3.2.1 'True-to-Being' and 'True-to-Self' Understanding

On the face of it, the importance of memory as a part of the virtue of prudence is not especially complicated. Recollection of past experience helps one formulate an impression of the present and thus allows one to navigate a path to a future goal. Further, it seems that memory is an entirely natural and involuntary activity, thus it might seem of little use to discuss it as a part of the formation of a virtue as there is, correspondingly, little we as moral agents can do about it. Indeed, one of the objections in the relevant article on *memoria* in the *Summa Theologiae* points out that, unlike prudence more broadly, it would seem that memory should not be considered a special part of prudence because it happens as a matter of course and is not something that can be “perfected by practice” as applies to the virtues in general.²⁷⁸

Aquinas’s response helps us understand the importance of what we can term ‘right memory’. It has already been indicated above that memory, as a cognitive function, is not perfect by nature – the sheer fact that one can improve recollection of things by certain ‘aids’ points to this (and Aquinas, citing Cicero and Aristotle, lists four methods to achieving just that).²⁷⁹ The implication is that our memories can be distorted or obscured. There are two aspects which can be held in this regard. Firstly, we can think of memory as simply the ability to recall the experience of our past, including how we may have dealt with moral dilemma and the like. How did we navigate such events? When confronted with a situation where we were required to favour one particular moral norm at the expense of another, how did we employ them in the right order towards the right ends? Such elements of *memoria*, which are important to developing a prudent character, seem to be the focus of Aquinas in the reply of II-II, 49.1. It is, in this vein, that *memoria* is an important aspect of coming to moral maturity. This topic is more closely examined in the next section but, put simply here, failing to utilise and foster right memory is akin to failing to ‘learn from our experiences’ and, as such, there is a sense of culpability associated with such a neglect.

²⁷⁸ *ST*, II-II, 49.1 obj. 2.

²⁷⁹ *ST*, II-II, 49.1 ad. 2.

Secondly, and not totally distinct, there is a more complete sense of memory that applies to the self that is more than simple cognitive recollection. It is related to what Pieper terms ‘true-to-being memory’. Pieper describes this principle as such:

True-to-being character of memory means simply that it “contains” in itself real things and events as they really are and were. The falsification of recollection by the assent of negation of the will is memory’s worst foe; for it most directly frustrates its primary function: to be a “container” of the truth of real things.²⁸⁰

Pieper is pointing out that the human person not only can struggle to ‘remember’ in a technical sense, but that the human condition is such that, whether by wilful movement or a negation of it, we falsify or distort our recollection of things. For example, I might have been asked to give money to a viable and sound cause but chose not to for selfish reasons and by negating my will that would otherwise be moved to do so. I might ‘recall’ later that my reasoning was based on lack of means or a perception that the charity involved was questionable in its practices and the like. I might falsely regard myself as being just and generous in character though my actions in a certain point in time did not demonstrate those virtues at all. Such an example is simplistic but, as Pieper notes, the problem is that such falsification of our memories of is often unnoticeable. As such, right memory, or ‘true-to-being memory’, requires diligent and active work at developing a character committed to the good and to the truth of things. As he states:

There is no more insidious way for error to establish itself than by this falsification of the memory through slight retouches, displacements, discolorations, omissions, shifts of accent. Nor can such falsification be quickly detected by the probing conscience, even when it applies itself to this task. The honesty of the memory can be ensured only by a rectitude of the whole human being which purifies the most hidden roots of volition.²⁸¹

As such, we can understand this concept of memory as holding to a clear-sightedness of the self, a ‘true-to-self memory’ as much as true recollection of events and entities outside one’s self. As McCabe states it, “good sense²⁸² is a kind of clear-sightedness about our problems which enables us to put them in proper perspective, to see what

²⁸⁰ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 15.

²⁸¹ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 15.

²⁸² The term McCabe prefers to use in reference to the virtue of prudence; McCabe, *God Still Matters*, 152-165. See also 2.1.2 above.

is more important and what is less so. It also, and most importantly, involves a certain clear-sightedness about myself.”²⁸³

Given that, it is quite understandable that such a practice does not come easily. Pieper goes on to state that the ‘knowing’ required by prudence is metaphysical in its scope rather than purely psychological and, as such, is not acquired easily. Thus, it is rightly described as a *bonum arduum*, a steep good.²⁸⁴

There is another layer to note in regard to right memory. Though the above is deeply personal, there is a notion of shared or collective memory that can be (and evidently clearly is at times) falsified or suppressed from a people’s viewpoint. For example, Australia’s inadequate attention to Aboriginal occupancy and heritage for much of its colonised history allowed for political imprudence and injustice to develop in the nation’s formal dealings. Turkish failure to recognise the genocide of Armenians during World War I has done similar.²⁸⁵ In the play *Paradise Lost* by Clifford Odets, the character Leo Gordon is listening to a radio announcer’s upbeat nationalistic commentary celebrating the 15th anniversary of Armistice Day. Leo, holding to the memory of a loss endured from the war, recalls in a lamented tone “We cancel our experience. That is an American habit.”²⁸⁶ These words speak to how a failure to attend to ‘right memory’ frustrates the role experience can have in serving the virtues, both in a collective and individual sense. In either case (collective or individual), morally sound activity guided through the virtue of prudence is impossible when our memory is suppressed or obscured.²⁸⁷

3.2.2 Proverbs and the Concept of *Memoria*

This deeper notion of *memoria* is also esteemed in Proverbs though the terminology is not used. It does not describe memory as a particular psychological conception in the technical sense, but the importance of ‘true-to-being’ and ‘true-to-self’ memory is nonetheless present. This is captured in a number of ways. One has already been

²⁸³ McCabe, *God Still Matters*, 196.

²⁸⁴ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 16.

²⁸⁵ Dilaver Arıkan Açar and Inan Rüma, "External Pressure and Turkish Discourse on 'Recognition of the Armenian Genocide'," *Journal of Southeast European & Black Sea Studies* 7, no. 3 (2007).

²⁸⁶ From Act I. See discussion in Harold Cantor, *Clifford Odets, Playwright-poet*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 33-34.

²⁸⁷ One author commenting on this describes such a vice as the “mystification” of memory; Judith W. Kay, "Getting Egypt out of the People: Aquinas’s Contributions to Liberation," in *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives*, ed. G. Simon Harak, vol. Moral Traditions & Moral Arguments (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996).

mentioned regarding the Hebraic concept of heart (*lēb*).²⁸⁸ The concept of *lēb* is an encompassing one that captures the entire inner motivations, sensibilities, and dispositions of the person. Though generally representative of emotions in modern Western settings, in the Hebrew Scriptures the heart is associated more so with the intellectual capacities of reason. Having said that, it should not be confused with mere psychological functionality either; the Hebrew image of heart holds an integrated conception of the faculties of the human mind.²⁸⁹ Included in it would be the concept of memory as discussed above. Though the sages of Israel may not necessarily see memory as being distinct from other capacities associated with the ‘inner workings’ of the human being, nevertheless, the way the concept of heart is used in Proverbs provides for a useful point of reflection in relation to the understanding of the sub-virtue of *memoria* being considered here.

For example, Prov 27:19 states:

As face mirrors face in water,
so the heart reflects the person.

This somewhat cryptic verse in the Hebrew is translated in various ways and the NABRE translation is used here as it is closest to the literal.²⁹⁰ The notion is that one’s face is essentially invisible to the self unless one sees it reflected back to them. Likewise, the person is known by seeing into the inner reflections of the heart, the inner mind.²⁹¹ As Murphy states it, “the heart serves as a mirror, and when you look honestly and directly into it, you attain greater knowledge.”²⁹² Murphy also indicates that there is ambiguity into whose heart is being looked into. It could be one’s own or the other. Neither is definitive nor should they be mutually exclusive.²⁹³ As such, the former is possible and, thus, inference can be found in two senses. Firstly, outward appearance is not the measure of a person, both as we see ourselves and as others

²⁸⁸ See section 2.2.3.

²⁸⁹ S. Schroer and T. Staubli, *Body Symbolism in the Bible*, trans., L.M. Maloney (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 41-55.

²⁹⁰ See Fox for a list of typical interpretations of this verse, *Proverbs 10-31*, 812-813.

²⁹¹ It is also interesting to note that the virtue of prudence was often depicted in mediaeval artwork with figures holding a mirror. See for example Francesco Pesellino, *The Seven Virtues*, ca. 1450, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham AL.

²⁹² Murphy, *Proverbs*, 209.

²⁹³ Various translations emphasise different modes. NRSV for example indicates that it is another person’s heart, NIV states it as one’s own heart. The NABRE used above holds to the ambiguity found in the Hebrew Text.

perceive us. Secondly, and subsequently, if one is to have a true appreciation of the self, a ‘true-to-being’ apprehension, the heart is where the examination must lie.

The importance of the notion of ‘heart’ can also be found in observing how Proverbs describes those who lack it. Among characteristics that are found in the fool, we see that deception and misapprehension is high amongst them. For example, Prov 14:8 states:

The wisdom of the shrewd enlightens their way,
but the folly of fools is deceit.²⁹⁴

This verse illustrates a typical pattern found in Proverbs where wisdom and folly are juxtaposed. In this case, it indicates that prudential wisdom²⁹⁵ illuminates the way of one’s life, while the vice of the fool is found in their dishonesty. As Fox points out, the deceit in question in such a verse is primarily of the self. He states, “Since the A-line alludes to wisdom’s benefit to its possessor, the B-line presumably speaks of folly’s harm to its possessor. Hence the deceit in question is self-delusion.”²⁹⁶

Elsewhere Proverbs points out that the one who has understanding (*těbûnâ*) has clear path to follow, but those that lack ‘heart’ fail to recognise folly for what it is. Prov 15:21 for example states:

Folly is a joy to one who has no sense [*hăsar-lěb*, lit. lacks heart],
but a person of understanding walks straight ahead.

Davis’ analysis of such concepts points out, “the exercise of prudence is so basic that to be without it is to lack the identifying element of humanity, namely, a ‘heart’ or ‘mind’.”²⁹⁷ Davis continues, while referring to Prov 14:8 as cited previously, that the prudent life explicated in Proverbs asks one to be self-critical, “The realism that

²⁹⁴ Once again the NABRE translation is used here as it is closer to the Hebrew and is in keeping with most scholarly commentators. The NRSV, for example, omits the third person indicative pronoun and renders deceit (Heb: *mîrmâ*) as a verb (lit. misleads), one that could be held as transitive. As such, it can infer that deceit is simply a by-product of folly rather than being constitutive of it. Murphy provides a useful comment on this verse: “Wisdom means the ability to see one’s way, since it calls for foresight and prudence. ... [In contrast,] folly is described as, even identified with, deception.” Murphy, *Proverbs*, 104.

²⁹⁵ In this instance the prudential expression is found in the word ‘*ā’rûm* translated to “shrewd” in the above. Other translations use the word “clever” (e.g. NRSV) or “prudent” itself (e.g. NIV, NKJV). See also previous note and section 2.1.7 above.

²⁹⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 575.

²⁹⁷ Davis, “Preserving Virtues,” 190.

underlies good judgment begins with a rigorous attitude towards the self.”²⁹⁸ As such, the teachings of Proverbs are very clear that a failure to seek ‘true-to-self’ apprehension of reality will necessarily inhibit prudential living.

It is not surprising, then, that Proverbs instructs the young student to, above all other things, guard one’s heart, for fullness of life is found therein (Prov 4:23). Van Leeuwen’s reflections on this are worth noting:

Even though the heart can stand in metonymy for the whole person in its “mental,” inner aspect (what my heart thinks is what I think), there is in the admonition to guard one’s heart an awareness of the mysterious reflexivity that humans possess: I can look at myself and make even my inmost self the object of care, reflection, improvement, and betterment.²⁹⁹

As can be seen, Proverbs does not describe ‘truthful vision’ as including memory in the same terms as those found in Aquinas, but the deeper sense of *memoria* discussed previous, namely that indicated by ‘true-to-being’ and, even more so, ‘true-to-self’ memory is certainly present. Acquiring prudential wisdom is wrapped up in a sense of the self that is deeply truthful. Conversely, deception, and in particular self-deception, is found inherently in imprudent and foolish lives.

As noted previous, *memoria* as a part of prudence also has a collective dimension. A collective underpinning is certainly found in Proverbs that correlates with this. For example, much of the teaching of Proverbs rests on a notion that what is being passed on is a collective wisdom, a collective memory of prudential living as it were, gathered such that those who follow can ‘recall rightly’ the truth of things and thus form virtuous character.³⁰⁰ Correspondingly, the teaching being imparted in Proverbs is not only for the betterment of the individual, but it benefits the community at large. The communal dimension of prudence has been discussed previously (2.2.2 above) where it was noted that the prudence of individuals and the collective/communal good are intrinsically entwined. Indeed, according to texts such as Prov 14:34, it is the moral and spiritual character of a people in the collective sense that is the measure of a nation’s greatness rather than its power, wealth and influence which

²⁹⁸ Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 190.

²⁹⁹ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 61.

³⁰⁰ This is not an enterprise unique to Israel. As Von Rad states “Every nation with a culture has devoted itself to the care and the literary cultivation of experiential knowledge and has carefully gathered its statements, especially in the form of sentence-type proverbs.” Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 4.

would be the more obvious criteria. As such, though Proverbs is largely addressed to the individual and a sense of ‘truthful vision’ is encouraged on that level, a communal dimension is always implied and surrounds such notions.³⁰¹

On both the individual and communal level, prudential living requires a ‘true-to-self memory’, one that sees the reality of the self as it has and continues to engage with existence in its fullest sense. Proverbs in its own mode of expression supports the importance of self-awareness and a ‘true-to-self memory’ and, with some frequency, also reminds the reader of the self-deception that shadows the fool. According to Proverbs, as Von Rad states, “the fool miscalculates his potentiality; he lives in deception (14:9). For this reason, folly is always something which endangers life (10:21; 18:7).” Thus, the acquiring of prudential wisdom requires a rigorous attitude toward the self and, further, spills over into the virtue of being humble and teachable, notions captured in the part of prudence termed *docilitas* which is taken up presently.

3.3 *Docilitas*

After *memoria*, the next necessary part of prudence to be examined is understood as *docilitas*. It rests on the idea that one way to aid the acquisition of the virtues is by being taught them via the wisdom and example of others. It is not the only way and certainly not the complete way for it is well noted that exercising the virtues in the activity of one’s life is necessary to habituate them into the character of one’s being. Nevertheless, for Aquinas, because prudence is concerned with the particulars of activity in the vast contexts of our lives, the ways of prudence above any other virtue seeks to gain the most in learning from others for it exposes us to a far greater sphere of experience than we could acquire with self-reflection alone.³⁰² Likewise, the Book of Proverbs esteems the reader to be a student of wisdom, attentive to instruction in prudential living. Of all the aspects of the virtue of prudence this thesis examines, this is perhaps the one that is most prevalent in the Book of Proverbs. As Aquinas quoting Proverbs 3:5 indicates, one needs to be cautious when “leaning on their own

³⁰¹ For discussion on this see Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 136-148.

³⁰² *ST*, II-II, 49.3.

prudence.”³⁰³ A good part of Proverbs’ instructions are on where one can ‘lean’ rightly and thus learn the ways of wise living.

3.3.1 *Docilitas*: Acquiring the Virtues by Being Open and Teachable

When discussing notions of acquiring virtues, invariably most scholars in the field will address the issue of *habitus*. Included within the concept of *habitus* is the idea that one acquires the virtues and, more specifically, has their character shaped in accordance with the virtues in the ongoing and repeated activity that concurs with the virtue in question in the particulars of life. In this sense, the virtues are expressions of enacted choices an individual makes over a period of time. There is a certain relationship between speculative reason and practical reason here. A person may indeed have a grasp of the good in a speculative sense, but, through the exercising of prudence, the truly virtuous is able to enact speculative knowledge of the good in the particulars of one’s life such that the virtue habituates itself into the character of the agent. It is this which provides a depth to the notion of *habitus* as it relates to the virtuous life.

Though *habitus* is often translated as ‘habit’, it is not simply through disengaged or mindless repetitive activity that one acquires the virtues nor is it a form of what Pinckaers terms an empty “psychological automatism.”³⁰⁴ Pinckaers cautions seeing the virtuous life as being something acquired through repetitive action alone or the ‘automatic’ activity built on simple notions of habit because such a rendering diminishes the moral weight that formed virtue should have.³⁰⁵ Rather, virtues are acquired by deliberate, formed inner conviction which moves one to morally sound activity born out of sound character – i.e. it is prudential activity which itself forms the virtuous person. Keenan commenting on the same article by Pinckaers states; “by prudence, an agent becomes what she or he intentionally does. ... Humans are not simply products of their actions, rather, virtues are acquired by intended, desired, prudential activity.”³⁰⁶

Such reflections by Keenan and Pinckaers are built on the thoughts of Aquinas who, in simple terms, taught that the agent’s prudential engagement of particular activities

³⁰³ *ST*, II-II, 49.3.

³⁰⁴ Servais Pinckaers, "Virtue is not a Habit," *Cross Currents* 12, no. 1 (1962): 81.

³⁰⁵ Pinckaers, "Virtue is not a Habit," 65-68.

³⁰⁶ Keenan, "The Virtue of Prudence," 265, 270 n.65.

occasions the further development of dispositions present within the agent. As Keenan notes, “Thomas’s appropriation of Avicenna’s formula for the acquisition of virtue through ‘reflection and exercise’ (*stadium et exercitium*) is evident here: to be virtuous requires right exercise of immanent activity.”³⁰⁷ As such, prudence, like any other virtue, is obtained and perfected through practice in deliberation and action. When we consider a more nuanced approach to this notion of practice, deliberation and action, as suggested by Keenan and Pinckaers, we can begin to conceive that formed virtue is not simply acting automatically, but developing what can be termed moral maturity.

The cardinal virtue of prudence in particular is dependent on one’s experience in moral deliberation; experience which is found over a lifetime, which is why, according to Aquinas, it is seldom found in the young.³⁰⁸ As such the quality of prudence is necessarily tied to maturity of age and the necessity of long years of experience.³⁰⁹ Though the young may have a degree of prudence, Thomistic thought would suggest there is a correlation between age in years and the capacity for having a character more fully imbued with prudence.

However, simply living long enough to be considered ‘mature in age’ is not enough. To again draw on Pinckaers, even simply repeating certain acts for a length of time does not necessarily lead to the fully formed character. It is thus that Pinckaers notes that one does not acquire the virtues by simple habit, but by a fuller notion of ‘moral education’.³¹⁰ To be ‘educated’ into the moral life one has to be teachable and it is this which represents the crux of *docilitas*. Aquinas teaches that the sub-virtue of *docilitas* allows one to be humble enough to learn the lessons that life has to offer; to be open and teachable to the ways that prudential living looks such that one can indeed mature into being prudent. As such, it also affords an avenue for acquiring prudence (and indeed an understanding of the virtues overall) for the young such that they can truly find moral maturity as they grow into physical maturity.

³⁰⁷ Keenan, "The Virtue of Prudence," 265. Also *ST*, I-II, 65.1; II-II, 47.14; II-II, 47.16.

³⁰⁸ *ST*, II-II, 47.14 ad 3. Here Aquinas is also making the distinction between infused prudence, which as an act of Grace can aid even the very young and those with impaired capacity for reason to find salvation, and acquired prudence which necessarily requires maturity of age. The former finds expression in the latter as the agent matures but only with time and growth.

³⁰⁹ *ST*, II-II, 47.15 ad 2.

³¹⁰ Pinckaers, "Virtue is not a Habit," 77-80.

Of course the notion of *docilitas* has a multi-layered aspect. It is most directly translated as ‘docility’ which potentially has the undesirable connotation of what Pieper terms “simple minded zealotry of the ‘good pupil’.”³¹¹ Rather, as Pieper continues,

what is meant [by *docilitas*] is the kind of open-mindedness which recognizes the true variety of things and situations to be experienced and does not cage itself in any presumption of deceptive knowledge. What is meant is the ability to take advice, sprung not from any vague “modesty,” but simply from the desire for real understanding (which, however, necessarily includes genuine humility).³¹²

The aim of moral maturity is ultimately to be able to recognise and exercise the virtues in one’s own particular life. Speaking from an educators perspective, Pinckaers suggests that the aim of moral education is to “acquire enough maturity to take formation into his own hands and to trace out his path to moral perfection by himself,”³¹³ i.e. to be able to recognise vice and virtue in the reality of their own lives and the context they occupy. However, such a place of maturity requires a prior formation that strikes a balance between the need of ‘personalism’ on the one hand and moral rigour that will not “abandon the other person ... to his own inexperience”³¹⁴ on the other.

Returning to *docilitas* in particular, what is imaged here is the realisation that a good moral pupil will be able to ‘think for themselves’, that is, to be malleable enough to realise the variety of life situations and have the character to adapt moral understanding to it. It also, however, requires at a more fundamental level that one be open enough to being taught in the first place. In the Thomistic tradition, this is intrinsically part of acquiring prudence. If one finds oneself holding the position of being a ‘know-it-all’, then it is quite likely that the virtue of prudence is in fact at some distance away from being acquired. The truly prudent is able to hold the somewhat counterintuitive notion of needing to be aware of their lack of wisdom and knowledge such that they are able to seek it from outside of themselves. Thus, it necessarily requires seeking and recognising what Aquinas would term good counsel. Indeed, it is part of what would be the first step in the ‘activity of reason’ as

³¹¹ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 16.

³¹² Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 16.

³¹³ Pinckaers, "Virtue is not a Habit," 80.

³¹⁴ Pinckaers, "Virtue is not a Habit," 81.

indicated in *ST* II-II, 47.8. Prudence includes the ability to seek good counsel and deliberate well with it, to form judgements about such counsel and inquiry, and to then command to action in accordance with that judgement.³¹⁵

To put this into the language of ‘truthful vision’ noted above, seeing reality rightly will only be possible if one is open enough to being taught how to do so in the first place. One’s own vision will only go so far. To acquire prudence, one needs to be open to being educated in moral formation. This is not found simply in abstract notions of the good nor is such an education found in imparting a codified set of rules to perform at certain points. Moral formation is an education into moral maturity, one that allows one to become good such that they recognise it and can respond rightly in the particulars of daily activity in its infinite possibilities; and such moral maturity is one that necessarily requires *docilitas*.

3.3.2 Proverbs and the Concept of *Docilitas*

This understanding of educating one into moral maturity similarly underscores Proverbs. It has already been noted that imparting a codified set of moral rules is not the mode in which Proverbs is shaped. However, the moral life is nonetheless its underscore and education in this vein certainly seems its intent. As discussed in 2.2.2, the social setting of Proverbs is a disputed understanding. However, what is generally agreed is that the intention of Proverbs is for instruction, particularly for the young. Education in ancient Israel and throughout the Ancient Near East was devoted primarily to the task of “moral formation” or the “building of character”³¹⁶ and Proverbs, shares this aim. In agreement with Aquinas as discussed above, Proverbs suggests that prudence is seldom found in the young and they have to be formed into moral maturity in that sense. It was noted previously (in 2.2.1) that the overall progression found in Proverbs is to move ‘the student’ from a place of naïve childhood to one of moral maturity able to deal prudently with the caprices of life. The aim here is to bring this into sharper focus through the sub-virtue of *docilitas*. More specifically, we can examine how Proverbs seeks to imbue the reader with a sense of *docilitas* as part of its pedagogical framework and thus help us shape an understanding of this important part of prudence.

³¹⁵ See also *ST*, I-II, 57.6.

³¹⁶ James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale, 1998), 1.

As with the Thomistic notion of *docilitas* mentioned above, the start of wisdom is found in the ability for the pupil to have a quality of humility, to realise that they can only grasp the height of wisdom by being aware that they are, in fact, not near it in the first place. Crenshaw concludes his opening section in *The Acquisition of Knowledge in Israelite Wisdom Literature* by highlighting such a notion:

[The teachers of wisdom] never forgot that wisdom was a stage beyond knowledge and that it meant far more than the accumulation of information. Wisdom, the capacity to use information for human good, includes virtue. By virtue these scholars meant generosity and humility. Perhaps a biblical proverb best sums up what these ancient scholars seem to have meant.

Three things are too wonderful for me;
four I do not understand:
the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a snake on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a girl. (Prov 30:18–19)³¹⁷

Life's abundant mysteries evoke gratitude and reverence before the author of wisdom and truth.³¹⁸

Elsewhere in Proverbs we are reminded that deception is the vice of the fool and the wisdom of the prudent (*'ārûm*) is to understand one's way (Prov 14:8). However, this cannot be a self-created activity. Understanding one's way is not the same as self-forming one's way despite the contemporary tendency to equate the two. On the contrary, according to Proverbs, one in essence despises the self if they do not seek to be formed by those around them:

Those who ignore instruction despise themselves,
but those who heed admonition gain understanding. (Prov 15:32)

Quite simply the fool thinks they know it all, while the wise seek and, more importantly, listen to advice (12:15) even when it is not that easy to receive.

As discussed above, to be without prudence is to lack heart/understanding. If one is to overcome this lack, one needs to be willing to do so through the discipline of

³¹⁷ NRSV version is used here to remain consistent with the rest of this work. Crenshaw's original article used RSV version.

³¹⁸ Crenshaw, "The Acquisition of Knowledge in Israelite Wisdom Literature," 294.

submitting to the critical judgment of others, particularly those who not only hold authority but have intimate knowledge of you:

A fool despises a parent's instruction,
but the one who heeds admonition is prudent. (Prov 15:5)

It is worth dwelling on this verse for a moment. In section 2.2.2, the role of the 'parent's instruction' was touched on. Drawing on that again, we see that parental image implies not only a mark of authority in an abstract sense but, moreover, one who seeks to form their child in the context of a particular familial community; to maintain and enhance an existent relationship. The one who is acquiring prudential wisdom recognises that right instruction and 'admonition' will come from such a relationship.³¹⁹

Further, as Fox notes, the structure of this verse is typical of the A-B line structure. In this case we are to deduce from the B line the consequence unstated in the A line, namely that a fool will remain imprudent if they despise a 'parent's instruction'. Thus, "The fool ... very likely fancies himself 'arum 'shrewd,' 'cunning,' so the proverb targets the very quality he prides himself on."³²⁰ Fox goes on to note that the focus is not on the "chiding" a parent might instinctively express in response to poor behaviour. Rather, the reprimand implied is more considered; "instruction (discipline) and admonition (reproof) are ethical correction."³²¹ Taken as a whole, the imprudent fails to recognise the value in authoritative familial moral instruction not because they do not value 'prudence' itself (or aspects akin to it), but because they think they already have it. In contrast, one who is actually enhancing prudence knows how to accept admonition from appropriate sources.

The one truly seeking prudential wisdom not only heeds it as found in familiar environments, but will actively seek it out in the world they live. Fox's translation of Prov 15:12 provides an example of this:

³¹⁹ To draw back to Pinckaers' reflections on moral education; to educate rightly requires that "the exercise of authority and profound respect to go hand in hand." Thus it necessarily requires a relational dimension for "only an intelligent love for the person whom one is educating can find the correct formula." Pinckaers, "Virtue is not a Habit," 81.

³²⁰ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 590.

³²¹ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 590.

The impudent man does not like being rebuked.
He will not go to the wise.³²²

The verse rests on the principle that the one truly seeking prudential wisdom will find company that helps in this cause, a notion that is echoed throughout Proverbs (e.g. 12:1; 13:20; 14:7). The impudent one (Heb: *lēš* lit. prideful and scorning) does not recognise the value of wise correction and thus is dissuaded from finding company that would offer such advice. They will keep away from the wise who will have an eye to rightly point out imprudence and foolishness where they see it. In contrast, one who seeks to live wisely will understand that rebuke and correction will be part of the process, they will not only hear it as such, they will, further, ‘bed down’ and find a home in it. As 15:31 states:

The ear that heeds wholesome admonition
will lodge among the wise.

All this points to the good quality of being humble and teachable that Proverbs esteems and many other examples could be drawn.³²³ However it is the attitude that one must hold that is to be highlighted.

Prov 12:1, for example, bluntly states:

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but those who hate to be rebuked are stupid.

Here one who loves discipline (*mūsār*) is, effectively, showing right corresponding love for knowledge (*da‘at*). This knowledge is no doubt prudential and valuable to the one who would seek it and would allow them to live the good life. However, this knowledge is not the real focus of this proverb as such. The focus, rather, is on the seeker of *da‘at*. Someone who has to seek this ‘knowledge’ is not, by implication, fully wise or knowledgeable and, as such, some of his or her actions may call for correction. However, lacking wisdom or knowledge is not necessarily in and of itself a foolish or an immoral position. The virtue really being highlighted here is not knowledge (prudential or otherwise) but, rather, the attitude of being open and

³²² Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 593.

³²³ Indeed as Brown points out, all of the Solomonic collection (Prov 10:1-22:16) have a common thread of advocating the value of heeding instruction and wise advice; "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9," 155-158.

indeed appreciating reproof.³²⁴ On the other hand, he who hates reproof is ‘stupid’ regardless of what they may demonstratively know or not know. Their culpability lies in their *attitude* to learning (*mūsār*), an attitude which leads to irredeemable ignorance.³²⁵

Thus, the attitude that is in keeping with *docilitas* has an air of paradox about it. As Davis states in her reflections on Proverbs 3:5-8:

The sages address us [the readers] as newborns, challenging us to give up our adult pretensions to know just what to do. Shockingly, prudence begins with acceptance of our own ignorance; yet ignorance itself is no virtue. The sages have no praise for the intellectually lazy; only fools hate knowledge (1:22). Nonetheless, genuine prudence means recognizing how much in fact we do not know, and can never know.³²⁶

This last statement is poignant. Davis here is drawing from Prov 3:5; “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.” As mentioned above, it is the same verse that Aquinas himself uses to highlight the importance of *docilitas* to prudence. But Davis is also drawing in the greater theological notion of ‘fear of Yahweh’ which is persistent throughout Proverbs and is ‘the beginning of all wisdom’ (1:7; 9:10).³²⁷ Full and complete wisdom is only found in God, thus there will always be a knowing that is beyond us. Proverbs illustrates that a notion of *docilitas* extends to this inestimable level and informs the attitude that the student of wise living should have. As Davis puts it, “the discipline of elders is a necessary help towards prudence, but a properly rigorous attitude toward myself always proceeds from a realistic attitude toward God.”³²⁸

With the above in mind, it is not surprising that Proverbs is keen to teach the student to recognise good authority from that which is malevolent. Clifford makes the point that in Proverbs, particularly Prov 1-9, key authority figures in the parent and ‘Lady

³²⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 546.

³²⁵ This is particularly seen in the later section of the ‘Hezekian collection’ where the one who is a fool in character is well described, but an even more dire character is highlighted who ‘knows it all’ and thus has no need for humble learning (Prov 26:12, 29:20). As Brown states it, “The Hezekian collection paints the fool on the lower end of the sapiential scale, one who deserves rebuke and harsh discipline by the wise ... In contrast, however, there is the presumptuous individual for whom there is no hope ... Compared to the sin of presumption, folly is only a relative flaw.” Brown, “The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9,” 173.

³²⁶ Davis, “Preserving Virtues,” 191.

³²⁷ See more detailed discussion of this in section 2.2.4 above.

³²⁸ Davis, “Preserving Virtues,” 190.

Wisdom' are found. Further, the instructions the authority figures provide are not very specific. Rather, "they inculcate receptivity to trustworthy authorities and fidelity to basic relationships. Counter-voices mimic the genuine call and must be rejected for the primary invitation to be properly received."³²⁹ In other words, an overarching theme in Proverbs is to recognise and heed the advice from appropriate authority, but to recognise that there are many characters (both literal and figurative) who will make claim to our sensibilities and searching who in fact have no capacity to impart true wisdom. For example, the calls of both Lady Wisdom and the juxtaposed Woman Folly will be found in the streets, squares and many other vantage points (Prov 1:9 and 9:14-15 respectively). The task for the attentive student is to recognise them for what they are. To find counsel in the right place as it were. When found, such sources of advice and counsel need to be approached with humility and a state of being teachable, an approach that is forever useful for even the wise can be come wiser still (Prov 9:9; 1:5).

3.4 *Solertia*

As has been pointed out previously, in both the Thomistic tradition and the wisdom literature there is an understanding that creation is imbued with a certain order. However, our experience of creation is not always predictable and the dynamism of our existence means that it is impossible to account for every circumstance we may face. The most complete moral system, codified or otherwise, or the most knowledgeable in moral matters cannot anticipate every situation one will face in every context. Further, such vagaries of life can rise in such a manner that timely response is required. *Solertia* is the ability to respond to such matters; to assess a situation quickly yet accurately and move one towards the goal of the good.

One advantage of the character-based morality taught in Proverbs is that it too recognises that all contingencies cannot be catered for and, though there is a discernible order in creation, the fullness of this understanding is beyond us. We can, however, navigate this uncertainty by forming a certain character of preparedness that allows us to respond to such contingencies in a composed yet decisive manner.

³²⁹ Clifford, "Reading Proverbs 10-22," 245.

3.4.1 *Solertia*: Timely Decisiveness

Solertia is not a word that translates simply into English. As Aquinas uses it, it can be understood as adroit, astuteness and quickness of mind. Deferrari states that it means “skill in discovering something, especially the principle of a thing.”³³⁰ Pieper uses the term “nimbleness” and describes it as “objectiveness in unexpected situations”³³¹ and Thomas Gilby translates the term in the *Summa Theologiae* to *acumen*.³³² All these terms capture the notion of *Solertia* which is an ability to assess a situation and decide on a right course of action and to do so in good time. Its focus is an ability to come to a right decision when presented with the unexpected and when “something has to be done without warning.”³³³

This particular *habitus* which serves prudence sits in contrast to other aspects that we might consider useful for the virtue. For example, the two other parts of prudence examined above (*memoria* and *docilitas*) are lingering and more deliberate in their nature. They are based on the idea that one can grasp reality and come to right decisions with sound reflection, both introspectively and by good external advice and counsel, over a lengthy period of time. However, life and the moral encounters that it requires will present us with the necessity to make decisions in quick time, ones for which we may not be able to fully prepare. In such circumstances, the ability to accurately size up the situation and act well to achieve the good is a required aspect for the perfection of prudence.

However, the focus on rapidity can be overstated. Good decisions, even when needed quickly, should still employ the aptitudes of prudence. Aquinas holds that certain steps are needed to cause an action to be prudent. Included among them are true-to-being memory, insight into the present and heeding good advice, all of which inform an action. For Aquinas unnecessarily rushing any of these steps can lead to imprudence rather than prudence.³³⁴ Further, thoughtless action even when haste is required is still thoughtlessness and will necessarily lead to a poor judgment of

³³⁰ Roy J. Deferrari, M. Inviolata. Barry, and Ignatius. McGuiness, *A Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas based on the Summa Theologica and Selected Passages of his Other Works* (Baltimore: Catholic University Press, 1948), 1037.

³³¹ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 16-17.

³³² Thomas Gilby in Thomas Aquinas, *Prudence: (2a2ae. 47-56)*, trans., T. Gilby, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, 2006), 69.

³³³ *ST*, 49.4 ad 2.

³³⁴ *ST*, II-II, 53.3.

reality and thus is culpable to sin.³³⁵ On the other hand, being thoughtful and well-reasoned, but lacking decisiveness to execute a conviction in good time will likewise inhibit prudence.³³⁶ Thoughtless haste is a vice not to be confused with *solertia*. On the other hand, indecisive irresolution is not to be considered a viable approach to moral quandary either. *Solertia*, in a sense, is an ability to make the right decision at the right time.

This aspect of the virtue of prudence is applicable to any age, but perhaps is particularly pertinent today where the types of activity we engage in and the technological advances of modern life accelerate the frequency in which we are faced with new experiences in decision making. Celia Deane-Drummond provides an interesting insight into the value of prudence in this regard and includes the value of the three ‘sub-virtues’ that are examined here.³³⁷ Regarding *solertia* she states that, “*Solertia* includes the ability to take decisions when faced with the unexpected, even when there is little time for deliberation, as it draws on the experience gained in the past.”³³⁸

As Deane-Drummond is indicating, *solertia* (as with the other aspects of prudence and the virtues overall for that matter) does not operate in isolation from other abilities and virtues. The successful implementation of *solertia* assumes that other parts are functioning well. In this case *memoria* is alluded to, but another that is indicated by Aquinas himself is sollicitude (*sollicitudo*).³³⁹ Aquinas warns against excessive sollicitousness as unnecessary fear and anxiety towards the future which not only clouds judgement but disturbs the spirit.³⁴⁰ However, urgent concern of future contingencies regarding things that matter is an aid to the prudential life. It encourages one to be moved to rightly prepare in both a practical and psychological sense but recognises, at the same time, that one can never operate out of a state of complete certitude. As Aquinas states, “because the subject matter of prudence is composed of

³³⁵ *ST*, II-II, 53.4.

³³⁶ *ST*, II-II, 53.5.

³³⁷ Celia Deane-Drummond, "Bodies in Glass: A Virtue Approach to Ethical Quandaries in a Cyborg Age," in *Glass Darkly: Medicine and Theology in Further Dialogue*, ed. D. Gareth Jones and R. John Elford, New International Studies in Applied Ethics, vol. v. 2 (Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2010).

³³⁸ Deane-Drummond, "A Virtue Approach to Ethical Quandaries in a Cyborg Age," 77.

³³⁹ *ST*, II-II, 47.9; 49.4 s.c.

³⁴⁰ *ST*, II-II, 55.6 ad 2.

contingent individual incidents, which form the setting for human acts, the certitude of prudence is not such as to remove entirely all uneasiness of mind.”³⁴¹

To expand on this, Aquinas notes that there is an appropriate solicitude to any moment; “different times call for their own sort of solicitude.”³⁴² Taking this on board, we can say that reading the times that one is situated in allows one to prepare rightly for the circumstances of one’s life. However, we must also recognise that we cannot account for all contingencies. *Solertia*, then, is the ability to face such contingencies when they arise in keeping with the wider notion of prudence. To change the terminology slightly while still holding to the principle; concern which leads to preparedness does not eliminate the need for nimble astuteness, rather, it serves it. To illustrate this notion Aquinas uses the example of the ‘diligent ant’ found in Prov 6:6. A reflection on this provides a useful entry way into this subject as found in Proverbs.

3.4.2 Proverbs and the Concept of *Solertia*

It is not uncommon in the Hebrew Scriptures for animal behaviour to be held up as a model in the ways of wisdom and right living.³⁴³ In the case focused on here, Proverbs uses the ant to target the problematic behaviour of laziness but it also speaks to the notion of *sollicitudo* as just indicated. It reads:

Go to the ant, you lazybones;
consider its ways, and be wise.
Without having any chief
or officer or ruler,
it prepares its food in summer,
and gathers its sustenance in harvest. (6:6-8)

The word translated by the NRSV to ‘lazybones’ is the character being targeted and is less colloquially translated to ‘ sluggard’ by many other versions and commentaries. The sluggard is one who not only embodies laziness, in itself a vice

³⁴¹ *ST*, II-II, 47.9 ad 2. See also Pieper’s lucid discussion on this *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 17-19. It should be pointed out that in Aquinas’s thoughts overall, solicitude is most strongly associated with ‘voluntary poverty’ as it deals with avoiding unnecessary anxiety of material matters over matters of the soul. Thus it is closely associated with a trust in God to provide that which is truly needed for whatever circumstances one might face. For some detail see Jan G. J. van den Eijnden, *Poverty on the Way to God: Thomas Aquinas on Evangelical Poverty* (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 89-91. Also *SCG*, 3.132; 3.135.

³⁴² *ST*, II-II, 55.7.

³⁴³ Other prominent examples outside of Proverbs include Job 12:7-9; Isa 1:3; Jer 8:6-9.

like quality but, as highlighted in these verses in particular, does not have an appreciation for the season at hand. Hence Aquinas points out the ant, in contrast to the ‘sluggard’, shows solicitude at the seasonable time.³⁴⁴

Davis provides a useful analysis of this verse in relation to the Thomistic expression of solicitude and notes that the parable of the ant can be engaged on three particular layers.³⁴⁵ First is the more obvious reading where what is being encouraged is practical and industrious preparation. Another is the encouragement to pay particular attention to the non-human world, a kind of ‘nature wisdom’, to use Davis’ term; to read accurately the goings on of our created reality and seek wisdom therein. However, the notion that is most pertinent to our concern is based on a long traditional reading of this passage which sees it as an admonition against the sin of sloth. This interpretation of Prov 6:6 is more overtly spiritual and moral in that sense.

As Davis puts it:

Sloth is more than laziness, an aversion to work. One may have considerable achievements and still be slothful. The spiritually deadly sin is the refusal to be alert to the new opportunities that continually come to us from God, opportunities that require us to keep our hearts open, minds fresh and restless in God’s service.³⁴⁶

What the ant teaches then, in this traditional reading, is an urgent concern for the future that motivates one to action – but not action for the sake of activity. The ant is not motivated to do anything and certainly not everything, but to prepare food based on what the season holds. There is, as the often quoted stanza from another wisdom book states, a time for all things (Ecc. 3:1-8).

As such, we can well note that ‘solicitous preparedness’ is part of the moral life esteemed in Proverbs³⁴⁷ but, ironically it might seem, one way that solicitousness is exercised rightly and aids prudence is recognising that we cannot attend to all circumstances.³⁴⁸ We cannot account for all cases in advance, only what is presented to us in a given time and place, but a prepared attitude and openness to ‘new

³⁴⁴ *ST*, II-II, 57.7 ad 1.

³⁴⁵ Davis, "Preserving Virtues," 191-192. Also, in relation to Prov 6:6-11 in itself, Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 55-57.

³⁴⁶ Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 55-56.

³⁴⁷ See also 24:27 for example.

³⁴⁸ As Pieper puts it, “a prudent man does not expect certainty where it cannot exist.” Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 18.

happenings’ allows us to deal in a prudent manner with such events. Here we are returning to *solertia* in particular. The ability to discern rightly and with good timing what is presented to us in a given moment, particularly in regard to the unexpected.

In terms of particular texts in Proverbs, there is not anything obvious which discusses the ‘unexpected’ or novel as a dilemma in its own right. However, it does point out that calamity catches the fool by surprise as they are so blind to the reality of the world and fail to heed the teaching of wisdom (e.g. Prov 1:26-27; 6:15). Moreover, Proverbs does call the one of sound character to be ready to enact and apply the teaching of prudential wisdom at any moment. As Prov 22:17-18 states:

Incline your ear and hear my words,
and apply your mind to my teaching;
for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,
if all of them are ready on your lips.

The latter stanza in this verse suggests no specific reward except for goodness itself (*nā'im* translated as ‘pleasant’ here); there is no concrete issue at hand toward which the wisdom being taught will address. However there is the imperative that such teaching will nonetheless be useful at any moment. The notion of ‘on your lips’ captures this; what is internalised in our minds (Heb: *lēb*) will find expression in our lips, a symbol of both action and speech.³⁴⁹

Indeed, as has been discussed in the examination of Proverbs overall, the pedagogical structure of Proverbs is such that the aim is not to prescribe set action in and of itself but, rather, form one into a certain quality of character such that they are able to cater for the particularities of any given situation and to navigate the sometimes conflicting requirements of living the moral life. This is evidenced in the myriad of life settings and aphorisms, sometimes contradictory, which form the collection of chs.10-29. An often quoted example is 26:4-5:

⁴ Do not answer fools according to their folly,
or you will be a fool yourself.
⁵ Answer fools according to their folly,
or they will be wise in their own eyes.

³⁴⁹ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 204. Murphy on the same verse also points out that the lips represent the most important organ for wise practice, *Proverbs*, 170.

Not only do we see a contradiction, but they are deliberately, it would seem, placed up against each other. There have been many interpretations attempting to reconcile the contradiction³⁵⁰ but most scholars concede that the presence of contrasting maxims is a point in itself. As Crenshaw states:

The wise man is one who knows the right time and place, the person who exercises propriety. Thus one finds outright contradictions in proverbial sayings, once even juxtaposed (Prov 26:4-5) ... Both statements are true, and one must choose which of the two is called for by the situation itself. The willingness to face up to contradictions arises out of the fact that wisdom is an open system, ... the sage knew that there were limitations to the comprehension of reality, both in terms of intellectual capacity and divine inscrutability ... The ever present incalculable ingredient to every experience promoted an openness to various possibilities and a recognition of one's limits.³⁵¹

Thus those with prudential wisdom know how to read the times and anticipate the choices one will have to make (what we understand as solicitousness), but has the acumen of *solertia* to deal with the 'incalculable' and unexpected that even the wisest sage cannot fully anticipate.

Solertia as an aid to prudence requires a certain disposition in other modes as well. For example Proverbs often attests that a prudentially wise person is calm (17:27), good-tempered (15:18), patient (19:11), unperturbed and measured (14:29-30) in character. Thoughtless haste is particularly problematic and will have one missing the way of wisdom all together (19:2). Composure is the key to dealing wisely with the situations of life, particularly when emotional rashness is the easier option (15:11). All these points allow one to hold *solertia* which thus allows one to be prudent in any circumstance.

At the start of this section it was noted that a key aspect of prudence is truthful vision. There are many ways this can be unpacked, three noted here help elucidate an understanding of truthful vision and, further, how the Thomistic notion and the teaching of Proverbs correlates and aids such an understanding. *Memoria* is an important starting point of truthful vision as it draws the agent to recall rightly the

³⁵⁰ Fox provides an illustrative list of many approaches, all of which he considers rather arbitrary, Fox, *Proverbs 10-31*, 793-794.

³⁵¹ Crenshaw, "Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom," 116.

lessons of the past. Proverbs in particular attests that a sense of *memoria* is more than cognisant recollection but is, rather, an honest dealing with the self in a total sense – a ‘true-to-being’ memory. Such an approach will necessarily recognise that no one person can possibly have all that is required to live the moral life, as such, the one who is truly prudent will also employ the ability of *docilitas*. In this regard, the assumed and expressed underpinning of Proverbs rests on a notion that the full moral life is not automatically attained but, rather, requires an attentive openness to teaching; a humility and attitude of seeking such that one can be educated and formed. As such, *docilitas* is not simply a passive docility that an English translation might suggest, but an engaged obedience to right authority and right teaching built on respect. However, even the most well-formed and ‘true-to-self’ individual will encounter circumstances that cannot be entirely anticipated. In such a case, *solertia* is an ability to still remain prudent even in those circumstances; to stay ‘true to character’, as it were, when circumstances are most likely to force one to do otherwise. As such, truthful vision is neither purely retrospective nor entirely anticipatory (though it includes those elements), but seeks to hold to a truthful grasp of reality in the particularities of a given moment.

4. Thomas Aquinas in Dialogue with Proverbs: Socio-Political and Theological Dimensions of Prudence

The overall work to this point has examined a number of different aspects of prudence and sought to analyse Proverbs in relation to it. The aim of this final section is to bring some of that discussion into a closer dialogue with Thomistic thought. Two dimensions of prudence are examined here. The first is the social-political dimension of prudence, more commonly understood as political prudence. It recalls particularly section 2.2.2, though draws on the overall discussion had to this point. The second dimension attempts to address the theological dimension of prudence in a particular mode. The theological dimension has been addressed throughout this work, but by way of conclusion it provides a crowning perspective of what prudence in its fullest sense is in the Thomistic tradition and how it can correlatively inform and be informed by the teaching of Proverbs.

4.1 Thomistic Political Prudence

The virtue of prudence in the Thomistic tradition has a significant political dimension.³⁵² This dimension also brings to the fore the difficulty that can present itself when drawing two somewhat disparate traditions into dialogue when expounding one concept. In this regard especially, Aquinas is far more technical and delineating in his understanding of morality compared to the more organic and eclectic approach that we see in writings such as Proverbs. For Aquinas, the moral science was divided into three distinct spheres that allowed for conceptions of corresponding types of virtues. The first domain concerned personal conduct, that which pertains to all people, the second was the management of the household and the third was concerned with right governance of a city or realm. Correspondingly, there were three types of prudence: personal prudence (*prudentia simpliciter dicta*), domestic prudence (*prudentia oeconomica*) and governmental prudence (*prudentia regnativa*).³⁵³ Not surprisingly given Aquinas draws on Aristotle in this field, the

³⁵² As J. Patrick Dobel states, the virtue of prudence has long been considered “a linchpin of political judgment and that any theory of leadership needs to develop an account of prudence.” J. Patrick Dobel, "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership," *Public Administration Review* 58, no. 1 (1998): 74.

³⁵³ All three terms (personal prudence, domestic prudence and governmental prudence) are defined by the ends they seek (good of the individual, good of the family/household, good of the nation/polis

question of the distinctly political nature of prudence is given some attention throughout his work including the *Summa Theologiae*. For example, he states:

It belongs to prudence rightly to counsel, judge, and command concerning the means of obtaining a due end, it is evident that prudence regards not only the private good of the individual, but also the common good of the multitude.³⁵⁴

Aquinas later goes on to articulate the special place of prudence in the life of the individual ruler in attaining the ‘common good’:

Now it is evident that there is a special and perfect kind of governance in one who has to govern not only himself but also the perfect community of a city or kingdom; because a government is the more perfect according as it is more universal, extends to more matters, and attains a higher end. Hence prudence in its special and most perfect sense, belongs to a king who is charged with the government of a city or kingdom.³⁵⁵

Domestic prudence follows this in a sense, though is still seen as distinct and sits as a ‘midway point’ between political and personal prudence. Thomas notes that just as individuals are part of a family, so a family is part of a political community. As such, domestic prudence is distinct in that the head of a household exercises an authority “like a king ... but without the full power of a king.”³⁵⁶ Beyond this, Thomistic thought does not display a particularly strong emphasis on prudence in the familial context as it pertains to maintaining the ‘common good’ compared to the imagery of prudential wisdom in Proverbs. However, as in Proverbs, Thomistic thought does draw attention to the importance of maintaining ‘good family order’ as an important aspect of maintaining the good of the community more broadly speaking even when the notion of ‘domestic prudence’ is not directly evoked. In Thomistic thought, it is evident that the understanding that the various ‘institutions’ of society (e.g. family, state, legislative authorities, church) are linked to the wellbeing of both society and

respectively) and it is based on these particular ends that the distinction is drawn. Thomas seems to hold in tension the particularity of the individual and collective good on the one hand (e.g. *ST*, II-II, 47.11) with their congruence on the other (*ST*, II-II, 47.10). This relationship is unpacked to some degree in the following. For fuller discussion on this see Thomas Gilby, *The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 228-229; Kossel, "Natural Law and Human Law," 175, 187 n.39.

³⁵⁴ *ST*, II-II, 47.10.

³⁵⁵ *ST*, II-II, 50.1.

³⁵⁶ *ST*, II-II, 50.3 ad 1.

individual.³⁵⁷ Regarding the formation of the virtuous person, it is certainly well noted that the place of familial relationships becomes vital. As Wadell sates:

Morality is not something [apart from] friendship, but is what happens to us through the best and most enduring relationships of our lives, with God to be sure, but also with family, spouses, communities, or lifelong companions. It is in these friendships that our character takes shape and we are transformed in the good.³⁵⁸

Thus, the familial context matters to the formation of good societies and good individuals.

Returning to the more technical aspects of virtue of prudence in the social-political sphere, Aquinas's scheme offers important points of reflection. Certainly on the face of it, Aquinas seems to follow many other classical thinkers in understanding an ordered society as being the outworking and the responsibility of the prudent ruler who, in that capacity, allows society to experience a 'common good'. In this vein Aquinas seems to hold a hierarchical sense of political ordering drawn from a cosmological (and theological) understanding of the created order. Aquinas utilises Dionysius in particular whose neo-platonic, theologically informed, hierarchical imagery was very influential throughout the middle ages and seemingly on Aquinas himself.³⁵⁹ Moreover, Aquinas holds that the crown of any hierarchal sense of reality is a God who governs, by way of the eternal law, "the whole community of the universe by Divine Reason" and by "dictates of practical reason."³⁶⁰ The rulers in a society are called to participate in the same eternal law by fulfilling the natural law in

³⁵⁷ Aquinas's discussion on the objects of love (*charitas*) is an example, *ST*, II-II, 25-26. Paul J. Wadell provides a contemporary discussion in line with this thinking in "Growing Together in the Divine Love: The Role of Charity in the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas," in *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives*, ed. G. Simon Harak, vol. Moral Traditions & Moral Arguments (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996).

³⁵⁸ Wadell, "Growing Together in the Divine Love," 140.

³⁵⁹ Paul E. Sigmund, ed. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Interpretations* (New York: Norton, 1988), 108. This hierarchical framing reflects not only Aquinas's time, but also his sources including those found in Roman legal thought and Stoic natural law (Sigmund, ed. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Interpretations*, 181). It should be pointed out that, though Aquinas draws from Dionysius among others who emphasises the good found in hierarchical ontological expressions, for Aquinas and many that follow him hierarchical order does not inherently equate to the good. Aquinas clearly intimates that when he describes how even demons have a sense of hierarchical order. Such a sense of hierarchical order is present because they have a created nature and exist under the universal providential order of God who creates (*ST*, I, 109.1 ad 2). As such, we see that a sense of hierarchy is attributed to being part of God's creative providence, but in fallen nature (demons representing this in the particular) a collective organised as a hierarchy is only a statement of being, it is not sufficiently a 'common good' in itself.

³⁶⁰ *ST*, I-II, 91.1. See also *Ethics*, vol. 1, lect. 2.

their capacity as ruler by way of prudence (governmental prudence to be more specific) so the community itself can be ‘perfected’.

This is not unlike, at least in broad principle, the expression that seems to sit behind wisdom in Proverbs (where it pertains to governance) and articulated in 1 Kings as noted above in section 2.2.2. Recall, however, that the role prudential wisdom might have in maintaining a morally ordered society does not rest in the ruling class alone. Similarly Aquinas, and many influenced by him, does not leave the ‘perfection of society’, and the role of political prudence therein, within the moral character and actions of the ruler(s). Clearly, there are expressions in the Aristotelian tradition that find their way into Aquinas’s thought that suggest the role of subjects, being the individual members of society, is to simply enact ordinances prudently within their limited sphere of influence.³⁶¹ However, the place of the individual and the virtue of prudence, even in a societal context, is more sophisticated than that line of thought would suggest.

A closer examination of Thomistic thought identifies that there is a greater role for those being ruled (the subjects) in building a society that is ordered to the common good. This can be gleaned when we recognise how Aquinas draws from Aristotle in the formation of his political conceptions. Aquinas uses Aristotle heavily, but he does so in certain ways and, ultimately, in ways of some difference to that of classic Aristotelian thought. Gilby is one who examines this and he demonstrates how Aquinas moves Aristotelian notions in a direction that suggests political responsibility (and hence a notion of political prudence), in some sense at least, rests on all people not simply those charged with enacting societal ordinances. Gilby articulates that in Aquinas’s earlier writings, particularly in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas followed Aristotle in stressing the role of ‘governmental prudence’ (*prudentialia regnativa*) and there was only “a vague reference to another kind of prudence which should be expected of his subjects, namely the statesmanship

³⁶¹ *ST*, II-II, 50.2 as way of example notes that slaves, who are more readily subject to the command of others, are still “self-acting through free will. Accordingly this much is required of them, that they possess in themselves a certain rightfulness of governance whereby they direct themselves in obeying their rulers.” Cf. *ST*, II-II, 104.1 & 5, where the limits of obedience are discussed. Most notably, Aquinas always tempers any call to obedience in a human context with the higher calling to virtue and to the highest authority of all, being God.

of the citizens themselves.”³⁶² In the *Summa Theologiae*, however, Gilby points out that Aquinas modified Aristotle’s approach. Gilby states “Statesmanlike prudence, *prudentia politica*, was not reserved to the ruler, ... it was the virtue of practical intelligence whereby citizens freely made their own ordinances of political authority.”³⁶³

Here Gilby is focusing on the difference between *prudentia politica*, what might be termed political or civic prudence; a prudence of the populace,³⁶⁴ and *prudentia regnativa* which is the term Aquinas generally uses when discussing the virtue in relation to the person or persons in positions of legislative leadership. *Prudentia regnativa* would rightly be attributed to the position of regent and political law maker, while the former (political or civic prudence) is something that can be acquired and exercised by everybody within a given polis. It is this broader notion of civic prudence where Aquinas (unlike Aristotle) seems to place significant focus. Gilby explains this shift from a traditional reading of Aristotle as such; he notes that Aquinas’s examination of *Politics* indicated that political prudence was restricted to the governor.³⁶⁵ However,

St. Thomas was uneasy about the limitation of political responsibility. In the *Summa Theologiae*, however, he felt freer to expound his own sentiments even if that meant stretching what Aristotle had said. The *legis positiva* and the government was in some sense everybody’s responsibility.”³⁶⁶

The point of interest for the concern of this project is that the role of prudence as a virtue is one that not only finds expression in the life of the individual but, while remaining operative in the individual, has a role in shaping the good of the community at large and does so regardless of where a person sits within the various strata of a given community. In this vein, Aquinas sees a connexion between the

³⁶² Gilby, *The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 292. Citing Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, III, d. 33, q. 3, a. 1.

³⁶³ Gilby, *The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 292-293. Citing *ST*, II-II, 50.1 ad 1.

³⁶⁴ Deferrari uses the terms ‘civic prudence’ or ‘the prudence of the subjects’. *A Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 912.

³⁶⁵ Gilby here cites *ST*, II-II, 47.12 Obj. 1; *Politics*, III, 4. 1277 b26.

³⁶⁶ Gilby, *The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 293. It is this sort of understanding which encouraged later scholars to utilise Aquinas towards moral teachings that called for greater emphasis on the general populace (both their concerns and their participation) in certain spheres of political matters. This often drew on notions of natural law to underpin universal goods all people should enjoy. Paul E. Sigmund provides some useful samples of such in *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Interpretations*, 145-188.

good to be found in the individual and a communal sense of the good. Moreover, prudence that is exercised in whatever capacity will rightly regard the “common good of all people, not merely the private good of one individual.”³⁶⁷ Along these lines, the primacy of the common good is well evidenced in Thomistic writing.³⁶⁸ This is premised, however, by an understanding held by Aquinas that the human person is necessarily social and so, even in a perfect state, what Aquinas would describe as a ‘state of innocence’, she would maintain that social context,³⁶⁹ thus the goodness of the individual will also serve the good of the whole. It is this social-communal dimension in Thomistic thought that adds depth to the virtue of prudence that could otherwise be construed in rather individualistic terms. Naturally, the responsibility of maintaining a ‘common good’ is going to rest more overtly in the ruler. However, as noted above and indicated by Aquinas himself, the individual subject (not just the ruler) should also employ ‘political prudence’ for the sake of the common good.³⁷⁰

Broadly speaking then, prudence as taught in the Thomistic tradition, though it will have particular ends proper to the position one holds, is fundamentally a virtue that should play a role in *both* the individual subject and in the communal-political sphere. In this sense there is a correlation of sorts between prudence in Thomistic virtue theory and Proverbial wisdom. The wisdom teaching of Proverbs is couched in more familial context, but it nonetheless stresses a communal dimension and responsibility to the ‘common good’ that crosses all strata of society. It is worth unpacking this further. Starting with the communal dimension generally, it is often observed that, though many of the teachings of Proverbs seem to be addressed to a single person and relate to his individual success and prosperity, the person is nonetheless necessarily seen in a communal context. For example, Frydrych states:

While the book addresses itself to an individual and the depiction of success is largely in individual terms, in general, prosperity is understood in the book as happening in the context of the progress and affluence of a

³⁶⁷ *ST*, II-II, 47.10.

³⁶⁸ E.g. *ST*, I, 108.6; II-II, 31.3 ad 2; *SCG*, I, 41.

³⁶⁹ *ST*, I, 96.4.

³⁷⁰ *ST*, II-II, 50.2. Note especially ad 3: “Man directs himself by prudence commonly so called, in relation to his own good, but by political prudence, of which we speak, he directs himself in relation to the common good.” In a more overtly political sense, Gilby offers the following interpretation: “Citizens were those who took an active part in politics. Thus political prudence, corresponding to general justice which served the Common Good, should be well dispersed and not concentrated in the official rulers of the State.” *The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 293.

community to which the individual belongs. Wisdom is not simply a tool of bringing order and success to an individual's life, but also a means for creating order on the social level. The righteous and wise uphold such an order, principally to do with justice, while the fools reject and pervert it.³⁷¹

The interrelationship between the individual good and the surrounding community is not only implied, but often stated as such, particularly in the sentence material (10:1-29:27). For example, Prov 10:21 states that the righteousness of the individual is not only self-nourishing, but it “feeds many, while fools die for lack of sense.” The implication seems to be that those who surround the righteous one will be nourished as a natural consequence; a spilling over, as it were, of goodness. In contrast, the fool as a victim of his own lack of ‘right reasoning’³⁷² not only fails to see the value of goodness in itself, but he fails to recognise the nourishment provided by the wise around him and becomes lost within his individual folly.

Naturally the wellbeing of the community is tied to the ruler in many ways and, as already noted above, it seems self-evident that people would rejoice when the righteous rise in influence and groan with despair when “the wicked rule” (Prov 29:2). Nevertheless, for large parts of Proverbs, the familial/communal setting is the most important dimension in which prudential wisdom as a concept is expressed and in which it is to also be found. Familial points of reference are located throughout and, in particular, the parent appealing to the child to follow the former's teaching is most common. This is perhaps more evidenced in the lecture material where we see the importance of family cohesion expressed. As an example, on a number of occasions the notion of marital faithfulness is evoked (e.g. 5:15-20) and considered of the utmost importance given the discord that can follow from the jealousy that unfaithfulness unleashes (6:34).

Expanding on this example of marital faithfulness, the point to focus on is that, within Proverbs at least, it is not adultery or lack of faithfulness in itself which is of concern – an intrinsic evil of the act in itself is not the issue. Rather, it is the disharmony that it creates within the family as well as in wider society that is of

³⁷¹ Frydrych, *Living Under the Sun*, 134. Frydrych refers to Prov 24:23-34 as a particular expression of this. See also Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 33-36.

³⁷² *Hāsar-lēb* lit. lack of heart or mind, usually translates to ‘lack of sense’ (eg. NRSV and NAB) in this usage, but is akin to ‘lack of reason’ or ‘lack of right reason’ (see for example HALOT 𐤁𐤏 –7).

concern. As Rodd states, “what the writers of proverbs and the givers of instruction are worried about are those who threaten the stability and easy functioning of the community. This can be seen from various angles.”³⁷³ Those angles include what we could term the general public sphere; the marketplace, streets, the gate and town squares³⁷⁴ where thieves and murderers undermine the community (Prov. 1:11-19). Prov 11:9 indicates that one’s imprudent words could destroy one’s friends and neighbours but prudent knowledge (*da‘at*) can build the society up, a notion that extends to the wellbeing of the city at large (11:10-11).³⁷⁵ It is within this larger framework that the most significant angle of the familial dimension sits – the “home and the wider society cannot be separated. Stability within the community is of central importance to the sages, and they are swift to condemn those who disturb it.”³⁷⁶

There is a role for the political leadership in this, and on at least one occasion (Prov 29:4) the character of the king is explicitly tied to the stability society might enjoy, and thousands of years after such words were recorded, the virtue of prudence as understood in our contemporary times would likewise still hold; as Dobel states, “prudent leaders hold special responsibilities to maintain and strengthen community foundations. Excellent political achievements do not stand in isolation but sustain the legitimacy of institutions and build community.”³⁷⁷ It is this communal dimension that Proverbs helps to draw into focus, but it does so with a view that it is not only the prudent political leader who creates life giving communities, but all people valuing, seeking and acquiring prudential wisdom that will necessarily be needed if we want stable and successful societies.

By way of conclusion we can draw two points of focus. Firstly, both the wisdom of Proverbs and the virtue of prudence in the Thomistic tradition point to a political/communal dimension. In Aquinas there is more emphasis on the political role that prudence employs particularly as it relates to those in governmental authority and is inherently more technical. Proverbs places far less emphasis on the

³⁷³ Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*, 278.

³⁷⁴ Frydrych provides a brief but valuable discussion on the image of the village gate in this context; *Living Under the Sun*, 143-145.

³⁷⁵ Of note is that the LXX reading of these verses stresses the political sphere even more so with the term *politēs* (lit. citizens) used instead of ‘friend’ or ‘neighbour’ as found in the original Hebrew.

³⁷⁶ Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*, 279-280.

³⁷⁷ Dobel, "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership," 79.

importance of the political leadership in this regard (in the form of the court/king in its own context), but it is nonetheless present. In both cases, however, there is recognition that prudence will necessarily have a communal dimension whether exercised by the ruler in their capacity as leader, in the familial context or at the individual level in one's 'common' life. It is this communal dimension which offers a particular twist on our contemporary understanding of the virtue of prudence (or the virtues in general for that matter). There is a tendency to see them in an individual sense; that it is the betterment of my individual character that is ultimately and perhaps even entirely at stake. The virtue tradition and, even more so, the prudential wisdom teaching of Proverbs, reminds us that our character formation and the actions that ensue will necessarily shape our community and, likewise, our character will be shaped by the community in return. Indeed, as the discussion on *docilitas* in particular attests, the need of the other in the formation of the self is in fact necessary.³⁷⁸ Brown discussing the relational dimension of prudential wisdom in Proverbs agrees. Taking 3:27-31 as an example, he states that the listed five negative directives are designed to illustrate the outworking of "the sensibly prudent lifestyle." He continues:

How they hang together is readily clear. All deal with the maintenance of harmonious relationship within the community. The importance of this list cannot be underestimated, since it clearly indicates that the instrumental virtues of discretion and good sense (3:21) are intimately bound up with the welfare of the community. The prudent lifestyle is profiled *relationally*, beyond the perspective of the efficient and successful attainment of individual goals.³⁷⁹

Secondly, the familial/communal dimension, certainly as far as Proverbs is concerned, is another layer of universality that seems to underpin its teachings. As discussed previously, the eclectic socio-political setting and multi-authored influence

³⁷⁸ See 3.3 above. Though not unpacked here at length, the allusion being made here is that the community is vital in the shaping of the prudent character, not simply that the prudent individual will serve the community. As Brown states it, when we examine the communal dimension of Proverbs we recognise that "wisdom *is* the community, created to behold and follow the ways of God." (Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 39).

³⁷⁹ Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 35. Brown later comments on the concluding chapter of Proverbs where the fully formed character returns to the place of family; finding "the ideal spouse, raising the ideal family and securing the esteem of fellow patriarchs." In establishing this ideal, the "silent son has become a responsible citizen of the community." The 'woman of excellence' (Prov 31:10-31) is also key to this fulfilled image and together "the establishment of a family ... represents and indispensable form of engagement with the community." Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 154-155. See also Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 199-200.

of Proverbs points to a universality in its teaching. Though it may not seem so obvious on the face of it, the importance of prudential wisdom in maintaining fundamental familial relationships also lends itself to a universal appeal. It might seem counter intuitive to state that the family speaks to a universal principle because how we understand the notion of family seems to be heavily influenced by the social setting in which it sits. A family of modern day Europe, for example, could well be considered very different to a family in ancient Israel. Even within the biblical world, the character of a ‘typical family’ in Israel in the monarchical era would differ in quite significant ways from pre-monarchical Israel – and both find expression throughout the vast scope that the Hebrew bible covers and, as noted above, within Proverbs itself. It is for this reason that Perdue in his examination of the family in the Hebrew tradition warns against drawing “absolutist, propositional, moralistic truths” on the “dos and don’ts” for the modern family in the contemporary Western context.³⁸⁰ Nevertheless, as Carol Meyers in the same publication suggests, “virtually all considerations of human behaviour operate under the assumption that there is such a thing as a family in every society. Indeed, the family is empirically ubiquitous”³⁸¹ and it is this sense of ubiquity which seems to pervade Proverbial teaching. Regardless of the socio-historical setting, those who embody prudential wisdom will do so within our fundamental social units and it will necessarily lead to a communal good.

Moreover, the formation of prudence should not be considered a moral trait for the ‘professional’ statesman or those in socio-political power.³⁸² As Aquinas indicates, theirs is a special place that requires the perfection of prudence for the sake of the common good, but there are limits to leadership regardless of age or system. Proverbs expresses a similar sentiment in the limitation of kingship (of the human kind at least) in the imagery of Solomon as the patron of Wisdom. We recall from section 2.2.2 above that Solomon represents a highpoint of Israelite culture and,

³⁸⁰ Leo G. Perdue, "The Household, Old Testament Theology, and Contemporary Hermeneutics," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Perdue et al. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 244. Perdue does not suggest that the Hebrew Bible cannot aid the moral formation of our modern families at all but, rather, that an appropriate hermeneutical approach is required. Perdue, "The Household, Old Testament Theology, and Contemporary Hermeneutics," 245-249.

³⁸¹ Carol Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. L.G. Perdue et al. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 1.

³⁸² It should be said that, particularly in today’s societies where those of noted celebrity can arguably have as much influence on the social fabric and even legislative matters as the political elite, we do well to expand our conception of ‘socio-political power’ to those beyond formal seats of government.

moreover, he represents a point in history where unity and order are apparent and thus can speak with authority in dictating how ‘the good life’ for Israel can be found and what it constitutes – most notably that it is found in wisdom itself. But the prudently wise king is not enough, and so Proverbs emphasises, even more so than Thomistic thinking (even though there is a correlation of sorts) that prudential wisdom is to be sought by those at any level of society and in any sphere of life. It is in this broad application to the formation of character that will ultimately lead to both the good of the individual and of life-giving societies.

4.2 Theological Imagery and the Infused Virtues

We recall the concluding examination of Proverbs conducted above (section 2.2.4) highlighted the teleological image of *life* that informs the direction to which prudential wisdom aspires. This teleological imagery provides a useful comparative basis on how Proverbs and Thomistic conception of the virtue of prudence can be examined. It is well established that Aquinas employed the eudaimonic principles from Aristotle and related philosophies to help formulate his broader moral outlook and, as touched on in earlier sections, this approach is integral in understanding the virtues. To briefly elaborate, virtue theory in this classically informed mode has at its heart the idea that everything has a particular and appropriate *telos* or a ‘final end’ which, when realised, expresses the fullness of that thing. Further, when that proper end is realised, the thing is fulfilled or ‘happy’ (Greek: *eudaimonia*). *Eudaimonia*, in Aristotelian thought and that which follows it, is the highest human good and, in itself, has significant resonance (though is not to be confused as being the same thing) as the notion of ‘goodness of life’ as found in the Proverbs discussed above. As with Proverbs, classically defined *eudaimonia* has a certain depth. It is identified with having a good life in a whole and consistent basis – it consists in both living well (*eu zēn*) and doing well (*eu prattein*).³⁸³

³⁸³ *NE*, 1095a19-20. Regarding the virtue of prudence, for example, Aristotle states that it is concerned with the deliberation about “things that are good and beneficial for himself, not about some restricted area – about what sorts of things promote health or strength, for instance – but about what sorts of things promote living well in general.” *NE*, 1140a27-29.

Aquinas takes such a position and, though he ultimately moves away from Aristotle, fundamentally agrees with it. In *Summa Theologiae* I-II 1-5 Aquinas discusses such notions more closely. There he points out that all humans desire complete fulfilment and this complete fulfilment is what is meant by the ‘ultimate end’ (*ultimi finis*) of human existence.³⁸⁴ The good, then, is that which rightfully realises this ‘desire for fulfilment’. However, as he goes on to articulate, how one realises such an end is not held unanimously, “since some desire riches, as their consummate good; some, pleasure; others, something else.”³⁸⁵ For Aquinas, this uncertainty about what the good actually is opens up the idea of limits of human nature and, further, sin (both actual and original) which has as one of its effects the confusing of the desire for the ultimate end with the seeking of it in ‘lesser goods’.³⁸⁶ Though Proverbs does not articulate this with the same technical and philosophical language, and it obviously does not have a developed concept of sin as it would appear in the later Christian tradition, there is, as discussed above, the echo here of such ideas – where the human person can seem to be on the path to the good, but whose end is anything but good (e.g. Prov 14:12).

Returning to Aquinas, he goes on to examine a catalogue of spheres where true fulfilment might be found.³⁸⁷ Raised are many human goods, but as to holding the ultimate good, none of those suffice. Rather, it is found in God alone. Even the good quality of one’s soul is not the *ultimate* good. As Aquinas states:

The thing itself desired as the final end is that which gives substance to happiness and makes a man happy, though happiness itself is defined by the holding of it. The conclusion to be drawn is that happiness is a real condition of soul, yet is founded on a thing outside the soul.³⁸⁸

Then in the following article he states it clearly, as translated by McInerney:

For happiness is the perfect good which totally quiets appetite; otherwise, if there still remained something to be sought, it would not be the ultimate end. The object of will, the human appetite, is the universal good, just as the object of intellect is universal truth. From this it follows

³⁸⁴ *ST*, I-II, 1.7. For a recent analysis of Aquinas’s approach to the role of teleological desire see Jean Porter, “The Desire for Happiness and the Virtues of the Will,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 3, no. 1 (2014).

³⁸⁵ *ST*, I-II, 1.7.

³⁸⁶ *ST*, I-II, 1.7 ad 1.

³⁸⁷ *ST*, I-II, 2.

³⁸⁸ *ST*, I-II, 2.7 (Blackfriars translation used).

that nothing can quiet the will of man except the universal good, which is found in no creature but in God alone, since every creature has a participated goodness. Hence God alone can fulfil the will of man.³⁸⁹

As McNerny discusses, this leads to an understanding that a perfectly fulfilled life is impossible in this one and can only be found in loving union with God in the beatific vision; a state of being that can be tasted in this life but not fully experienced.³⁹⁰ A point should be made that, given we are bringing the wisdom of Proverbs into dialogue with Thomistic thought, this notion of the afterlife that is heavily informed by New Testament and early Christian imagery, is not one found in Proverbs. The concerns, articulations and teachings of Proverbs are weighted to how the current life is shaped and, as such, are not concerned with ‘ultimate rewards’ in the same manner.³⁹¹ However, as has been argued previously, there is in Proverbs a vision of God who is beyond human experience but, nonetheless, is imbued within created reality and that such a vision matters in properly conceiving life in its goodness as well as the means to achieving such goodness. Moreover, when we begin to reflect on how such ‘high’ imagery of God both within and beyond created reality impacts the virtuous life including the virtue of prudence, we can find points of similarity between Thomistic thought and Proverbs and, consequently, a place where one can begin to more directly inform the other.

With that in mind, and returning to Thomistic thought more centrally, what this theocentric image of the ultimate good does is open a layer of understanding of the virtuous character that might otherwise remain silent. For Aquinas this is considered in a number of ways including in his integration of the theological virtues as well as the importance of the infused virtues. It is difficult to briefly discuss these ideas because they are, firstly, complex in their own right and, secondly, Aquinas’s own writings shift in such a way that those who follow and interpret him in the field of moral thought do not always have fixed agreement on some of the issues

³⁸⁹ *ST*, I-II, 2.8. As cited in McNerny, *Ethica Thomistica*, 30.

³⁹⁰ McNerny, *Ethica Thomistica*, 30-31.

³⁹¹ Note that Aquinas himself does use imagery found in the wisdom literature including Proverbs (Prov 9:3; Sir 24:4) to articulate the teleological image of human longing, *SCG*, 3.50. According to Aquinas, such high imagery of wisdom and its calling to humanity is an illustration of our natural desire to see God which informs the *telos* of human existence. A task here is to articulate similar notions, though in concert with more modern biblical scholarship.

presented.³⁹² As such, the infused and theological virtues are discussed here only in general terms, but they nonetheless provide a valuable framework on how certain aspects of prudence, as understood both in the virtue tradition broadly as well as in Proverbs, can be more fully informed.

To unpack this we need to briefly revisit the concept of virtues more broadly. Acknowledging that the ultimate good, that is the ultimate end of human goodness, is found in God alone places a limit on the acquired cardinal virtues of prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance. Given the fundamental idea that something from outside the natural human experience is required to find that ultimate end (being union with God himself), Aquinas recognises that the traditional cardinal virtues in themselves are not sufficient. Though they perfect the human person, they do so only in the ‘natural order’. This is articulated in a number of places in Thomistic thought, but is perhaps made most clear in his discussion on the virtues in general in I-II, 55-67 of the *Summa Theologiae*. Aquinas here draws the distinction between the acquired moral virtues and infused virtues. The former, as the appellation suggests, are virtues that can be acquired through the exercise of the human faculties, including the intellect, and in the development of habits through human effort. The latter are bestowed by God directly and are necessary if we are to attain our ultimate end as articulated above. As Aquinas states:

Man is perfected by virtue, for those actions whereby he is directed to happiness. Now man’s happiness is twofold ... One is proportionate to human nature, a happiness, to wit, which man can obtain by means of his natural principles. The other is a happiness surpassing man’s nature, and which man can obtain by the power of God alone, by a kind of participation of the Godhead, about which it is written [2 Pet 1:4] that by Christ we are made partakers of the Divine Nature. And because such happiness surpasses the capacity of human nature, man’s natural principles which enable him to act well according to his capacity, do not suffice to direct man to this same happiness.

³⁹² For example Sherwin’s treatment of how charity (the key theological virtue in Thomistic thought) interacts with the moral life articulates that an understanding of such relationships shifts in Aquinas. Michael S. Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University Of America Press, 2005), 192-202 and passim. Kent similarly notes how a shift even in the *Summa* alone is identifiable. It is why she suggests that “the *Summa* can be better understood as a conversation continuing over the course of many evenings than as the straightforward textbook discussion modern readers might expect.” Bonnie Kent, "Habits and Virtues (Ia IIae, qq. 49-70)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 112.

Hence it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness, even as he is directed to his connatural end, by means of his natural principles, albeit not without the Divine assistance. Suchlike principles are called theological virtues: first, because their object is God, inasmuch as they direct us aright to God: secondly, because they are infused in us by God alone: thirdly, because these virtues are not made known to us, save by Divine revelation, contained in Holy Scripture.³⁹³

What this introduces is the notion of theological virtues, which are identified as faith, hope and charity.³⁹⁴ As the above quote indicates, these virtues allow for the ultimate *telos*, that being participation in God, to be realised and are termed theological because they originate from God alone and are not able to be acquired any other way. The term ‘bestowed’ was used earlier and this is apt as they are ‘gift’ in the fullest sense; hence they are, in regard to the virtuous life, the essence of grace. Further, this graced moral life is found in the gifts of the Holy Spirit which operate within human experience to elevate the person to communion in the Godhead.

Two points need to be made regarding this. As alluded to in the above, the goals of ‘natural happiness’ served by acquired virtues are certainly goods. They are not to be confused as being inherently immoral simply because they have as their object human flourishing in the place of natural existence. To expand, the virtue of justice, even as exercised with only the power of human reason for the sake of human good in the natural order of things, will still properly be a good for the human individual and the community in which they live. However, it may not be able to aid in the ultimate good which is found in union with God. Nevertheless, assuming it is well directed by prudence and is in concert with the other cardinal virtues, it will cause both the agent and her actions to be genuinely good according to her nature. Having said that, according to Aquinas at least, the effects of sin make the virtuous life apart from grace difficult, but nonetheless it is, in principle at least, possible.³⁹⁵ For the

³⁹³ *ST*, I-II, 62.1. A sentiment repeated in various modes, for example: I-II, 3.6; I-II, 4.5-6; I-II, 51.4; I-II, 63.3.

³⁹⁴ The theological virtues receive much attention in contemporary Thomist theology. For a succinct summary of their conception as being discussed here, see Jean Porter, *Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 168-171.

³⁹⁵ *ST*, I-II, 109.2; cf. I-II, 65.2.

sake of space, I simply note, as Aquinas does, that the ‘lower order’ of goods are still sufficient in serving the ends in that order.³⁹⁶

Secondly and most importantly, the above mentioned theological virtues do not sit in isolation. Also introduced above is the notion of ‘infused virtue’, that is, virtues otherwise considered natural that are ‘infused’ with grace. This is a key notion for this discussion. Not only is there a well-regarded understanding that for all the virtues to be virtues, they need to work in concert in the person, Aquinas has taught us that, similarly, the theological virtues and the gracious gifts of the Holy Spirit need to operate in concert with all the other virtues if one is to live the ultimate fullness of life.³⁹⁷ This does not involve a suppression of the naturally acquired cardinal virtues with a replacement set of theologically shaped virtues. As such, the term ‘infusion’ is apt in its imagery as it represents an infusion of grace within the human person; a mixing with a capacity readily present. In this vein, the notion of the infused virtues is not something that suppresses created reality, but elevates our moral activity within it such that the ultimate *telos* can be realised. As Cessario describes it:

The infused moral virtues assume that God has acted in human history in such a way as to make beatific fellowship with himself possible for every member of the race. This elevation of human nature’s destiny requires a proportionate elevation of human nature’s capacities.³⁹⁸

Nonetheless, it always remains a capacity within the created being operative within creation.

Naturally in developed Christian theology, this notion of ‘God’s action in history’ is captured in the image of Christ in which, through the Holy Spirit and his Church, we are invited to participate in the life of the Trinity. However, as Cessario later states, this power to live the ‘elevated life’ is premised in the Hebrew Scriptures:

Christ promises his disciples and, through them, his Church that the power of the Holy Spirit – a divine power – will be bestowed efficaciously on them, so that they and every member of Christ’s Body

³⁹⁶ This is one of a number of topics where there is conjecture pertaining to natural and supernatural goods. Angela Knobel provides a useful summary of the issue. As she discusses, there are schools of thought that suggest that, according to the Thomistic scheme at least, pagans cannot be perfectly virtuous because without active grace operating, even the acquired virtues become at least somewhat obscured to the agent. Angela Knobel, "Ends and Virtues," *Journal of Moral Theology* 3, no. 1 (2014).

³⁹⁷ *ST*, I-II, 51.4.

³⁹⁸ Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 106.

can fulfil man's divinely appointed vocation to holiness of life. In the Old Testament, this divine power is identified as divine wisdom, an active principle in creation, which according to the Book of Wisdom³⁹⁹ abides as the source of everything that man needs to pursue a complete human life.⁴⁰⁰

Taken as a whole, this concept of the ultimate human good and the natural human good echoes the discussion earlier on Proverbs. Relying on human wisdom alone is problematic if the *fullness* of wisdom properly understood (which necessarily includes the divine imagery) is to be grasped. As discussed to this point, this is well established in both Proverbs and in Thomistic thought. However, there is a greater depth to be had in this topic and this can be illuminated when we examine the key theological virtue of charity as it relates to the other cardinal virtues and to prudence in particular.

All three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity have their place, but charity is particularly important in the Thomistic scheme for a number of reasons. Most notably it is closely associated with the beatific end described above as it concerns the love of God as the object directly.⁴⁰¹ Further, the love of God that is captured in the virtue of charity is an all-encompassing one. What is meant by this is, being a love from and for God, charity is a love that, through God, extends to all for all. As such, the virtue of charity, working through the infused moral virtues, concerns the totality of human beings as they act within lived reality including with each other. As Kent discusses, one might inaccurately regard a Christian life to be “mostly a private relationship between the individual conscience and God—chiefly a matter of one's heart and mind, so that one's everyday behavior might be hard to distinguish from the behavior of non-Christians.” However, this is not in keeping with a complete

³⁹⁹ The Book of Wisdom is being cited here. However, such a concept of divine wisdom is found in Proverbs as well. Cessario refers to the Book of Wisdom in particular as it does find some prominence in Aquinas's deliberations on the topic of the infused virtues (e.g. *ST*, I-II 110.1; *De Veritate*, q. 22, art. 1, where Aquinas quotes Wis 8:1). Of particular pertinence Aquinas on two occasions as part of the *sed contra* statements cites Wis 8:7. The first (*ST*, I-II, 57.3) regards whether prudence is necessary for the good life and in the second (*ST*, I-II, 63.3) the question pertains to whether moral virtues are infused. On both occasions Aquinas responds in the affirmative. Though a detailed analysis of Aquinas's use of Scripture is not an essential part of this project, it seems safe to say that Aquinas did see a resonance between the Old Testament concept of wisdom and the notion of the infused virtue of prudence.

⁴⁰⁰ Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 163.

⁴⁰¹ As Aquinas describes, all virtues, formed through acts and habits, get their character from their objects. The object of charity is the love of God himself for love's own sake. *ST*, II-II, 23.4.

understanding of the theological virtue of charity or the virtues in general.⁴⁰² As has been articulated throughout and is apparent especially in the current discussion, the virtues, and virtuous activity included, are only virtues in an integrated mode and, further, the human being is also necessarily communal and so any sense of the virtuous life must account for such integration. As such, the virtue of charity, though pertaining to one's individual relationship with God, will have a necessary influence on the day-to-day lives of human beings as they act with each other and within created reality.

Given that, for all the virtues and their activity to realise the ultimate end (as opposed to the connatural ends alone), it will need to be shaped by the 'mother' of all virtues, charity.⁴⁰³ The question is how does this occur? Aquinas himself used the example of fasting and temperance.⁴⁰⁴ Balanced regular meals are considered a well-reasoned approach to food, useful for human flourishing if approached in that way. It would not be considered intemperate to eat as such at any given time. However, the believer, infused with charity, with a love for the ultimate good would be exercising the same virtue (temperance) but to a different end in the exercise of fasting. The virtue does not change in its proximate object (that being a healthy exercise of bodily appetite), nor does the activity in the general sense (it still pertains to eating food), but the end (natural human fulfilment in the cardinal virtue compared to union with God in the infused virtue) changes the virtue as it is exercised in the life of the believer.⁴⁰⁵

The same reckoning is applied to our particular virtue of interest in prudence, in fact even more so given that prudence is so central to coordinating the other virtues.⁴⁰⁶ Taking the above example, later in the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas stresses that if we were to fast to a point where we are harming our natural bodies, then it is a perversion of the spiritual act and thus sinful.⁴⁰⁷ As such, infused prudence is one that is able to direct temperance (in this case) towards an end that is true to one's

⁴⁰² Kent, "Habits and Virtues," 125.

⁴⁰³ *ST*, I-II, 62.4; II-II 23.8 ad 2.

⁴⁰⁴ *ST*, I-II, 64.4.

⁴⁰⁵ For Aquinas, this points to infused virtues being entirely differing species of virtue, something assumed in this discussion but not elaborated on for the sake of space.

⁴⁰⁶ *ST*, I-II, 65.1.

⁴⁰⁷ *ST*, II-II. 147.1-2; esp. 147.1 ad 2.

entire being – to find a fullness of life that draws our natural activity into right relationship with our fullest end.

This brings another aspect of prudence into focus. Central to our understanding of prudence is that it concerns the ability to see reality rightly (see the previous discussion on ‘truthful vision’) and to use such vision to reason rightly in matters of the particular and move the agent towards the *telos* of fullness of life. Charity as a virtue, the cultivated gift of “friendship with God”⁴⁰⁸ necessarily changes the scope of this vision. Further, it does this in the most substantial way. To expand, charity in the Thomistic tradition is not simply associated with attaining knowledge of God in the cognitive sense. As far as the theological virtues are concerned, for Aquinas, this rests in the virtue of faith which is operative in the intellect; a virtue that allows one to grasp the truth of God. Over both the theological virtues of faith and hope (and all other virtues for that matter), Aquinas teaches that charity is primary as it grasps the dynamism of God’s very being drawing humanity to God’s self – an operative for and in God.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, in the virtue of charity, we come to know God; not simply to know truths about God, but to know the place where our desires as human beings are entirely satisfied.⁴¹⁰ Further, as Aquinas states it, charity is most important in conceiving the virtue of prudence in its fullest capacity as illuminating means to ultimate ends, i.e. charity works through infused prudence to provide it with a vision of what the ultimate *telos* for the agent is:

For it has been stated that the other moral virtues cannot be without prudence; and that prudence cannot be without the moral virtues, because these latter make man well disposed to certain ends, which are the starting point of the procedure of prudence. Now for prudence to proceed aright, it is much more necessary that man be well disposed towards his ultimate end, which is the effect of charity, than that he be well disposed in respect of other ends, which is the effect of moral virtue ... It is therefore evident that neither can infused prudence be without charity;

⁴⁰⁸ A term developed by Aquinas himself, particularly in *Commentary on the Sentence* (see Thomas Aquinas, *On Love and Charity: Readings from the Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, trans., Peter A. Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin, and Joseph Bolin (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), especially d. 27, q. 2, a. 1. Also *ST*, II-II, 23.1.

⁴⁰⁹ *ST*, II-II, 23.6.

⁴¹⁰ Being alluded to here is the faculty of the will where, for Aquinas, the virtue of charity sits. The will is the ‘intellective appetite’ expressed as a desire for the good, not in the particular (which is sensory), but the good as a universal concept (*ST*, II-II, 24.1). This notion is unpacked to some extent below (4.2.1). See also Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love*, 11-24.

nor, consequently, the other moral virtues, since they cannot be without prudence.⁴¹¹

In examining this concept Pinches describes the effect of infused prudence as “adding more ‘realities’ to know.”⁴¹² Moreover, as he goes on to state:

Since we receive full knowledge of God in the communion of charity rather than in the intellectual apprehension of faith, it follows that infused prudence is the result not so much of apprehending but of communing. In short, we know God and God’s world in communion, in friendship.⁴¹³

As such, the elevated concept of infused prudence not only changes what we know in the faculty of the intellect which is where prudence sits, but it allows the believer to exercise truthful vision with a whole new perspective, one only found in God. As Pieper puts it, “by grace-given love, man may become one with God to such an extent that he receives, so to speak, the capacity and the right to see created things from God’s point of view and to “relativize” them.”⁴¹⁴ Pieper here is commentating on I-II, 26.5 of the *Summa* where Aquinas writes that perfect prudence “sees nought else but the things of God.” As Pieper well points out, it is *only* through infused prudence that we see creation accurately as it is put in right perspective relative to God’s self. Thus, one can have such a perspective “*without* at the same time repudiating [created things] or doing injustice to their nature.” In contrast, contempt for the world that “springs from man’s own judgments and opinions” is unfounded arrogance and is unable to recognise created things rightly.⁴¹⁵

4.2.1 Infused Prudence as a Hermeneutical Aid for Proverbs

If we hold such notions and step into our wider examination of wisdom in Proverbs, a new depth of hermeneutical understanding is made available. It was noted above that the theological imagery of Proverbs adds to how we might engage with prudential wisdom. Throughout Proverbs there are admonitions and insights based

⁴¹¹ *ST*, I-II, 65.2.

⁴¹² Charles Pinches, "Pagan Virtue and Christian Prudence," in *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 106.

⁴¹³ Pinches, "Christians Among the Virtues," 106; citing *ST*, II-II, 26.6. One of the key ways that the virtue of prudence operates in the theological sense is through the gift of counsel, that being, according to Aquinas the gift of the Holy Spirit associated with the virtue of prudence. Through such a gift, one is able to take “counsel from God” in discerning right action. *ST*, II-II, 52.1.

⁴¹⁴ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 38-39.

⁴¹⁵ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 39.

not on revealed truths in the prophetic or covenantal mode but, rather, in the lived experience of created reality. Nonetheless, prudential wisdom that is called to be exercised within created reality is most fully conceived as a wisdom that is ultimately found in God alone. Holding that in mind, the image of charity as it works with prudence to build an infused prudence in the human experience gives a technical shape to how we can more fully comprehend this theologically informed prudential wisdom found in Proverbs. There is, as articulated above, an acquired prudence operative that is virtuous, it will rightly recognise created goods as such and will lead to a natural flourishing. That is not taken away, but the theological background in Proverbs and the notion of infused prudence in Aquinas expands acquired prudence to contemplate and engage in the lived experience of created reality with a penetration that allows one to navigate life not only toward the good of the human in nature and of itself, but for the good in totality. This is not to claim that sages who wrote and redacted Proverbs had in mind the notion of infused virtues in the technical sense. As with the discussion on natural law earlier, such technicality is clearly not its mode and one is cautious that we do not ‘read into’ Proverbs that which is not there. However, as demonstrated previously and developed further here, there is an ‘ultimate vision’ of wisdom that is borne out in God alone yet invites human participation such that the fullness of life, including life in God, can be found.

We recall from the earlier discussion that when Proverbs calls out and ties the gaining of wisdom with a ‘fear of the Lord’, the call is not to suggest that prudential wisdom necessarily requires pious activity for its own sake.⁴¹⁶ It is, rather, to enter into dwelling in God in both heart and action. The Thomistic vision of infused virtues gives a greater shape as to why – because without such a development of virtue, the ability to live virtuously to the ultimate end is frustrated. Moreover, it harkens to the relational dimension necessary if one is to gain the fullness of vision that prudential wisdom allows. Recall the invitation of Woman Wisdom (Prov 8); imbued in it is a call to encounter a ‘creative force’ and gain the things of good sense, deep understanding and prudence. But this invitation, with the above in mind, is not simply a cognitive exercise. As is found by many interpreters, the call of Woman Wisdom is couched in relational terms.⁴¹⁷ This is not simply a literary

⁴¹⁶ See in particular section 2.2.4.

⁴¹⁷ For example Clifford, *Book of Proverbs & Our Search for Wisdom*, 23-28.

instrument, rather it is indicating the approach one is to have if one is going to engage the fullness of life that is on offer. In short this approach is a dynamic of love; to love and be loved (Prov 8:17).

This touches on a notion implied in the above discussion, and it pertains to the importance of our desires and will. It is not a dimension that can be analysed extensively here but it is useful to grasp the importance of desires of the will as it operates with prudence in the virtuous life.⁴¹⁸ Cessario in his examination of prudence notes that, “Christian prudence ... combines both the intellectual emphasis of classical philosophy, for example, Aristotle’s doctrine of *phronesis*, with the quest of the Christian tradition – ‘*amor meus, pondus meum*,’ my love, my inclination.”⁴¹⁹ He then goes on to quote Aquinas from the *Summa Theologiae*:

Now this is very difficult to a man without virtue: thus even the Philosopher [Aristotle] states that it is easy to do what a righteous man does; but that to do it in the same way, viz., with pleasure and promptitude, is difficult to a man who is not righteous. Accordingly we read also [1 John 5:3] that *His commandments are not heavy*: which words Augustine expounds by saying that *they are not heavy to the man that loves; whereas they are a burden to him that does not love*.⁴²⁰

As Cessario discusses, this points to how a fuller comprehension of morality is found in an integrated vision of the moral life and how prudence provides a “unitive function.”⁴²¹ Partly to this is the importance of our appetitive makeup. Prudence (as the ability to move from rational deliberation about what is to be done through a right grasp of reality to moral activity) is necessarily shaped by what we desire as our ultimate end. It is this which sits as a major plank in how charity (as a communing in friendship) impacts the virtues, not only in its broadening of vision but by also directing, through prudence, all the virtues to their fullest end. This is so because prudence operates not only in deliberation about things, but by enacting our desire for the good which is kernelled in us in creation and present in the natural law; to

⁴¹⁸ ‘Will’ here is referring to what Aquinas terms as the intellectual appetite. The will functions in drawing one to what one can apprehend in the intellect. A full discussion is not pertinent here, however, the importance of the desire and will in the conception of prudence and as understood in this project can be found in Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 248-267; Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 43-61. See also 1.2.2 above.

⁴¹⁹ Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 79.

⁴²⁰ *ST*, I-II, 107.4.

⁴²¹ Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 80-90.

desire good and avoid evil. This includes what we would understand as our emotions, and Aquinas recognises that our affective desires (what is included in notion of *appetitus*) are essentially created to seek and find goodness, and the fullness of life is thus possible only if our desires are ordered to their proper ends.⁴²² The virtue of charity is the ultimate expression of this. It allows our being to not only express our desires rightly for proximate goods, but to desire the ultimate good at the same time. These rightly ordered desires of the will, what Aquinas terms a rectitude of the appetite (*rectitude appetitus*), allows prudence to integrate right desire into right action.⁴²³ Cates captures the impact of Charity regarding our appetites well:

Charity is partly a change in one's appetite that becomes possible when one apprehends (by faith) that one stands in a fitting relationship to God and to all that God loves. It is a change that becomes possible when one realizes that one has been granted by God, a special capacity to relate to God, not only as the first cause of one's being and goodness (as evident to natural reason) but as an intimate Friend with whom one shares one's life.⁴²⁴

The sage authors of Proverbs also seem to have had an awareness of the importance of desires in shaping the character of one's moral life. Prov 10:23 states that;

Doing wrong is like sport to a fool,
but wise conduct is pleasure to a person of understanding.

The key term here is *śāḥaq*, what the NRSV translates as 'sport'. It captures the idea of delight and pleasurable desire and works elliptically with the second line (hence NRSV inserts the word 'pleasure'). A number of places in Proverbs points out that fools and the immoral find pleasure in evil and their lack of 'good sense'. For example:

Folly is a joy to one who has no sense,
but a person of understanding walks straight ahead. (Prov 15:21).⁴²⁵

⁴²² For a recent treatment of the importance of appetites as they relate to the modern concept of the emotions in Thomistic thought, see Nicholas E. Lombardo, *Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012); Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009). As both these recent authors articulate, the affective dimension of Thomistic thought as it relates to the virtues is not an entirely settled matter. What can be said is that the desire for the good (as an expression of our appetite) is integral for the virtuous life.

⁴²³ *ST*, I-II, 57.4-5; 58.2.

⁴²⁴ Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 198.

⁴²⁵ Other examples include Prov 1:16; 2:14; 26:19.

What seems prevalent here is the understanding that what we love (desire) sets the character and direction of moral formation. It is not simply a case of knowing ‘good things’ as a faculty of the intellect which is the drive of prudence. Rather, it finds fullness as a virtue in conjunction with our desires operating towards proper ends. It is not surprising then that Prov 8:17 states, “I [divine Wisdom] love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.” This pertains to the type of attitudinal stance (in the natural sense) one should have if they are to attain wisdom,⁴²⁶ however, as the discussion had in 2.2.4 on Prov 8:22-36 indicates, there is also a distinctly theological dimension that is required.⁴²⁷

4.2.2 The Natural and Supernatural in Proverbs

The above discussion allows one to bring into focus the commonly expressed notion of ‘grace perfecting nature’. Proverbs does not literally articulate such an understanding. However, as the examination had above attests, the pathway to prudential wisdom found in its fullest is a meeting of two aspects, the created world where we experience reality and the fullness of the creative force of wisdom found ultimately in God alone. In the Thomistic language, the infused virtues (including the infused virtue of prudence) are similarly a meeting of our commonly experienced human nature, and the supernatural love of God - an elevation of creaturely activity to its fullest end.

An issue for much of the Christian theological enterprise has been how these two ‘natures’ relate – and for many the articulation of the dictum *gratia perficit naturam* has been less than satisfactory. As Cessario states, it has been “subject to countless misinterpretations and, therefore, the beneficiary of unmerited deprecation.”⁴²⁸ Porter also provides a discussion on how nature and grace as distinct concepts have substantive value and critiques the tendency in modern Catholic theology in particular to downplay the distinction.⁴²⁹ The downplay is usually based on two inaccuracies. The first pertains to over stressing the distinction of two natures. With such an overstating, the human person is seen as being operative in either one state of being or the other, or, moreover, can pursue only one *eudaimonic* nature or the other.

⁴²⁶ See Fox’s discussion on ‘Reciprocal Love’ in *Proverbs 1-9*, 275-276.

⁴²⁷ See also Wis 7:14. It is also worth noting that Aquinas uses Prov 8:17 as a point of reference regarding the integration of faith and charity as a love of God in friendship (*ST*, I-II, 65.5).

⁴²⁸ Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 23.

⁴²⁹ Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 378-400.

It holds that grace and nature, in this sense, are mutually exclusive spheres of existence and that the faculties of one does not necessitate engagement with the other. This can result in a denigration of nature as something to be suppressed for the sake of the moral life on the one hand or, on the other, a bifurcation of graced reality from created nature such that ‘pure nature’ stands as a complete paradigm of the moral life. Both ‘extremes’ have deficiencies particularly as far as the Christian faith is concerned. More the point here, as has been repeatedly illustrated above, this bifurcation is not necessary in utilising Aquinas. Rather, in Thomistic thought, supernatural grace and nature are distinct but, in the human person, they share in the very activity of being human, including the human faculties, wherever the human may be. Grace perfects nature, it does not supplant it.

Secondly, and this is more the issue that Porter addresses, is the tendency by some to recognise that the supernatural impacts the natural without destroying it, but they go further and suggest that nature distinctively conceived is thus unnecessary. What we experience in a graced existence is a subsumed nature that is, thus, entirely supernatural. As such it is redundant to speak of distinctly natural faculties pursuing natural ends including the natural good.⁴³⁰ Most notably this is a position held by Karl Rahner.⁴³¹ Porter contends that what is at stake if we collapse nature and grace into a single and ubiquitous mode of existence is that nature loses its distinct theological significance as an “independent witness to divine wisdom.”⁴³² The detail of this argument is not vital here, except to note that maintaining a distinction between grace and nature also allows scriptures such as Proverbs an avenue to speak to the moral life.

Having said that, it is possible to interpret the theological and creative imagery of Proverbs in a Rahnerian mode where all existence shares a supernatural order. Roland Murphy is particularly persuasive in this regard.⁴³³ However, this interpretation in the Rahnerian mode is not necessarily the only approach available and, in fact, it is the proposition here that the Thomistic notion that Porter defends can be witnessed in Proverbs. As discussed at various points through this project, the

⁴³⁰ Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 386-388.

⁴³¹ See Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 383 n. 69 for key texts.

⁴³² Porter, *Nature as Reason*, 388.

⁴³³ Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 120-124, 275-277; "Israel's Wisdom: A Biblical Model of Salvation," *Studia Missionalia* 30 (1981). See also section 1.2.3; fn. 120 above.

experience of creation does bear revelatory significance when Proverbs is reflected upon. Prudentially engaging it (as encouraged in Proverbs) is possible in its own right and this does not inherently equate to a mode of operation that is necessarily secular. Murphy's reflections are most useful in drawing that into focus. However, what is being proposed here is that Proverbs can legitimately be read in such a way that the natural and supernatural are interrelated yet distinct and, further, that it might be beneficial to its interpretation to do so. Certainly, as readily conceded, Proverbs does not speak of grace perfecting nature in the same mode found in contemporary theology. Such a notion is built on the corpus of Scriptures and the great doctors of the Church and will not be found spelled out categorically in one book of the Old Testament. However, there are certain aspects of such a notion that can be affirmed by the examination of Proverbs undertaken in this project.

Firstly, despite the call for the human creature to share in the particular perspective which only divine wisdom can provide, God and His complete perspective always remain distinct. For example, God has the totality of 'truthful vision' for He alone has eyes in every place (Prov 15:3). Not only is God the very source of creation (8:22), the very mysteries of the underworld are exposed only to Him, much less the depths of human existence (15:11; 20:27), and even in our moral conduct, what might seem right by external measure and the place of human reckoning is weighed accurately only before God who sees the very being of human activity (21:2-3). Acquiring and adhering to wisdom, as a calling infused with Godself, will cause one to live well, however the fullness of wisdom can only be found in God and, because of this very fact, its sum and end will always remain beyond human experience. As such, one needs something of God; that is to encounter God as God, to fully grasp wisdom. To collapse the natural world into the supernatural risks elevating the human experience to a place that it cannot possibly occupy; that is being able to hold a perspective of complete knowing (or complete wisdom to remain true to Proverbs). Proverbs seems determined to periodically remind the reader that such a perspective is God's alone. We are simply encouraged to share in it in some capacity, this sharing we might term as a gift of grace (though Proverbs does not hold such terminology).

Secondly, there seems to be within Proverbs a recognition of natural goods being goods in their own right. Take for example the following:

Better is a little with righteousness
than large income with injustice. (Prov 16:8)

and;

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord
than great treasure and trouble with it. (Prov 15:16)

Conceptually the verses are near identical except for the ‘fear of the Lord’ motif. The first (16:8) can be plausibly read as concerning the good of the human being and the society in which she lives for her own ends. More specifically, a large income made by unjust activity might fill one’s treasure house, but it is immoral and, therefore, it is better to have less but secure one’s moral health. It is also necessary for a functioning society that its members operate justly, so such an approach points to contributing to a stable and flourishing society. One can make such claims with no theological input. The second reference (15:16) is the same principle but with a more overt theological implication. A humble and engaged respect of the Lord, is better than great material wealth. In fact Prov 15:16 sits in a section held together by word repetitions (15:13-17).⁴³⁴ It lists a catalogue of goods (glad heart, prudential knowledge, a loving dinner table), but has at its centre the image of right relationship with God. The theological imagery in one does not take away from the natural good attested in the other, though it can be argued that it does add to it.

Thus, and by way of conclusion, it is possible in Proverbs to witness a sense of the natural good that is a good in that order. The many modern interpretations that suggest a secular reading of large parts of Proverbs attests to that point.⁴³⁵ However, Proverbs does not stop there. There is, in addition to natural goods, a distinctly theological dimension (and one pertaining to the God of Israel to be more specific) that, while not taking anything away from the former, tunes the prudential wisdom being imparted toward that ‘higher’ order of wisdom that is found in God alone. Such reflections on the Book of Proverbs recognises those goods that might be termed ‘secular’ as goods but, equally, seems to hold an elevated and higher perspective of wisdom that escapes human natural capacity which, nonetheless, can be drawn upon in the natural and, further, elevates natural virtues to the goodness of life in its theologically informed fullest. As such, the prudential wisdom that is

⁴³⁴ Van Leeuwen, "The Book of Proverbs," 149-150.

⁴³⁵ See note 93 above.

esteemed in Proverbs can very much imaged as an infused virtue; necessarily theologically sourced but operative in the human natural order for the sake of his good.

What this demonstrates is that a Thomistic understanding of the infused virtues provides an approach to understanding how the ‘natural goods’ of wisdom expressed in Proverbs maintains theological relevance. Likewise, Proverbs itself can help us reconcile the theological issues that can arise in certain readings of *gratia perficit naturam*. Proverbs and its commitment to theological prudential wisdom attests that one order does not need to collapse into the other, that a distinction of both is possible without undermining either. As discussed, there is a theme throughout Proverbs that navigating life prudentially will inherently be aided by a dynamic engagement with God. Such an engagement elevates what are goods in the sphere of human activity and gives them an end that satisfies both the human good *and* the good in *toto*. The wisdom of Proverbs attests (though clearly does not describe in full) that, to the believer, all natural daily activity has supernatural implications and so an appropriate stance toward, and provision in response from God, allows the means to fulfilling those implications completely.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this project was to form a correlative dialogue between the virtue of prudence especially as it is informed by Thomas and his interpreters on the one hand, and the wisdom teaching of Proverbs on the other. Sitting behind this aim was the call, highlighted in the documents of Vatican II, for modern scholarship to draw on the Scriptures to more readily inform moral thought. In response to this, the approach in this study was not simply to use Scripture in passing, but to engage it in such a manner that utilises the varying tools of modern biblical scholarship where at all possible. As such, it is an engagement between two modern theological traditions – biblical study on the one hand and moral theology on the other. The aim has been to remain true to the scholarly standards demanded of both traditions where possible. The challenge has been to offer enough scholarly depth on the one hand to be thorough, but to do so without becoming lost in the finer detail where it does not serve the overall project on the other. A balance of sorts has been the aim, but undoubtedly certain aspects from one area of study or another could have been more fully explored were space available.

With that in mind, the boundaries of what has been examined were set by where one scholarly tradition has been able to speak to the other in the aim of illuminating a certain field of moral thought – that being, the virtue of prudence and related concepts. For that reason, it should be pointed out that this was not an exhaustive study of either Proverbs or the virtue of prudence. Neither Proverbs nor what the Thomistic tradition has to say about the virtue of prudence exhausts all that there is to say.

Despite these limitations, the project has unpacked some useful points of reflection. Firstly, Proverbs helps to critique the notion that natural law, as informed by Thomistic thought, is non-biblical or non-theological. The opening section, in particular, laid this groundwork by explaining how a more fruitful understanding of natural law (in Aquinas) and created order (in Proverbs) can be had and also set the context in which the virtue of prudence and Proverbial wisdom can be more fully grasped. Then the closer examination of Proverbs brought to the fore various modes where prudential wisdom is expressed. This also brought into greater focus elements such as the communal dimension and the theological imagery of prudential wisdom

found in Proverbs. Part of this is a recognition of the importance of ‘truthful vision’ which is so vital to living the prudent life at any time, but particularly so in our modern context where seeing reality rightly is arguably becoming more difficult despite our advancements in the accumulation and access to information.

The final section brought to the fore two aspects where Proverbs is able to illuminate and add depth to Thomistic teaching. The first is the importance of the socio-political dimension of prudence – that the moral life is never an individuating activity in its entirety. We are shapers of and shaped by the societies we live in. The second drew into sharper focus the theological imagery of the virtues and, while drawing on reflections in Proverbs, unpacked the notion of the theological virtues and infused prudence. By drawing on the notion of ‘grace perfecting nature’, which is so important to the Thomistic imagery of the infused virtues, it subsequently gives avenue for the interpretation of Proverbs to inform a more complete image of the virtue of prudence; a fuller image of prudence that is able to direct human activity not only to the good in the natural (or ‘secular’, as often applied to Proverbs) order of things, but to the fullness of *life* in its theological informed capacity.

Bibliography

- Açar, Dilaver Arıkan, and Rüma, İnan. "External Pressure and Turkish Discourse on 'Recognition of the Armenian Genocide'." *Journal of Southeast European & Black Sea Studies* 7, no. 3 (2007): 449-465.
- Aikin, Wm. Carter. *Moved by God to Act: An Ecumenical Ethic of Grace in Community*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014.
- Alderman, Harold. "By Virtue of Virtue." In *The Virtues: Contemporary Essays on Moral Character*, edited by Kruschwitz, Robert B. and Roberts, Robert C. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1987.
- Ansberry, Christopher B. "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens? The moral vision of the book of Proverbs and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics." *Hebrew Studies* 51 (2010): 157-173.
- _____. *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Translated by English Dominican Fathers London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1924.
- _____. *Summa Theologiae*. Translated by English Dominican Fathers. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.
- _____. *The Disputed Questions on Truth [Vol. 3]*. Translated by Schmidt, Robert W. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954.
- _____. *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries*. London: Blackfriars, 1960-1974 (reprinted by Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- _____. *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*. Translated by Fortin, Ernest L. and O'Neill, Peter D. In *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, edited by Lerner, Ralph New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.
- _____. *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Litzinger, C. I. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964.

- _____. *Prudence: (2a2æ. 47-56)*. Translated by Gilby, T. Vol. 36 *Summa Theologiae*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, 2006.
- _____. *On Love and Charity: Readings from the Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. Translated by Kwasniewski, Peter A., Bolin, Thomas and Bolin, Joseph. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Irwin, Terence. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999.
- Baechler, Jean. "Virtue: Its Nature, Exigency and Acquisition." In *Virtue*, edited by Chapman, John W. and Galston, William A. New York: New York University Press, 1992.
- Barr, James. *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford lectures for 1991, Delivered in the University of Edinburgh*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Translated by Thomson, G.T. Vol. II. New York: T. & T. Clark, 1956.
- Barton, John. "Natural Law and Poetic Justice in the Old Testament." *Journal of Theological Studies* 30, no. 1 (1979): 1-14.
- Baumann, Gerlinde. "Wisdom and Ethics: The Contribution of Sapiential Ethics for Old Testament Ethics." *Verbum Et Ecclesia JRG* 30, no. 1 (2009): 15-24.
- Bondi, Richard. "The Elements of Character." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 12, no. 2 (1984): 201-218.
- Boström, Lennart. *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990.
- Boyd, Craig A. *A Shared Morality: A Narrative Defense of Natural Law Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Publishing Group, 2007.
- Brown, William P. *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996.

- _____. "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 10:1-31:9." In *Character & Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Brown, William P. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2002.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith*. Richmond, Va: John Knox Press, 1972.
- _____. "The Social Significance of Solomon as a Patron of Wisdom." In *The Sage in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Gammie, John G. and Perdue, Leo G. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Budge, E. W. *Second Series of Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*. London: British Museum, 1923.
- Cantor, Harold. *Clifford Odets, Playwright-poet*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2000.
- Cates, Diana Fritz. *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009.
- Cessario, Romanus. *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*. 2nd ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.
- Clements, Ronald E. *Wisdom in Theology The Didsbury Lectures*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992.
- Clifford, Richard J. *Book of Proverbs & Our Search for Wisdom*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995.
- _____. *The Wisdom Literature*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- _____. *Proverbs: A Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- _____. "Reading Proverbs 10-22." *Interpretation* 63, no. 3 (2009): 242-253.
- _____, ed. *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, SBL. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.

Cox, Dermot. "Fear of Conscience?: *Yir'at YHWH* in Proverbs 1-9." In *Studia Hierosolymitana III*, edited by Bottini, Giovanni C. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1982.

_____. *Proverbs: With an Introduction to Sapiential Books OTM*, Edited by Stuhlmüller, Carroll and McNamara, Martin. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982.

Crenshaw, James L. "The Acquisition of Knowledge in Israelite Wisdom Literature." In *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom*. Macon, GA: Mercer, 1995.

_____. "Proverbs." In *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom*. Macon, GA: Mercer, 1995.

_____. "Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom." In *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom*. Macon, GA: Mercer, 1995.

_____. *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* AYBRL. New Haven: Yale, 1998.

_____. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Curran, Charles E. "The Role and Function of the Scriptures in Moral Theology." In *The Use of Scripture in Moral Theology*, edited by Curran, Charles E. and McCormick, Richard A. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.

Davis, Ellen F. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

_____. "Preserving Virtues: Renewing the Tradition of the Sages." In *Character & Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Brown, William P. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002.

Deane-Drummond, Celia. "Bodies in Glass: A Virtue Approach to Ethical Quandaries in a Cyborg Age." In *Glass Darkly: Medicine and Theology in Further Dialogue*, edited by Jones, D. Gareth and Elford, R. John. Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2010.

Deferrari, Roy J., Barry, M. Inviolata., and McGuiness, Ignatius. *A Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas based on the Summa Theologica and Selected Passages of his Other Works*. Baltimore: Catholic University Press, 1948.

Dell, Katharine J. *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

_____. "A Heap of Proverbial Jewels." Review of *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* by Michael V. Fox. *The Expository Times* 121, no. 12 (2010): 627-628.

Demmer, Klaus. *Shaping the Moral Life: An Approach to Moral Theology*. Translated by Dell'Oro, Roberto. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000.

Dobel, J. Patrick. "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership." *Public Administration Review* 58, no. 1 (1998): 74-81.

Eichrodt, Walther. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Translated by Baker, J. A. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1967 [Ger. 1933].

Eijnden, Jan G. J. van den. *Poverty on the Way to God: Thomas Aquinas on Evangelical Poverty*. Leuven: Peeters, 1994.

Elders, L. *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990.

Fox, Michael V. "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 2 (1994): 233-243.

_____. *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 18A The Anchor Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

_____. "The Epistemology of the Book of Proverbs." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 4 (2007): 669-684.

_____. "Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs." *Hebrew Studies* 48 (2007): 75-88.

_____. "The Growth of Wisdom." In *Proverbs 10-31*, edited by Fox, Michael V. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

_____. *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 18B The Anchor Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Frydrych, Tomas. *Living Under the Sun: Examination of Proverbs and Qoheleth*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Fuchs, Josef. *Human Values and Christian Morality*. Translated by Heelan, M. H., McRedmond, Maeve, Young, Erika and Watson, Gerard. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970.

Geroge, Robert, ed. *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*. Oxford: Claridon, 1992.

Gilby, Thomas. *The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Guillet, Jacques. *Themes of the Bible*. Translated by LaMothe, Albert J. Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers, 1960.

Harris, R. L., Archer, Gleason L., and Waltke, Bruce K., eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*. Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1974.

_____. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. London: Notre Dame Press, 1983.

Hibbs, Thomas S. *Virtue's Splendor: Wisdom, Prudence and the Human Good*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001.

Janzen, Waldemar. *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

Jenkins, John I. Review of *Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law: An Analytical Reconstruction* by Anthony J. Lisska. *The Journal of Religion* 78, no. 2 (1998): 297-298.

Kay, Judith W. "Getting Egypt out of the People: Aquinas's Contributions to Liberation." In *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary*

- Lives*, edited by Harak, G. Simon. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996.
- Keenan, James F. *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992.
- _____. "The Virtue of Prudence (IIa IIae, qq. 49-70)." In *The Ethics of Aquinas*, edited by Pope, Stephen J. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002.
- Kent, Bonnie. "Habits and Virtues (Ia IIae, qq. 49-70)." In *The Ethics of Aquinas*, edited by Pope, Stephen J. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002.
- Kerr, Fergus. *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism*. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.
- Knobel, Angela. "Ends and Virtues." *Journal of Moral Theology* 3, no. 1 (2014): 105-117.
- Koch, Klaus. "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?" In *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, edited by Crenshaw, James L. London: SPCK, 1983.
- Koenen, K. "עֲפָלָה." In *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, edited by Botterweck, G. J., Ringgren, Helmer and Fabry, Heinz-Josef. 2004.
- Kossel, Clifford G. "Natural Law and Human Law (Ia IIae, qq. 90-97)." In *The Ethics of Aquinas*, edited by Pope, Stephen J. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002.
- Levering, Matthew. *Biblical Natural Law: A Theocentric and Teleological Approach*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Lewis, Theodore J. "Abode of the Dead." In *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, edited by Freedman, David Noel. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Lisska, Anthony J. *Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law: An Analytic Reconstruction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Lombardo, Nicholas E. *Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012.

- Lyu, Sun Myung. *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- Mahoney, John. *The Making of Moral Theology: The Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- McCabe, Herbert. *God Still Matters*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- McInerney, Ralph. *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*. Rev. ed. ed. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997.
- McKane, William. *Prophets and Wise Men*. London: SCM, 1965.
- _____. *Proverbs: A New Approach*. London: SCM Press, 1970.
- Meyers, Carol. "The Family in Early Israel." In *Families in Ancient Israel*, edited by Perdue, L.G., Blenkinsopp, Joseph, Collins, John J. and Meyers, Carol. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Moss, Alan. "Wisdom as Parental Teaching in Proverbs 1-9." *Heythrop Journal* 38, no. 2 (1997): 426-439.
- _____. "Proverbs with Solomon: A Critical Revision of the Pre-Critical Commentary Tradition in the Light of a Biblical Intertextual Study." *Heythrop Journal* 43, no. 2 (2002): 199-211.
- Murphy, Roland E. "Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs." *Interpretation* 20, no. 1 (1966): 3-14.
- _____. "Form Criticism and Wisdom Literature." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1969): 475-483.
- _____. "Israel's Wisdom: A Biblical Model of Salvation." *Studia Missionalia*, no. 30 (1981): 1-43.
- _____. "Wisdom and Creation." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 1 (1985): 3-11.

_____. *Proverbs*. Vol. v. 22 Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word Books, 1998.

_____. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002.

O'Meara, Thomas F. "Virtues in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas." *Theological Studies* 58, no. 2 (1997): 254-285.

Perdue, Leo G. *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

_____. "The Household, Old Testament Theology, and Contemporary Hermeneutics." In *Families in Ancient Israel*, edited by Perdue, Leo G., Blenkinsopp, Joseph, Collins, John J. and Meyers, Carol. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

_____. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Perdue, Leo G., Blenkinsopp, Joseph, Collins, John J., and Meyers, Carol, eds. *Families in Ancient Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

Pieper, Josef. *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.

Pinches, Charles. "Pagan Virtue and Christian Prudence." In *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

Pinckaers, Servais. "Virtue is not a Habit." *Cross Currents* 12, no. 1 (1962): 65-81.

_____. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Translated by Noble, Mary Thomas. 3rd ed. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.

_____. "Scripture and the Renewal of Moral Theology." In *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, edited by Berkman, John and Titus, Craig Steven. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005.

- Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Bible and Morality: Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008.
- Porter, Jean. *Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.
- _____. *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Novalis, 1999.
- _____. "Natural Law as a Scriptural Concept: Theological Reflections on a Medieval Theme." *Theology Today* 59, no. 2 (2002): 226-243.
- _____. *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005.
- _____. "The Desire for Happiness and the Virtues of the Will." *Journal of Moral Theology* 3, no. 1 (2014): 18-38.
- Rodd, Cyril S. *Glimpses of a Strange Land: Studies in Old Testament Ethics*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001.
- Schroer, S., and Staubli, T. *Body Symbolism in the Bible*. Translated by Maloney, L.M. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001.
- Second Vatican Council. "Dei Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation." In *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Abbott, Walter M. New York: Guild Press, 1966.
- _____. "Optatam Totius: Decree on Priestly Training." In *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Abbott, Walter M. New York: Guild Press, 1966.
- Sherwin, Michael S. *By Knowledge & By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Washington, D. C.: Catholic University Of America Press, 2005.
- Shupak, Nili. *Where Can Wisdom be Found?* Fribourg: University Press, 1993.
- Sigmund, Paul E., ed. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Interpretations*. New York: Norton, 1988.

Van Leeuwen, Raymond C. *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

_____. "The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*, V. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.

Von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. London: SCM Press, 1972.

Wadell, Paul J. "Growing Together in the Divine Love: The Role of Charity in the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas." In *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives*, edited by Harak, G. Simon. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996.

_____. *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2002.

Waltke, Bruce K. "The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136, no. 543 (1979): 221-238.

_____. *The Book of Proverbs*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.

Westberg, Daniel. *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Whybray, R. N. *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974.

_____. *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* JSOTS. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990.

_____. *Proverbs: Based on the Revised Standard Version* New Century Bible Commentary. London: Marshall Pickering, 1994.

_____. *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

_____. "Slippery Words: IV. Wisdom." In *Wisdom: The Collected Articles of Norman Whybray*, edited by Dell, Katharine J. and Barker, Margaret. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

Wozniuk, Vladimir. "The Wisdom of Solomon as Political Theology." *Journal of Church and State* 39, no. 4 (1997): 657-680.

Zabán, Bálint Károly. *The Pillar Function of the Speeches of Wisdom: Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:1-36 and 9:1-6 in the Structural Framework of Proverbs 1-9*. Boston: De Gruyter, 2012.

Zimmerli, Walther. "The Place and Limit of Wisdom in The Framework of the Old Testament Theology." In *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, edited by Crenshaw, James L. New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1976.