SCEPTICISM AND IRONIC CORRELATIONS IN THE JOY STATEMENTS OF QOHELETH?

PRESENTED TO

The Faculty of Divinity

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

In Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

William H. U. Anderson

August 1997

ABSTRACT

This Ph.D. dissertation examines the seven joy statements in the Book of Qoheleth (2.24-25; 3.12-13; 3.22; 5.17-19; 8.15; 9.7-9; 11.8-9) in order to understand their literary nature and effects. The *thesis question* which this dissertation attempts to answer is: Can scepticism and ironic correlations be found in the joy statements of *Qoheleth*? *After examining* the thesis question, the conclusion was drawn (thesis): Even if there is no scepticism *in* the joy statements of *Qoheleth*, one must be sceptical *about* any interpretation of them. In other words: Any reading of the joy statements in *Qoheleth* must be viewed as indeterminate. This conclusion was drawn not only on the basis of the literary nature and effects of the joy statements alone, which were indeterminate, but in the light of scepticism as a philosophy and because of possible correlations with irony.

The methodology for examining the thesis question is progressive. Each chapter of the dissertation provides additional information from the most basic upwards in an attempt to answer the question. Each chapter and section are critically assessed and conclusions drawn. The methodology of this dissertation is as follows:

Chapter one provides a careful analysis of key terms in *Qoheleth*: הבל, רעות רוח, יתר.

Chapter two provides a detailed exegesis of the joy statements.

Chapter three provides a form critical analysis of the joy statements with special attention to their literary form in the overall literary structure of the book and within their overall (1.12-2.26; 3.1-15; 3.15-22; 5.7-6.9; 8.1-10.20; 9.1-12; 11.7-12.7) and immediate (2.17-26; 3.9-15; 3.18-22; 5.15-6.2; 8.10-17; 9.7-10; 11.8-9) contexts, additional exegetical notes, and with reference to *Qoheleth's* overall content and ethos.

Chapter four provides an overview of the philosophy of scepticism and the view there is a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter five examines the three main interpretations of the joy statements as editorial glosses, indicative *carpe diem* and as the essence of *Qoheleth's* message of joy.

Chapter six examines the literary form of irony and whether or not there are correlations between irony and scepticism. The thesis question is then put to the test by examining whether or not the exegeted verses, in their overall context, correspond to the basic elements of irony and scepticism.

Finally, a conclusion is given to the overall contents of this Ph.D. dissertation.

DEDICATION

This dissertation for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy is dedicated in loving memory of my most excellent parents who loved their native Scotland and the Scottish intellectual and cultural heritage.

William Harris Usher Anderson

Musselburgh (1921-1989)

Working Man Sage, Profound Teacher of Life, Practitioner of Wisdom

Margaret Speirs Robb Orr Anderson

Blantyre (1919-1993)

Unconditional Love, Constant Support, Wise Maturity

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the University of Glasgow for the most generous Postgraduate Scholarship which made this research possible.

I would also like to acknowledge those people whose guidance helped me through the research process: my supervisor Dr. Robert Carroll, Mr. Alastair Hunter, Dr. David Jasper and Dr. Joseph Houston.

These acknowledgments have been updated since this thesis has been examined and I would like to thank the two external examiners for their time, energy and consideration in the examination process: Dr. Kenneth Aitken of the University of Aberdeen and Dr. Robert Salters of the University of St. Andrews.

Two close personal friends have been supportive through the whole research process and I would like to acknowledge their special role in it: Paul and Ina Watson.

I would also like to acknowledge the loving support of my wife Joan Boyarzin.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.D.	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
B.D.B.	*Brown, Drivers and Briggs*
B.H.S.	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
Bib.	*Biblica*
B.R.	*Biblical Review*
C.B.Q.	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
C.E.W.P.P.	*The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*
C.L.S.	*Comparative Literature Studies*
C.Q.	*Classical Quarterly*
D.C.H.	*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*
E.D.N.T.	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*
E.T.	*Expository Times*
I.D.B.	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
J.A.A.R.	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
J.B.L.	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
J.N.E.S.	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
J.N.S.L.	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
J.Q.R.	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
J.S.O.T.	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
J.S.S.	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
J.T.S.	*Journal of Theological Studies*
O.E.D.	*Oxford English Dictionary*
O.M.E.D.	*The Oxford Modern English Dictionary*
R.H.Ph.R.	*Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*
T.D.N.T.	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
T.D.O.T.	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
Trin.J.	*Trinity Journal*
T.W.A.T.	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*
T.W.O.T.	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
U.F.	*Ugarit Forschungen*
V.T.	*Vetus Testamentum*
Z.A.W.	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This Ph.D. dissertation did not *begin* with a thesis which would *govern* its examination. Rather, it began with a *thesis question* which would allow the examination of the data to progressively contribute to an understanding of the proposition without drawing conclusions before hand.

The Oxford Modern English Dictionary, adopted for this dissertation, defines 'thesis' as 'a proposition to be maintained or proved'.[1] The *O.M.E.D.* defines 'question' as 'a sentence worded or expressed so as to seek information' or 'doubt about or objection to a thing's [subject's] truth'.[2] A thesis question would thus be: 'a proposition to seek information on a certain subject which is in doubt'; and one should add: 'a question out of which a thesis will come, i.e., a conclusion'. In the case of this dissertation, the thesis question is: Can scepticism and ironic correlations be found in the joy statements of *Qoheleth*?

To answer this question, one must examine the literary nature and effects of the joy statements in *Qoheleth*. The 'literary nature' refers to the 'conceptual, linguistic, grammatical and formal qualities of literature'. The definition of 'literary effect' is 'the result or consequence of the use of conceptual, linguistic, grammatical and formal qualities to produce a desired effect on the reader, understanding or meaning of a particular text, i.e., the author's literary *intent* reflected in the text's literary *function*'.

The various tools of biblical criticism such as source criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism and exegesis, etc., all have a symbiotic relationship with one another: they all originated or came out of each other and they all feed off one another and inform one another. The distinctions of the chapters of this Ph.D. thesis are, therefore, somewhat artificial, but necessary for breaking down and analysing the joy statements in *Qoheleth*. Philosophical analogies, in this case from scepticism, are used in conjunction with the biblical critical tools in order to elucidate the literary *form*, content, *function* and *intent* of the joy statements.

Each section dealing with new concepts is followed by a critical assessment of them, so that as the new concepts are progressively applied or used to aid understanding of following subjects or concepts, an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of their intrinsic ideas keep, *in check*, any conclusions which may follow. 'Critical assessment' is defined in conjunction with the *O.M.E.D.* as 'making adverse or censorious comments which lead to judgments concerning the quality and value of the arguments in question and for the purpose of drawing conclusions'.[3] Sometimes these critical assessments will include additional arguments or comments from, or on, the scholars being critically assessed.

Hopefully, as the examination of the thesis moves on chapter by chapter, more information will add to the understanding and interpretation of the joy statements in *Qoheleth*. In other words: The examination of the thesis

question is a *process* and hopefully each chapter will provide cumulative information which aids in a progressively greater understanding of the literary nature and *effects* of the joy statements in *Qoheleth*.

CHAPTER ONE

KEY TERMS IN QOHELETH: הבל, רעות רוח, יתר

This chapter looks at the linguistic issues of הבל, רוח רעות, יתר because they are key terms in *Qoheleth* which have implications for an overall understanding of the book.[1]

1. THE SEMANTIC IMPLICATIONS OF הבל AND רעות רוח IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND FOR QOHELETH*

The Hebrew root הבל appears approximately 86 times in the Hebrew Bible:[2] 69 times as the absolute noun, masculine, singular (הבל),[3] 7 times in the construct plural (הבלי),[4] 5 times as the absolute plural (הבלים)[5] and 5 times as the verb.[6] The Hebrew phrase רעות רוח will be treated in relationship with הבל at a later point in this section.

A number of views on the semantic implications of הבל will be examined before a critical assessment is carried out on them. 'Semantic' refers to the 'connotations and meaning of words' and 'implications' refer to 'what is implied or suggested rather than by formal expression'.[7] The latter will be examined by way of syntactical and contextual use of הבל in the Hebrew Bible and *Qoheleth*.

A. הבל in the Hebrew Bible and Cognate Languages

Defining the Hebrew term הבל is a difficult task. The semantic range of הבל is extensive and has been translated in a variety of ways.[8] Etymological evidence of the word

leads to a literal translation something like 'breath' or 'vapour'.[9]

These renderings are further supported by a wide cognate understanding of the root הבל in these terms: Jewish Aramaic (Babylonian) 'warm breath', 'vapour'; Jewish Aramaic (*Targumim*) 'breath', 'vanity'; Syrian *habala* 'vapour'; late Egyptian and Ethiopic *hbl* 'breath', 'wind'.[10] The LXX generally renders הבל as ατμος or κενος but only as ματαιοτης in *Qoheleth*.[11] Burkitt thought הבל might be from the original Aramaic הבלא which means to 'exhale'.[12] Whitley, along the same line, adds that הבלא is 'therefore suggestive of a mere waste product which rapidly vanishes'.[13]

Unpacking all of the semantic nuances of הבל is precarious because of the subtle inter-relationships which הבל has with other words. Seybold thinks in all probability that הבל was of onomatopoeic origin.[14] Following Bertram,[15] the onomatopoeic origin may be indicated by the constellation of the root letters, weak vowels and the absence of a primary verbal root.[16] Seybold thus says that

> Diese Tendenz wird begunstigt durch die dem Onomatopoetikon eigene Aufnahmefahigkeit und Offenheit fur neue Festlegungen.[17]

('This tendency is aided by the capability and openness of onomatopoeic words for new meanings'). He further adds that 'Das Wort besitzt demnach offene Sinnbezirke' ('Consequently, the meaning of the word [*hevel*] is open').[18] There might also be reason to think that the onomatopoeic origin may be related to the semantic

relationship of הבל ('breath') in parallelism with רוח ('wind').[19] There are many examples of the onomatopoeic relationship of הבל with רוח but a classic example may be Is. 57.13bc.[20] Referring to idols it says, ישא־רוח יקח־הבל ואת־כלם, 'but all of them the wind will lift, a breath will take away'. The pronunciation of *ha-vel* gives the onomatopoeic effect of 'breath', or in the case of Is. 57.13c, of being 'blown away'.[21]

The example of Is. 57.13 introduces, at this juncture, the complicated metaphorical range of הבל in inter-relationship with other words in the Hebrew Bible. Thus the semantic implication of 'breath' has a 'fleeting' or 'insubstantial' quality about it. Consequently הבל can act as a metaphor of something 'empty' or 'insubstantial', and thus in a derogatory sense, to an 'idol'.[22] This, in the context of Is. 57.13, may provide the reason why idols can be so easily blown away.[23]

The semantic implication of 'empty' in הבל is further reinforced by a close syntactical relationship of הבל with ריק and תהו.[24] The concept of empty can carry the semantic implications of 'vanity' or 'meaninglessness'.[25]

The semantic implication of הבל as 'fleeting' is related to the physical nature of 'breath' or 'vapour'. Thus in its metaphorical sense of 'fleeting' the semantic implication can be that of 'transitory'.[26] This may be related to the concept of the 'breath of life' in Gen. 2.7. The transitory sense of הבל may be best exemplified in the use of הבל in Genesis 4 to represent one whose life was fleeting or 'shortlived'.[27] הבל is also used a number of

times in the Psalms to describe the transitory nature of life as related to the 'breath of life'.[28]

הבל is often found in the semantic field of שקר, עוה and שוא which have the connotations of 'deception', 'deceit' or 'falsehood'. Sometimes these are used altogether in the context of idol worship.[29] Sometimes the concept of 'emptiness' or 'insubstantial', as related to the original etymology of הבל as 'breath' or 'vapour', has the semantic implications or metaphorical value of 'worthlessness'.[30] This value, or lack of value, is often a semantic implication of הבל when applied to idols.[31] Thus to worship worthless idols causes the worshipper to become worthless themselves.[32] The use of הבל in this sense can also apply to foreign intervention.[33]

Seybold also argues that there is a great deal of emotional force to the term הבל.[34] He seems to base this on the evaluative use of the term, especially in the form of laments, polemics against idols and in Ecclesiastes.[35] He also thinks that because of its onomatopoeic origin, הבל has an open range of meaning and the potential for new meanings. This makes it a good candidate for a keyword or catchword, e.g., in Ecclesiastes.[36]

The complicated inter-relationship of הבל and its various nuances provides a general background to how Qoheleth may have understood and used הבל in his book. However, in hermeneutics the meaning of a word is discovered not only by its literal translation and etymological history, but by how the author used the word and intended it to be understood.[37]

B. Understandings of הבל in Qoheleth

Qoheleth used the term הבל 38 times in his book. This is almost half of the occurrences of הבל in the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, the term seems to have a strategic or evaluative purpose in the Book of Qoheleth. Therefore understanding the semantic implications of הבל for Qoheleth will aid in understanding the meaning of his book.

If one consults the wide variety of commentaries available on *Qoheleth*, one will inevitably find a wide variety of interpretations of הבל in *Qoheleth*. For example, the most basic translations of הבל include: 'vanity', 'breathlike', 'ephemerality', 'transitory', 'enigmatic', 'mysterious', 'meaningless', 'futility', 'absurd'.

Staples has provided one of the most extensive treatments of Qoheleth's use of הבל.[38] He ultimately views Qoheleth to have meant by הבל 'unknowable' or 'incomprehensible'.[39] Staples postulates this by a study of Qoheleth's use of הבל to describe the *topoi* of his book.[40] But in fact it is not the *topoi* themselves which are called הבל (because they have inherent benefits to them). Rather it is because humans cannot always understand the mysterious nature of the *topoi* which are 'incomprehensible'. Thus it is this 'ignorance' which is branded הבל and not the *topoi* in and of themselves.

Whitley thinks that Qoheleth understood הבל in its basic sense of 'vapour' but with a variety nuances.[41] Qoheleth essentially used הבל in the sense of

'evanescence' or 'transitory'; though Whitley argues vigourously that Qoheleth also used הבל extensively to mean what is 'false' or 'deceptive' as related to the lack of reward for toil.[42]

Seybold understands Qoheleth to have known and used the term הבל in all its various nuances. Thus Qoheleth can use the term in the concrete sense of 'breath' as related to the 'breath of life' (e.g., 3.19, 21); in 'breath-wind' parallelism (e.g., 1.14); as an expression of 'worthlessness' (e.g., 11.10); in lament (e.g., 2.17); in the sense of 'transitoriness' (e.g., 6.12) and in its very emotional sense of the intensified form in 1.2 and 12.8. Seybold thinks that how Qoheleth used הבל is often related to other keywords such as יתר, חלק and טוב. In such cases, the semantic implication of הבל is that of 'vain', in the special sense of 'Bedeutung des nicht Zahlbaren' ('that which does not count or matter').[43] Finally, Seybold argues that the dominant use of הבל in *Qoheleth* is as an evaluative statement for many things in life. These really act as *devaluative* statements because Qoheleth is often polemical against those things which are considered valuable by others. The polemical use of הבל by Qoheleth exploits the emotional dimension of the term to the full.[44]

Qoheleth's use of הבל is thus his catchword and nihilistic judgment of the world and its values.[45]

a) The LXX's Understanding of הבל in Qoheleth

The LXX consistently renders הבל as ματαιοτης in *Qoheleth*. ματαιος generally means 'vain' but 'denotes the world of appearance as distinct from that of being'.[46] Bauernfeind, in dealing with occurrences of ματαιος in Greek literature, argues that ματαιος has the semantic implication of 'what is against the norm, unexpected, offending what ought to be'.[47] He further argues that ματαιος 'retains its comprehensive metaphysical undertone'[48] and adds:

> The result is that, in accordance with the more optimistic or sceptical view of the life of the one who uses it, its range may be narrow or very broad. This is important, since it does not become a weak and quickly fading formula. When it is used and when it convinces, or begins to convince, a value is assailed and a part of supposed being begins to sink into the world of mere appearance.[49]

Bauernfeind says that the understanding of ματαιος in the LXX is 'purely lexically—that it is constantly used for the other world'.[50] He further adds

> That which distinguishes the LXX from the Greek tragedians, the certainty, the instructive calm, with which the sphere of ματαιος is extended to all the lower and higher and highest values attainable by man, derives, not from a historically conditioned joy in negation, but primarily and exclusively from faith in the one God. Whether this God for His part is a product of the human will for negation, or whether He is as He says in the OT, is itself not a matter for investigation, but for faith.[51]

Balz says of ματαιος in the biblical tradition that it

> . . . refers to a senseless understanding of reality in contrast to the only valid reality of God or to skeptical resignation in the face of God's distance from this world.[52]

According to these scholars, ματαιος has in essence the connotation of 'vanity' based in an 'other worldliness', with the semantic implication of heaven's superior reality in contrast to the obtuse form of reality in this world. They also view Qoheleth as making the most extensive use of הבל (LXX ματαιοτης) and to have used the term in a despairing way: despairing of the vanity of this world but pointing to God.[53]

b) Fox's Understanding of הבל in Qoheleth

Fox's work in assessing Qoheleth's use of הבל is very impressive. He takes a contextual approach and provides a philosophical basis for his rendering of הבל as 'absurd'.[54] In Fox's discussion, he refers to Camus' classic description of the word absurd. Commenting on Camus he says that

> . . . the essence of the absurd is a disparity between two terms that are supposed to be joined by a link of harmony or causality but are, in fact, disjunct. The absurd is an affront to reason, in the broad sense of the human faculty that looks for order in the world about us. The quality of absurdity does not inhere in a being, act, or event in and of itself (though these may be called "absurd"), but rather in the tension between a certain reality and framework of expectations.[55]

In discussing the semantic range of הבל, Fox argues against a strict rendering of it as 'incongruent', 'irony' or 'ironic'. He says that

> . . . incongruities and ironies may be merely puzzling or amusing; the absurd is never that. Some ironies may also satisfy a sense of justice, as when a man is caught in the trap he has set; the absurd never does. . . .[It] is not merely

> incongruous or ironic; it is oppressive, even tragic. The divorce between act and result is the reality upon which human reason founders; it robs human actions of significance and undermines morality. For Qohelet *hebel* is an injustice.[56]

Fox further argues that הבל is not a sense of incomprehensibility. While elements of a situation may be shrouded in mystery and some incomprehensibility,

> . . . to call something "absurd" is to claim a certain understanding of its nature: it is contrary to reason. To call something "incomprehensible" is to avoid a judgment of that sort. "Incomprehensible" allows the possibility that a phenomenon is meaningful; "absurd" denies that it has meaning and suggests its bitter implications for human existence.[57]

Fox further adds that absurd carries the emotional connotations of 'alienation, frustration, resentment, a stale taste of repeated and meaningless events, even resentment at the "gods"'.[58] Fox will go on to argue that the emotional dimension of הבל is reinforced by the close relationship between הבל and רעות רוח.[59] He argues that because רעות רוח is used in conjunction with the הבל judgments, רעות רוח is an auxiliary statement of the emotional import of the intellectual הבל judgments.[60] There is a logical relationship between the two terms. The phrase רעות רוח is literally translated 'chasing after the wind'.[61] It can also be rendered 'the desire of the spirit' or a 'vexation of spirit'. But רעות רוח is quite obviously a metaphor for the vexation inflicted on anyone who tries such a futile activity.[62] As Fox points out: The pursuit of the wind may convey the notion of trying to catch something which cannot be caught, and thus it is futile or meaningless. But in Qoheleth's case, the

immediate goals were achieved.[63] The desired goals just turn out to be unpleasant.

> Thus the phrase, as Qohelet uses it, points to the psychological experience of the pursuer rather than to a characteristic (such as elusiveness) of that which is being pursued.[64]

Perhaps the רעות רוח statements are a wordplay with the futility of 'chasing after the wind' having the psychological and emotional effect of a 'vexation of spirit'. In any case, rendering the phrase as a 'vexation of spirit' is sound in relationship with the הבל judgments, because it is clear that many life situations distressed Qoheleth and were considered bad.[65] Thus the רעות רוח statements may be representative of the psychological and emotional effects of the הבל judgments.

Fox is not denying the other generally recognised nuances of הבל in *Qoheleth*. But since Fox is arguing that Qoheleth was building his case around the term הבל, he thinks that a one word translation of הבל is the best way forward to avoid obscuring Qoheleth's point (whatever that may be). Thus Fox argues that 'absurd' is the best one word rendering of הבל for *Qoheleth*.

2. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF הבל AND רעות רוח IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND FOR QOHELETH

The previous discussion should have alerted the reader to the complicated and subtle problems of determining what הבל means in the Hebrew Bible and for *Qoheleth*. A step by step critical assessment will now be made of these linguistic arguments.

A. הבל in the Hebrew Bible

The only semantic certainty about הבל is that, etymologically and as cognate languages understood it, הבל means 'breath' or 'vapour'. That is where the certainty about the semantic implications of הבל end. However, there are a number of contexts whereby a literal rendering of הבל as 'breath' or 'vapour' would make no sense.

While a case can be made for the onomatopoeic origin of the root הבל, on the basis of its phonetic pronunciation (*ha-vel*) and literal understanding, it cannot be proven.

The subtle metaphorical implications of הבל are even more problematic to prove. However, the notion that הבל carries the semantic implication of 'fleeting' or 'transitory' has some credence, on the basis of the physical nature of 'breath' or 'vapour', in the way the term is grammatically used in some contexts: breath or vapour quickly fleet away.

While הבל can be syntactically related to ריק and תהו, it does not follow that הבל means what they mean. When הבל is used in sentences with ריק and תהו, these may all stand as independent adjectives of those things so described, e.g., Is. 30.7 and 49.4. So because הבל is in the same semantic field or in syntactical relationship with other words does not mean that those words determine or necessarily alter the essential meaning of הבל, nor does it make הבל a synonym for those words. One could argue, moreover, if one took a rather scientific and literalistic

approach to הבל, that, at least physically, הבל cannot mean 'empty' or 'insubstantial', because breath or vapour still constitute some physical presence and not 'absence' as those two terms suggest. The most that can be said of whatever is described as הבל in these contexts is that they are of small or fleeting substance. This is, however, obviously too literalistic and applies a scientific rigour alien to the ancient Near East.

The same thing can be said of the value judgment of הבל representing 'worthless'. All that can be ascertained linguistically of those things evaluatively described as הבל is that they are of small or fleeting value but not of 'no value' (idols do have a physical presence). One also would expect, moreover, that when idol worshippers are accused of being worthless themselves, the verbal form of הבל would be in the Hiphil stem in order to provide a *causative* semantic implication to the root. But this is simply not the case. This may again, however, be too literalistic and not sensitive enough to the contextual uses of הבל. Therefore, the semantic implication of הבל as lacking any real or lasting substance ('empty') may have the metaphorical value of 'worthless': for is there any worth to something that is of insignificant and quickly fleeting substance?

While Seybold makes a great deal about the emotional force of הבל, which he says is 'der ganze *haebael* eigene emotionale' ('the emotional force proper to *hevel*'),[66] he in no way explains nor justifies this semantic implication of הבל. Seybold's best case might be, if he is correct in

his genre analysis, the use of הבל in laments. An overall genre recognition, however, does not necessarily provide the semantic implications for specific words used therein. In the case of the laments where הבל appears, the specific references seem to be to the transitory and limited duration of life.[67] Moreover, one cannot prove there is emotional value to a term because of its context alone. In contradistinction, terms like כעס,[68] מכאוב,[69] שׂנא[70] clearly have a meaning which is attached to the emotional dimension of human being. The same cannot be said of הבל. Notwithstanding, the emotional force of הבל may be a semantic implication of the word. Fox's concept of רוח רעות being an auxiliary statement of the emotional import of הבל may lend weight to Seybold. But a context sensitive analysis can only ever be used with a great deal of caution.

B. Understandings of הבל in Qoheleth

Staples definition of הבל is for the most part erroneous. Whitley rightly criticizes Staples for providing a meaning for הבל which is not based on linguistic grounds.[71] 'Incomprehensible' is not an appropriate understanding of הבל for two basic reasons. One, Staples basis for defining הבל as 'incomprehensible' is related to a faulty etymology from Canaanite mystery cults.[72] Two, there are a number of situations which Qoheleth described as הבל but are comprehensible, e.g., 2.17-21.

Qoheleth may have used הבל with all of the previously discussed semantic implications, i.e., he used it in different ways with specific reference to each *topos*. However, as Fox points out, a multiple rendering approach to translating הבל in *Qoheleth* may in fact obscure Qoheleth's message which was built around the singular term הבל. This may be behind the LXX's single rendering of הבל as ματαιοτης when other appropriate words were available for different contexts. But this can not be proven. Nevertheless, it may be that Qoheleth used הבל in such a way as to imply its original sense but with an overall greater meaning suitable for the theme of his book.

a) The LXX's Understanding of הבל in Qoheleth

One must remember that the LXX is a translation of the Hebrew text of *Qoheleth*. Since all translations are interpretive by their very nature, and have the potential to misunderstand texts and mistranslate terms, some caution needs to be exercised when appealing to them. Moreover, as Barr points out numerous times in *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, Bible dictionaries, and in particular those with a theological slant, often have the tendency to be overly interpretive and import theological meaning into words which are not necessarily a part of the word's semantic implications.[73]

Bauernfeind and Balz may be guilty of the above. Nevertheless, there is probably some validity to notion of the 'vanity' of this world as opposed to the divine realm

on the basis of the exploration of philosophical and theological issues in Greek literature. This in turn may be related to why the LXX went with the singular use of ματαιοτης in their translation of *Qoheleth*; though it does not follow that Qoheleth used it in this sense, nor is there any evidence of a concept of afterlife in his book.[74] But one should be cautioned that the LXX may have had another agenda: to save *Qoheleth* for the canon and this is why they went with ματαιοτης and its semantic baggage.[75]

b) Fox's Understanding of הבל in Qoheleth

Fox made use of Camus' philosophical concept of 'absurdity' in order to draw certain analogies. He is careful not to deny the other known semantic implications of הבל in the Hebrew Bible and for *Qoheleth* but makes an important point with regard to Qoheleth building his case around the term הבל.

Fox's discussion of רעות רוח may have some validity. Nevertheless, finding the root and etymology of רעות is a difficult task. רעות may come from the Aramaic root רעע. But this is unlikely because רעע means 'to break' and makes no sense of רעות רוח in *Qoheleth*; though Fox thinks it does following the Syrian version (*thurapa' drucha*) and the Targum (*t^{e}birut rucha'*).[76] Nevertheless, the problem remains because רעע is never conjugated as רעות or רעיון.[77] Some scholars have postulated the root ענה which means to 'answer', 'sing', 'busy with' or 'be bowed down, afflicted'.[78] But this is unlikely and would need a major

textual emendation (adding ר and removing נ) which is unwarranted. If the root of רעות is רעה, then there are many possibilities: to 'shepherd', 'feed on', 'associate with' (as in a friend), 'desire' or 'pursue'.[79] Most commentators compare Qoheleth's רעות רוח with Hos. 12.2: רעה רוח ורדף קדים. They view רעה to be in parallelism with רדף. רדף is well known to mean 'pursue' or 'persecute'.[80] If *Qoheleth* has a conceptual dependence on Hos. 12.2 for רעות רוח, רעה may thus come from the root meaning 'to pursue'. Therefore רעות רוח would be the 'pursuit of wind' with the metaphorical implication of 'futility'. However, רעות may also be from either the roots רעה or רעע meaning 'bad', 'evil', 'distress' or 'affliction'.[81] Thus in conjunction with רוח meaning 'spirit', the phrase means 'affliction of spirit'. This is the Vulgate's understanding of רעות רוח: *afflictio spiritus*. Fox probably has a sound footing for his rendering of רעות רוח as a 'vexation of spirit' on the basis of word play and in relationship with the הבל judgments.

While Fox's notion of existential absurdity may be a modern anachronism, there may be some validity to it for understanding Qoheleth's use of הבל. Fox could have found more support for his philosophical approach if he had examined the LXX's use of ματαιοτης and used Bauernfeind's understanding of it in Greek literature, the LXX and *Qoheleth*.

3. THE SEMANTIC IMPLICATIONS OF יתר IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND FOR QOHELETH

The Hebrew root יתר is a very common root and it appears approximately 226 times in the Hebrew Bible in various forms.[82]

A. יתר in the Hebrew Bible and Cognate Languages

According to Kronholm, 'it is not hard to determine its [יתרI] basic meaning: "be extra, surplus"'[83] and *B.D.B.* supports Kronholm with 'remainder', 'excess', 'preeminence'.[84] יתרII, which refers to 'string', 'cord', 'bow-string', is clearly not a possibility for Qoheleth's use of יתר in any context.[85]

יתר, with the meaning 'remainder', 'surplus', is also found in the cognate Akkadian root *wtr*, frequently in economic texts but also in astronomical and mathematical sources. The Akkadian noun *atartu* means 'surplus' in accounting but can be used to mean 'exaggeration' with the connotation of 'lie', i.e., to lie by means of exaggeration. The Akkadian adjective *atru* can mean 'excessive', 'extraordinary' and the noun *atru* 'supplement', 'supplementary payment' or more generally 'price', 'cost'.[86]

In general, cognate appearances of יתר in Syriac *itar*, Ethiopic *tarafa*, Arabic *watara*, and Ugaritic *ytr*, align with usage in the Hebrew Bible with primary reference to 'remainder', 'excess', 'surplus';[87] though occasionally יתר

is used in the Hebrew Bible 'with implied inferiority in number or quality',[88] i.e., from a negative perspective.

B. יתר in Qoheleth and the LXX

יתר appears in *Qoheleth* 18 times: 10 times only in the Hebrew Bible as the masculine absolute noun יִתְרוֹן (1.3; 2.11, 13 [2x]; 3.9; 5.8, 15; 7.12; 10.10, 11), 3 times as the *qal* masculine participle יוֹתֵר (6.8, 11; 7.11), 4 times as the *qal* masculine participle יוֹתֵר used as an adverb (2.15; 7.16; 12.9, 12) and 1 time as the masculine absolute noun מוֹתַר (3.19).[89]

The masculine noun יתרון is only found in the Hebrew Bible in *Qoheleth* and in some rabbinic literature, e.g., *Rabbah Midrash Ecclesiastes*. Fredericks argues that the reason why the absolute ending ון is used in *Qoheleth* with יתר is not because of any Aramaic influence but rather because of the *abstract* nature of the book;[90] this is plausible but questionable.

יתר eventually came to refer to that which is 'leftover' with the implication of 'profit' or, in a metaphorical sense, 'advantage'; though Scott argues that the 'difference' from a transaction relates to its 'value', and in the case of the rhetorical question מה־יתרון: 'Qoheleth says there is none'.[91] Schoors follows Scott and Ginsburg in the understanding that the rhetorical question מה־יתרון requires a 'strong negation'.

The LXX renders יתר in *Qoheleth* consistently as περισσεια, meaning 'to be present overabundantly'.[92] The

idea, therefore, of Qoheleth's use of יתר to mean 'surplus' is thus supported by the LXX. Hauck argues that in 3.19 the Greek phrase παρα το κτηνος is used for the noun מוֹתַר to mean '"to have advantage over" others',[93] and in the case of 3.19, specifically man's *advantage* over the animals.

For Ogden, 1.3 is the 'programmatic question' (מה־יתרון) of *Qoheleth*, the question Qoheleth is seeking to answer; which Ogden concedes the required response is: 'there is no *yitron*—and leading into the advice that life as a gift from God must be enjoyed'.[94] The programmatic question appears 3 times in Qoheleth all with reference to work and its profitability (1.3; 3.9; 5.15).

A careful examination of how Qoheleth used the term יתר can be found as follows: with reference to work and commercial activity where a rendering something like 'profit' or 'gain' is required by the context (1.3; 2.11; 3.9; 5.8, 15; 10.11); where an 'advantage' over against something else (2.13 [2x], 15; 3.19 [מותר]; 6.8, 11; 7.11, 12; 10.10); adverbially (7.16) and finally with the sense of 'in addition to' in the epilogue (12.9, 12).

There is another common use of the root יתר in the Hebrew Bible which may have a bearing on *Qoheleth*. The noun יֶתֶר can mean 'remainder', 'remnant': 'This remainder is seen primarily from a negative perspective, implying that what is left is less in number or quality' (*sic*).[95] Could this 'poor remainder' be the primary sense in which Qoheleth used יתר, perhaps as a pun on the economic sense of the word and in relation to the rhetorical question מה־יתרון which requires a *strong negation*? This would

certainly correspond to the negative content and ethos of his book and the *hevel* statements. This 'poor remainder' is used some 95 times in the Hebrew Bible (almost half of its occurrences), and thus Qoheleth might well have intended a pun between the positive economic sense of יתר and the negation of his programmatic question, negative evaluation of life and activities under the sun as *hevel*.

Ogden has done a careful study of יתר in *Qoheleth*, and comes to a unique conclusion; but since his arguments on יתר are integral to his essential message of joy interpretation, they will be dealt with in chapter five.

4. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF יתר IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND FOR QOHELETH

The extensive evidence of יתר in cognate languages, the LXX and the Hebrew Bible (266 times) leaves little doubt that its general meaning is 'surplus', 'excess', 'profit' or 'gain', and that this, in the commercial context of *Qoheleth*, is its meaning for Qoheleth. What may complicate matters is if the negative sense of the word is being alluded to with regard to Qoheleth's employment of the commercial sense of יתר. This is likely in conjunction with the negative response of the rhetorical question מה־יתרון because even what is 'left over' (profit) appears to have little benefit 'under the sun' on the basis of death's leveling effect and the *hevel* evaluations. Chapters four and six will help illuminate the possibility of an ironic use of יתר in *Qoheleth*.

Ogden's view that מה־יתרון is the programmatic question which Qoheleth sought to answer is questionable for two reasons. First of all, the source critical problems of *Qoheleth* are notoriously difficult, especially with regard to 1.2-3; and that מה־יתרון is original to *Qoheleth* can never be held without doubt because of these source critical problems. Secondly, the so-called programmatic question is only asked three times (1.3; 3.9; 5.15); and while Ogden might have a case for 1.3 being indicative of a programmatic question for the book, 3.9 and 5.15 appear in the middle of the book, and nowhere near the end of the book, as one would expect if this was the main question the author was trying to answer (unlike the evaluative *hevel* statements). Ogden is clearly wrong, moreover, that the term יתר does not have any 'commercial' or 'material' sense in *Qoheleth* (which he says is left to the term חלק). Qoheleth's commercial and materialistic nature is clearly evident in the text itself (1.3; 2.1-11, 17-23; 3.9; 4.4-9; 5.9-6.11; 7.11-12; 11.1-6) and recognised by scholars alike (Dahood, de Jong, Kugel, Seow, Whybray, *et al.*).[96]

5. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING יתר, רעות רוח, הבל

Qoheleth may have intended to use all of the semantic nuances of הבל within a context specific approach, i.e., with a variety of different meanings for הבל as related to his *topoi*. But it is more likely that he used the term הבל as a running play on words, i.e., he used הבל to play

off the specific *topoi* he discussed and imply an ultimate metaphorical meaning. Thus Qoheleth may well have used the term in a very *loaded* sense, i.e., with many or all of the above mentioned nuances of the word, but ultimately with the *loaded implication* of *absurdity*. For example, death presents an enormous problem for Qoheleth and הבל might well be related to the 'transitoriness' of a fleeting life; or the 'emptiness' of life's activities may also be related to the nuance of 'meaningless', and in the loaded sense of הבל ultimately imply that life is 'absurd'. Perhaps רוח רעות is a play on words with הבל whereby the futility of 'pursuing the wind' has the psychological effects of a 'vexation of spirit' and is thus representative of the emotional value of הבל. Collectively the הבל and רעות רוח statements may represent the 'existential absurdity' of human being and there can be no denying that the *hevel* and רעות רוח statements are of a *negative force* in *Qoheleth*.

Because of the complicated and subtle semantic implications of הבל, and the difficulty in ascertaining its meaning in specific contexts, it is probably not valid to render הבל unilaterally as 'absurd' in *Qoheleth*. But Fox may be right that multiple renderings of הבל in *Qoheleth* obscure the author's message. Therefore, following Garrett's advice,[97] it might be best to simply transliterate the Hebrew term הבל and provide an explanatory note of all the semantic implications for the reader so they can evaluate each use for themselves and in the overall context of the book, albeit *negatively*. Thus the transliterated term הבל could be understood in the

context of the *loadedness* with which Qoheleth used it. This applies a context sensitive approach but has the benefit of a unified and unilateral recognition of this technical term for *Qoheleth* without denying its multiple semantic nuances and implications.

The הבל judgments are often 'prolepticisms', which are a *rhetorical device* with the literary *function* to announce *in advance* the conclusion of some subject under investigation;[98] and in the case of *Qoheleth*, the conclusion or value judgment (הבל) of the various *topoi* under investigation, e.g., 1.14; 2.1, 17; 4.7; 7.15; 11.8.

There can be little doubt, on the basis of the extensive use of יתר in the Hebrew Bible (266 times), cognate languages and the LXX that יתר means 'excess', 'surplus' or 'profit'. It is also clear in *Qoheleth* that the term is used with some commercial sense but also in the sense of 'gain' or 'advantage'. There can also be little doubt that מה־יתרון is *a* question of Qoheleth (1.3; 3.9; 5.15) which he was trying to answer; but it is not at all clear that it was his programmatic question and there is considerable doubt on such a proposition.

If *Qoheleth* is sceptical and contains ironies, which chapters four and six will show, then it is very likely that Qoheleth used the term יתר in the negative sense of 'little value' or 'poor quality' (almost half of the occurrences in the Hebrew Bible), i.e., as a pun on commercialism, materialism and the utter lack of profit or gain under the sun in conjunction with the *hevel* evaluations.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGESIS OF THE JOY STATEMENTS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the joy statements through a detailed exegesis of their linguistics and grammar in order to determine their linguistic and grammatical meaning.

1. QOHELETH 2.24-25

Qoheleth 2.24-25 begins with the stock phrase אין טוב. This introduces a comparison;[1] though there is some dispute that its literary nature is interrogative (cf. Gordis). טוב rarely carries any connotations of ethical good in the Hebrew Bible; and with the comparative phrase it denotes what is 'better'. There is some question, however, as to why the comparative מן is omitted before שיאכל. Some scholars suggest it is a haplography (Barton, Fox, Gordis, Whybray), and this may be supported by the textual evidence of *Targum Secundum* and the *Syriac* where the מן is present (משיאכל); but the above scholars go too far when they support a haplography on the basis of the comparative analogies of 3.12 and 8.15 where the construction is כי אם . . . אין טוב or 3.22 where the construction is טוב מאשר אין. The use of the comparative מן is not necessary in Hebrew and אין טוב is adequate on its own to indicate comparison; though Whybray suggests that its absence could be interpreted as 'man derives *no* good from [enjoying food and drink]' (cf. also Ginsburg). Qoheleth's erratic Hebrew

style only accentuates this problem. Crenshaw probably demonstrates prudence when he says that אין טוב indicates 'relative advantage: not "This good," but "There is nothing better."'

There is textual variation of באדם in *Alexandrinus*, *Vaticanus* and *Codex Ephraemi*, as well as the *Peshitta*, which all read לאדם; the LXX omits any preposition whatsoever. 6.12 and 8.15 demonstrate a similar, though not identical, grammar: מה־טוב לאדם and אין־טוב לאדם respectively. A textual emendation is probably the best solution for באדם in 2.24; unless in this particular instance Qoheleth was indicating some deep existential meaning, perhaps implying instrumentality in the ב of באדם: 'There is nothing better *in* humanity than . . .'. But this is unlikely and may simply be attributed to either Qoheleth's erratic Hebrew style or a spelling mistake corrected by other manuscripts.

The use of אכל and שתה should be taken in their most basic sense of 'eat' and 'drink'; but as elsewhere in *Qoheleth* and the Hebrew Bible, אכל may carry the semantic force of 'consume', possibly with the connotation of 'enjoyment'.

The next clause, והראה את־נפשו טוב בעמלו, is problematic. Crenshaw suggests that the use of the *hiphil* with ראה, and in connection with נפשו ('his body'), may indicate the 'pampering of one's body' (citing 3.13, 5.17 and 6.6 as other examples); but neither the verb itself nor his examples can sustain this view. הראה often carries the connotations of 'experience' in *Qoheleth*; but in this

context probably refers to 'sight' versus 'experience'. Its use with direct object נפש, which often has the deeper meanings of 'person', 'soul' or 'self' rather than just 'body', may indicate some existential nuance here, especially when some commentators like Gordis and Crenshaw view the sequencing of the perfect and imperfect verbs in the sentence as emphasising the present and expressing a universal truth. However, the verb and direct object probably mean, in the simple sense of the grammar, 'show himself'.

Fox contends that עמל 'carries heavy negative connotations'. He rightly begins with the original meaning of the noun עמל which means 'trouble' or 'suffer', but further argues that it carries the notion of 'futile', 'arduous burdensomeness' or 'toil'. It is activity which demands effort beyond its rewards, and as such, does not adjust itself to reality. Fox further argues that עמל may be a metonym for the 'material benefits' or 'earnings' of one's toil; though Salters disputes this in his Ph.D. thesis.[2] Fox's view, however, may be supported by the cognate Assyrian term *nimelu* which means 'gain' or 'possession'. The use of טוב with this clause may be rendered 'beneficial'. *Midrash Rabbah Ecclesiastes* is surely wrong when it suggests that עמלו should be read עולמו, which Cohen translates as 'his world'.

The last sentence in 2.24 begins with the emphatic constructions גם־זה and ראיתי אני: 'This *too I* saw'. Gordis rightly points out that the subject of זה comes after the verb of perception in the subordinate clause היא . . . כי.

In this case the compound subject is מיד האלהים ('from the hand of God'). The implication would then be that the ability to enjoy life (eating, drinking, work) comes from God. This may be further supported by the next clause in 2.25; if a textual emendation proves acceptable to ממני.

2.25 is an explanatory clause to 2.24 as indicated by the כי preposition (LXX οτι). Its literary nature is a rhetorical question, as indicated by the interrogative מי, and anticipating an emphatic negative response ('no one'!), which may give a positive endorsement of the idea of enjoying life; but this might be reading too much into the text.

The last part of the clause is highly problematic. The LXX, *Theodotion*, *Syriac* and the *Peshitta* all read יחוש as ישתה (πιεται); whereas *textus Graecus ex recensione Origenis*, *Aquila* and *Symmachus* all read יחוש as יחוש (θεισεται), 'experience pain'. The etymology of the root חוש only enhances the problematics. As Whybray rightly points out, there is little sense in understanding חוש to be from the root meaning 'haste'; although its Akkadian cognate *hasu*, can mean either 'haste', or as Ellermeier has argued, 'be worried', 'anxious'.[3] This might be, then, related to the *Targum's* use of חשׁשׁא ('anxiety'). Fox aligns with this interpretation and links 'hurry'/'worry' with 'fret', in which he identifies the one who *frets* with the 'sinner' of 2.26 and the one who *eats* as the one whom God favours. There are late Hebrew and Aramaic roots (חוּשׁ, חשׁשׁ) which mean 'feel pain', 'suffer'; but these do not relate to 'fear' or 'apprehension' (so Gordis). Another

possibility is that it is from the root חוש meaning 'feel', 'enjoy', and if related to the Arabic root *hassa*, would make good sense with 2.25 acting as a coordinate clause to 2.24. Gordis raised other possibilities by suggesting that, in relationship with the next explanatory clause in 2.26 (which speaks of both the ability and failure to enjoy) and חוש in 2.25, חוש 'should therefore have a significance contrary to יאכל'. This therefore implies that חוש should be understood as coming from the root meaning to 'fail to enjoy', i.e., 'suffer'. Whitley disagrees with all of the above interpretations and makes a number of connections with the *Mandaic* and rabbinic understanding to 'feel pain', 'meditate' or 'consider', and thus renders חוש as 'for he who eats and considers'. The *Vulgate* paraphrases it as *et deliciis affluet ut ego* ('and abound in delights as I').

The textual evidence, identification of the root, etymology, and the precise meaning of חוש, are ambiguous.[4] One should also note that like the versation of bibles, the presence of the *sof passuq* at the end of 2.24 is a subjective and arbitrary decision of the Massoretes. It should probably be ignored since the three clauses of 2.24-25 appear to be coordinate. The best option, if 2.24-25 are coordinate, is then to view חוש as coming from the root meaning to 'enjoy'. This is on the basis that 'because this too is from the hand of God' (2.24b כי מיד האלהים היא . . . גם־זה), and implies that even *the ability to enjoy* one's material benefits comes from God (so Crenshaw, Fox, Gordis, Whybray).

An equally thorny problem as the rendering of חוּשׁ, is what to do with חוץ ממני ('without me'), and in particular, the first person singular pronomial suffix נִי. A number of solutions are possible. The first is to accept it on face value, as it stands in the text, and render it 'from me'. This presents certain difficulties, however. Who is 'me'? Two possibilities present themselves. One, the book resumes the first person royal fiction of Solomon, with the effect that, as the greatest of all hedonists, only 'with me', '*in my fashion*', can one truly enjoy themselves. But this is a highly unlikely interpretation.

The second possibility, a rather unique one, was advocated by Ginsburg who says that:

> . . . Coheleth places himself in the position of the labourer, and says, "If I toil, who should enjoy the fruit of my toil more than I?".[5]

He backs up this rather remarkable idea by quoting Rashi: ומי ימהר לבולעה מבלעדי מי ראוי לאכול את יגיעי ('who is entitled to eat my labours, and who should hasten to partake of them, except I?').[6] He further quotes Ibn Ezra who says: היש מי שהוא ראוי לאכול אותו כמוני ('is there any one so entitled to eat it as I am?'). While this is an interesting solution to the problem, the immediate context of 2.24-25 argues against such a notion of a first person singular pronoun. Therefore, another solution must be found.

The third solution, favoured by Dahood and followed by Whitley, is to view the final *yod* as a Phoenician form of the third person pronoun. But Dahood's evidence has been

strongly challenged by Schoors,[7] and in particular, Zeit has raised serious doubts on Dahood's statistical evidence on the basis of a contextual analysis of his examples.[8]

The most common solution to the problem of the first person singular pronoun is textual emendation. A number of manuscripts like the LXX (αυτου), *Coptic*, *Syriac*, Jerome and the *Peshitta* all read נו (the third person 'him') with the antecedent being 'God' in 2.25a; and in the immediate context of 2.24-25 and in relationship with the rhetorical question, this seems like the best solution.

A reasonable translation of 2.24-25, in the light of the above exegesis, and with some textual emendation (especially ממני in 2.25), would then be: 'There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and show himself his work is beneficial. I saw that this too is from the hand of God – because who can eat and enjoy without him?'.

2. QOHELETH 3.12-13

The root ידע means to 'know' but often carries the connotations of 'experience', and in the case of the experienced wise man, a 'knowledge based out of experience'. The use of the first person is typical of Qoheleth and the above connotations: he 'knows from personal experience'; or as Whybray suggests: 'he realised' (from personal experience).

The stock phrase אין טוב appears here, and unlike 2.24, with the coordinate construction כי אם clearly indicating comparison.

The textual apparatus of *B.H.S.* suggest that, as in 2.24, בם should read בארם; though the LXX (εν αυτοις), the *Peshitta* and *Vulgate* all support the *Massoretic Text*. This provides a singular noun appropriate for the singular pronoun at the end of the sentence; though Hertzberg defends the Massoretic reading: the ם suffix could be understood as a corporate pronoun, i.e., *this man* represents the community of humanity. The fact that the sentence ends with a singular pronoun makes this a dubious reading; but there are two Hebrew manuscripts, *Kennicott (Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum)* and *Cum Variis Lectionibus II* (552),[9] as well as the *Targum*, which read בארם. Driver explained בם as an abbreviation of בארם.[10] Gordis has an ingenious explanation for בם in 3.12. He views both the ם and the ב as dittographies: the ב from טוב and the ם from the כי, the old style script of כ which looks like ם. While this is a bit of a stretch, Gordis' conclusion is true: the deletion of בם makes for a perfect sentence: 'to enjoy and to do good in life'. Whybray thinks that no emendation is necessary.

As Gordis points out, from the opposite in II Sam. 12.18 (ועשׂה רעה, 'be miserable'), there is no need to view לעשׂות טוב as the Grecism ευ πραττειν ('to succeed' or 'to fare well'); though Whitley argues for some reflection of it. טוב probably carries no moral connotations (cf. 7.20) but simply means to do 'good' in the sense of, as Whybray puts it, 'realise happiness'. The ב probably carries the temporal force of 'while' in בחייו: 'while he lives'.

3.13 probably emphasises the previous thought in 3.12, as indicated by the emphatic use of גם. Ginsburg concludes that this statement is still governed by the original ידעתי in 3.12. There is an anomalous use of the imperfect (יאכל) followed by *waw* reversives (שתה and ראה). *Waw* reversives are not uncommon in *Qoheleth* (see 2.24; possibly 4.11; 5.5, 6; 12.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6);[11] and it is not certain what to make of them other than putting them down to Qoheleth's erratic Hebrew style.

Whybray is surely correct when he says that 'every man' (כל־האדם) is qualified by the relative pronoun שׁ attached to יאכל ('every man *who* . . .'): enjoyment is not to be universally had, but for those who can experience enjoyment, and this is indeed the gift of God (היא is used as the copula between אלהים and מתת).

Crenshaw views 3.13 as Qoheleth defining what 'faring well' means by using the same formula he gave in 2.24. There may be an analogy between 3.13 and Robert Burn's *Selkirk Prayer*.

> Some ha'e meat and canna' eat;
> And some wa'd eat that want it.
> But we ha'e meat, and we can eat;
> And may the Laird be thank-ed.

The idea being: There are many disabilities (physical or want) which prevent the enjoyment of the basic things of life (eating and drinking) but for those who can enjoy them – this is the gift of God.

On the basis of the above exegesis, a reasonable translation of 3.12-13 would then be: 'I know that there is nothing better for them than to enjoy and do good while one

lives. Moreover, every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his work – this is the gift of God'.

3. QOHELETH 3.22

The *waw* conjunction on וראיתי is probably an emphatic and conclusive 'so':[12] '*So* I saw that . . .'. The *Peshitta* adds בם after טוב, as in 3.12: It is either a dittography on the *Peshitta's* part, or the *Peshitta* presumed in the case of 3.22a, that it is a haplography on the part of the *Massoretic Text* (between מאשר and טוב) based on the syntax of 3.12. Gordis views בם in 3.12 as a dittography between כי and טוב; but this is unlikely because אין comes in between them and adds nothing to the sense of the clause. The phrase אין טוב מאשר is simply an alternative form of the comparative statement 'there is nothing better than *from which* . . .'; though the מאשר is unnecessary.

The preposition ב can and often does carry the connotation of 'from', both in *Qoheleth* and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. There is no need to appeal to Dahood[13] and Phoenicianisms on this point since there are plenty of other exegetes who understand this connotation of ב, e.g., Ibn Ezra, Luther, Ginsburg, Castelli.[14] The ב on במעשיו probably means 'from his work', or 'from his earnings'.

The explanatory clause introduced by כי, refers to חלקו. חלק generally relates to 'portion' with the implication of 'assigned portion', i.e., a portion which is one's right or obligation, as in an 'inheritance'. Given Qoheleth's rather deterministic viewpoint, it is likely

that חלק implies some sense of '*one's lot*'. The demonstrative pronoun also acts as the copula: 'because that *is* his lot'.

The כי of 3.22b introduces the overall explanatory clause for the joy statement which is a rhetorical question, as indicated by the interrogative particle מי. The ב is redundant on the particle מה, which is simply 'what'.

אחריו has evoked a number of interpretations. Literally it means 'after him'; though Fox, following Podechard,[15] argues that אחריו should be rendered 'afterward', with reference to 'what will happen to the individual in his *future lifetime*'. Podechard uses a number of subtle arguments against the two standard interpretations: 'after him' meaning what will happen to the individual *after death* or 'after him' meaning what will *happen on earth* after the individual's death. The former would not be a natural way to refer to an individual's existence in *sheol*, for that would be 'present' not 'after'. Podechard argues against the latter interpretation by saying one would not be interested in what happens on earth after death (and he could have added the unlikelihood of one's ability to relate to *this world* after death); though if the joy interpreters are right, he is wrong and this would then be an *impetus* to enjoy life in the *present*. Even though Fox wants to follow Podechard, he must concede some inference of ignorance 'after death' in 3.22, and thus ends up qualifying his support, which in turn has the effect of supporting the interpretation that

'after him' means 'after death'. Podechard's interpretation should be rejected because it is contrary to the natural meaning of the grammar and idea of the preceding verse (3.21): death is what is referred to and to talk of the individual's future in this life would be contrary to the basic sense of the discussion in 3.18-22 which is on death.

The rhetorical question anticipates the negative response 'no one!': an emphatic denial. Paraphrastically 3.22 could be rendered: 'Man should enjoy his work, or the material benefits of his work, because that is his lot: for no one can show him what will happen after he dies'. The rhetorical question anticipating this emphatic denial of future knowledge *post mortem*, provides the impetus to enjoy one's work and the fruits of one's labour. Thus, some existential *carpe diem* is exhorted in 3.22 on the basis that no one knows what death will bring: 'therefore make the best of things *now while you can*!'.

On the basis of the above exegesis, a reasonable translation of 3.22, would then be: 'So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work – for that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?'

4. QOHELETH 5.17-19

The particle הִנֵּה is used to draw attention to some thing, and in the case of 5.17, what Qoheleth has 'seen' (רָאִיתִי), or perhaps more appropriately, what he has 'realised' (again through personal experience), and this is emphasised by the emphatic אֲנִי. Fox, however, translates the particle of attention as 'here': 'Here is what I have seen to be good: . . .'.

The second phrase, טוֹב אֲשֶׁר־יָפֶה, is made difficult to understand because it lacks a subject of its own, the double use of אֲשֶׁר with אֲשֶׁר־רָאִיתִי and the accentuation of the *Massoretic Text*. It is unnecessary and improbable that טוֹב אֲשֶׁר־יָפֶה is the Grecism καλος καγαθος ('fine' and 'good'); which Whitley points out would be טוֹב יָפֶה.

The exact meaning of the adjective יָפֶה is problematic for the overall clause: Is it to be taken literally as in 'beautiful', 'fair'; or should it be understood more dynamically like 'appropriate', 'becoming'? Either 'beautiful' or 'appropriate' suit the immediate context of 5.17. Crenshaw sees the latter meaning as in 3.11; but Gordis may be right when he says: 'Apparently we have here an idiom heightening the effect, like "good and proper," "dulce et decorum," etc'.

There are a number of possible translations for the opening clause: 'Behold, that [which] *I* saw was good, which was beautiful'; or '*I* saw what was good, what was even beautiful'; or, if one takes Whitley's advice and disregard the Massoretic accentuation: 'Behold that which I have

discovered is good, that it is becoming to eat and drink'; though the LXX translates the clause as ιδου ειδον εγω αγαθον ο εστι καλον ('Behold *I* have seen good which is beautiful'). Nevertheless, one must supply a subject and conjunction for the second clause consistent with the 3.m.s. pronouns of the verse: 'Then I realised it is good, even beautiful, *for* *a man* to eat and drink and . . .'.

The use of the imperfect with עמל is problematic. If one was to see the 'fruits of their labour' or 'material benefits' of one's work (בכל-עמלו), presumably one would have had to have already done the work (the idea of the perfect). Thus, שֶׁיַּעֲמֹל ('which he will work for') is poor grammar. But it is not unusual for Qoheleth to use imperfects where perfects are needed and vice-versa.[16]

English punctuation can be critical for translation and understanding the sense of a verse. This is especially true for 5.17. In addition, the use of אשר in the first clause may indicate a *temporal* relationship[17] rather than a relative relationship: this may explain the unusual construction אשר-ראיתי emphasised by the particle of attention הנה ('*then I* realised'). The second אשר may be acting as a coordinate to the clause and not as a relative pronoun (so Ogden) and may yield the translation: 'Then *I* realised [it] is good, even beautiful, to eat and drink and see the good in all his work [or material benefits] which he worked for under the sun'.

As many commentators correctly notice, מספר is an accusative of time, that of paucity (Barton, Crenshaw, Ginsburg, Gordis; cf. Dt. 33.6; Job 16.22). חיו is clearly

a spelling mistake with a haplography of one of the *yods*, which *fragmentum codicis Hebraici*[2] corrects to חייו. The clause, מספר ימי־חייו אשר־נתן־לו האלהים, requires some temporal preposition like 'during' (perhaps the ב of temporality)[18] to make sense of the Hebrew clause: '*during* the few days of his life God gives him'.

The final clause of 5.17, כי־הוא חלקו, is a stock phrase or idea of Qoheleth (see 2.10, 21; 3.22; 5.18; 9.6, 9; 11.2) with הוא doing double-duty as the demonstrative pronoun and the copula: 'because *that is* his lot'.

5.18 The גם of 5.18 is probably a conjunctive 'moreover': Qoheleth wants to qualify his previous statement in 5.17; and Whybray views this qualification as one which corrects any impression from Qoheleth's previous discussion that wealth is an evil in and of itself.

The definite article with אדם indicates that כל should be understood as referring to 'any man' and not 'every' (cf. LXX πας ανθρωπος): 'any man' is an example amongst humanity; the relative pronoun אשר may be the objective 'whom', but it probably has the temporal force of 'when': '*when* any man . . .'.

נכסים is perhaps an Aramaic loan word, possibly from the cognate Akkadian *nikasu* or the Syrian *nekse* 'possessions', 'treasure'. עשר ('wealth') and נכסים ('possessions') are likely to be a merismos for 'abundance'.

והשליטו, from the root שלט, usually means 'domineer' or 'be master of'; but the cognate Assyrian *salatu* means to 'have power' ('empower'), and this is the sense of שלט in

5.18 with the causative force of the *hiphil* and the nuance of 'enable'. Crenshaw seems to follow Gordis' analogy from the Yiddish idiom that 'a miser has no power over his possessions': for Crenshaw too implies that it is the miser who does not have the power to enjoy his wealth; but the verse makes no reference to misers and it is simply '*any* man whom God empowers to enjoy his wealth'.

Fox claims that ממנו 'is partitive ['from it'], a nuance ignored by most translations'. He is probably right as לאכל should be seen as 'consume', perhaps with the nuance or connotation of 'enjoy'; but his secondary point that 'In Qohelet's view you need not consume all you own' seems invalid because it cannot be sustained by the text nor by his obscure connection to 2.21-26 where the hard earned material benefits go to the inheritor. לשאת, literally to 'carry', 'lift' or 'take' but metaphorically 'accept', in the overall grammar of the verse, indicates a sense of 'contentment' in relationship with one's lot (חלק): 'to take his lot', 'to *accept* his lot' [in life]. Some manuscripts in *fragmentum codicis Hebraici* have יוֹ instead of וְזֶה, whilst others support the *Massoretic Text* with וְזֶה.

Whybray's interpretation of 5.18 is unwarranted:

> . . . God when he bestows riches on a person also bestows the **power to enjoy them**. It is implied, however, that this enjoyment depends on the recipient's willingness to see them in their true character as **the gift of God** . . .[19]

This is a completely subjective interpretation which the grammar of 5.18 will not sustain; and, as 6.2 points out,

God does not necessarily supply the power to a person ('enable') to enjoy the benefits of material possessions. Crenshaw's interpretation, on the other hand, can be supported by the grammar of 5.18:

> In Qohelet's affirmations about God, the notion of divine gift loses its comforting quality. The gift comes without rhyme or reason; it falls on individuals indiscriminately.[20]

5.19 is an explanatory clause as indicated by the opening כי. זכר generally means to 'remember' or 'call to mind'; and *B.D.B.* further adds 'usu. as affecting present feeling, thought, or action'; though *B.D.B.* makes no connections with Qoh. 5.19 on this point. Nevertheless, this nuance is probably implied in 5.19 because its immediate context is one which deals with the state of mind or feelings of a man given the gift of joy by God.

לא הרבה ('not much') is a strange way to indicate paucity (cf. 5.17 מספר); but with את־ימי חייו should be idiomatically rendered the '*few* days of his life' as opposed to literally 'not many days of his life'. The LXX renders the clause οτι ου πολλα μνησθησεται τας ημερας της ζωης αυτου ('for he shall not much remember the days of his life') linking the לא הרבה with זכר; though the literary effect would be the same as the above: the gifted man is *oblivious* to the brevity of life.

The whole interpretation of 5.19 hinges on the highly problematic מענה. The LXX (περισπα αυτον), the *Targum* and *Syriac* have מַעֲנֵהוּ, some manuscripts have מענא ליה and the *Vulgate occupet* – but all of these understand the root to be ענה, 'to distract' or 'occupy'. There are, however, a number of possibilities: 'afflicted', 'humility',

'poverty', 'sing', 'answer', 'respond', 'reveal', even 'cohabit'. But what root best makes sense in the immediate context?

Gordis argues that the root that makes the best sense is 'answer' (*contra* Fox), which he adds 'possesses the connotation "answer for"', citing examples in Gen. 41.16; Hos. 2.23, 24. He thus renders the clause as 'God provides (i.e. man) with the joy of his heart'; or as Ginsburg puts it: 'bestows upon him joy, as it were, in answer to his desire'. However, the use of ענה in *Qoheleth* (1.13; 3.10) is probably a strong clue that it should be similarly rendered here as 'occupy'; which is, with the use of the *hiphil*, the strongest cognate meaning of ענה in Syriac. The whole clause could thus be rendered: 'because God occupies his heart with joy' (cf. the discussion on Lohfink and ענה in chapter five).

A reasonable translation of 5.17-19, in the light of the above exegesis, would then be: 'Then I realised that it is good and beautiful for a man to eat and drink and see good in all his work which he worked for under the sun – during the few days of his life which God gave him – because that is his lot. Moreover, when God gives a man wealth and possessions – and enables him to consume them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work: this is the gift of God. For he does not remember much the days of his life – because God occupies his heart with enjoyment'.

Unlike the previous joy statements, the joy statement in 5.17-19 is ambiguous as to its exact meaning. The most complicating factor is the ambiguity surrounding God as the

'giver of joy', i.e., his *selectivity* (cf. 6.2) and the deterministic aspect of *one's lot*.

5. QOHELETH 8.15

A number of scholars view the *waw* conjunction on וְשִׂמְחָתִי in 8.15 as the *waw conclusivum* (Aalders, Geier, Ogden);[21] though Lohfink disagrees and puts וְשִׂמְחָתִי on the level of אָמַרְתִּי in 8.14. It would be hard to disagree with Geier, Aalders, *et al*. that, the *waw* conjunction is a conclusive 'so', when 8.15 logically concludes the pericope of 8.1-14 which ends ominously; though the LXX uses και. Whybray is probably justified when he says that the use of the piel stem with שָׁבַח indicates an intensification of the joy statement. This may be supported by the addition of extra stock phrases, clauses and ideas from previous joy statements here in 8.15: a better-than saying, תחת השמש, addition of the infinitive לִשְׂמוֹחַ and the *accompaniment* (לוה) of joy in work.

שָׁבַח generally means to 'laud' or 'praise' but can also, in a secondary sense, mean 'commend' or 'congratulate'. Barton, Crenshaw and Fox utilise the primary sense of 'praise'; though Fox views the *waw* conjunction as conclusive in the first clause of 8.15: '*So* I praised pleasure'. Ogden and Whybray view שָׁבַח in its sense of 'commend'; and if the *waw* conjunction is conclusive, as it appears to be, then the first clause is best translated as: 'So I commend joy', or, perhaps better: 'So I commend enjoyment'. The following אֲשֶׁר should be

viewed as the explanatory conjunction 'because' (so Gordis; LXX οτι).

The *waw* conjunction is redundant in the English translation of והוא since הוא is used in adverbial sense with both a temporal and conclusive force of 'then'; though Crenshaw renders it as 'and it . . .'. Gordis says that הוא 'refers to the actions described in the preceding infinitives'; and while he is probably correct, this does not make it easy to incorporate those ideas in the following clause. Another solution is to view the antecedent to הוא as שׂמח: 'Then enjoyment . . .'.

Ginsberg views ילונו as a gross corruption of חלקו;[22] but there is no textual evidence to support this. Zimmermann finds the use of לוה 'very strange' because the verb is usually used in the sense of 'joining' human beings in some way. Thus, the translator would have done better to retain the original Aramaic יחברנה: 'and he combine it (joy) in his work'; but clearly this is Zimmermann's attempt to sustain his dubious Aramaic original theory for *Qoheleth*. As Whitley points out:

> . . . לָוָה is used in Ben Sira 41₁₂ (Hiphil ילוך) in the sense of a name accompanying one, while it is again used in the Mishna (Aboth 6₉ מְלַוִּים, Piel part.) of pearls and precious stones not "accompanying" one to the grave.[23]

Regardless, the context in 8.15 indicates that the connotation of the 'joining' is one of 'accompany': 'Then enjoyment will *accompany* him in his work, all the days of his life which God gives to him under the sun'. According to *B.H.S.*, some manuscripts have מספר (paucity) for ימי (cf. 5.17).

A reasonable translation, on the basis of the above exegesis, would then be: 'So I commend the enjoyment of life: because there is nothing better for a man under the sun than to eat, drink and be happy. Then joy will accompany him in his work – all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun'.

Whybray is probably correct when he sees an intensification of the joy statement here in 8.15; but the problem may be the deterministic aspect of 'God's giving'; though this does not seem to be as ambiguous here as it did in 5.17-19.

6. QOHELETH 9.7-9

9.7 presents a number of difficult grammatical problems. It begins with two imperatives together followed by a third in the first clause. These are the first imperatives used in the joy statements thus far. Crenshaw may be correct when he says that

> Until now, Qohelet's comments on enjoying life have taken the form of advice (2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:17-19 [18-20E]; 8:15; but note 7:14, "be happy"). Now he switches to imperatives (*lek, 'ekol, sateh*), conveying a greater sense of urgency issuing from Qohelet's reflection on the power of death to extinguish powerful emotions.[24]

But the exact relationship of the imperatives raises a number of questions. Do לך and אכל belong together ('Go and eat')? Or does אכל belong with שמחה ('eat in enjoyment)? Or is the אכל an emphatic combination as in 'consume with the implication of enjoy' – thus simply '*enjoy*'? Why is the third imperative שתה separated from

the other two? Perhaps it is the לך which is out of place and simply used as an emphatic imperative to back up the following two; though Ginsburg suggests that it has 'an inferential force, i.e., *this being the case, go then, &c.*'. He is probably correct. The most logical syntactical relationship would be: 'Go, eat your food with joy and drink your wine with a glad heart!' לב טוב is a common Hebrew idiom meaning 'glad' or 'happy heart' (cf. Est. 5.9; I Kgs. 21.25 יטב לב 'cheer the heart'; Ruth 3.7). But Barton surely reads too much into the text when he says, in comparison with its opposite in Prov. 26.23 (רע לב), 'that there is an element of "good conscience" in the phrase'.

The explanatory clause is typically introduced with כי followed by the adverb כבר. The verb רצה is used to refer to God accepting offerings on the altar (Dt. 33.11; II Sam. 24.23; Am. 5.22). There is considerable debate on the exact meaning, or perhaps more correctly, the correct reference of כבר. The root from biblical Hebrew for כבר relates to 'be many', 'much'; and in its secondary sense, when related to time, 'a great length of time' or 'already'. This seems to be the etymological meaning of the Syriac root; but as both *B.D.B.* and Fredericks point out: that connection is dubious. Regardless of its etymological origin, כבר, when related to time, refers to '*duration previous to an event*'. It is the concept of 'previous' which is in question. This may have implications for the theology of the verse. Ginsburg, relating 9.7 to the previous discussion on God indulging

the wicked (perhaps a dubious interpretation of 9.1-6), says:

> God, who indulges the *wicked*, must surely have *long since* (כְּבָר) been pleased with *our* works; we must therefore not be troubled with it *now*.[25]

Thus, כבר would have temporal implications for the works done previously, and consequently, for the present. The *N.I.V.* is grossly negligent in its translation of the clause as 'for it is now that God favours what you do', changing the noun מעשׂיך into the verb 'do'. Ginsburg, however, says that the grammar and syntax will not allow for 'your work' to be the reason for 'God being pleased with your work', which he says would require the Hebrew: כי כבר רצה האלהים שתעשׂה. But he is surely wrong when it is clear by the direct object marker that 'your works' are the object of 'God's being pleased' (רצה האלהים את־מעשׂיך). Since, however, this leaves a problem regarding how the verse fits in with the previous pericope: what should one do with it?

The easy solution would be to say it is an editorial gloss; but Ogden would interpret it to mean that enjoyment of the basics of life is God's predetermined will (cf. his view of חלקו): the issue is, according to Ogden, whether or not one receives it gladly from God – and it is difficult to refute this grammatically since this *is* the explanatory clause. This interpretation, nevertheless, has enormous problems in relationship with the previous pericope 9.1-6, statements in the following verses of the joy statement itself (its immediate context), and other statements in the book (cf. 5.17-19; 6.2; 8.15); or as Crenshaw points out:

> Justification for joyous eating and drinking rests in the divine disposition, which 9:1 declares to be unfathomable.[26]

9.8 The apparel of white and oil were both pragmatic and symbolic: white kept one cool in the heat and exhibited either a wealthy or festive disposition; and the oil, which may be perfumed and act as a moisturizer, had a similar function (cf. II Sam. 12.20; Ps. 23.5; 45.8; Prov. 27.9; Est. 8.15). Later on, white clothes came to symbolise the garments worn in the world to come (*B. Shab.* 114a; Rev. 3.4-5; 7.9). The phase בכל־עת imports the idea of being '*continuously festive*' and perhaps even implying 'ostentation'; though this latter idea is dubious.

9.9 The imperative רְאֵה should be viewed as 'experience' rather than 'see' in the context of 9.9; and the notion of 'enjoy' for ראה is unwarranted and reading too much into the text (*contra* Barton, Fox, Ginsburg, Ogden).

When Hebrew wants to use the generic אִשָּׁה for wife, it generally uses the article. The LXX does not help the situation by preserving the Greek generic equivalent without the article (γυναικος). Dahood defends 'wife' on the grounds of the Phoenician אשת, which even without the article means 'wife'.[27] But Hebrew does not always use the article with אִשָּׁה to indicate 'wife', as Whitley argues (see Gen. 21.21; 24.3, 37; Lev. 20.14); though Crenshaw takes exception to Whitley on this point saying that his examples indicate that the woman was not yet the wife but betrothed. This, however, leaves the problem that Qoheleth was advocating 'wild licentious behaviour with any woman

one fancied'; a notion that the *Wisdom of Solomon* attacks in 2.9. Jerome understood this clause in 9.9 to mean: *quaecumque tibi placuerit faeminarum ejus gadue complexu* ('whosoever among women shall please you, rejoice in her embrace'). A number of scholars do advocate the generic sense of 'woman' in 9.9 (Barton, Ginsburg, Schoors), and thus: 'love *any* woman you fancy'. A rather long quotation from Ginsburg might elucidate the argument.

> To festive enjoyments are to be added the gratifications with those who are "the delight of man," which formed an essential part in Eastern pleasures (*vide supra*, ii. 8). The discrepancy which some have found between the recommendation here to enjoy life with women, and the assertion made in vii. 26-28 about their wickedness and the mischief arising from intercourse with them [a dubious interpretation], proceeds from overlooking the different stages of the argument. Here, in the *resume*, Coheleth has reached that point from which he could see no moral government at all, no retributive justice, and nothing left for man but momentary enjoyment and the gratification of every desire which is calculated to impart pleasure. Whereas, there, in the *disquisition*, Coheleth has passed this stage, and gone on to the *prudent* or *common-sense view of life*, which enjoined moderation, and therefore precluded every indulgence which was incompatible with that view.[28]

In other words: There is no contradiction between Qoheleth's apparent misogynist statements in 7.26-28 and his call here to enjoy women. It could be further argued, moreover, that the advice in 7.26-28 on women was to avoid *entanglement* by women and here in 9.9 to *exploit* women for male gratification – and these two ideas would be compatible if Qoheleth was a misogynist.[29] No proof can be given that אִשָּׁה refers to wife, and therefore, the exact meaning of this statement will always remain ambiguous. Nowhere does Qoheleth refer to 'wife and children' as a

part of the 'pursuit of happiness'; though it is possible that there is irony here, perhaps in relation to 7.26-28.

9.9b has textual problems with some manuscripts like LXX (*codex Alexandrinus*) and the *Targum* which omit the second כל ימי הבלך; but others like LXX (*codex Vaticanus*) and the *Vulgate* retain it. The *Peshitta* is remarkable, as Gordis points out, because it retains the second ימי הבלך but omits the entire clause כל נתן לך . . . הבלך אשׁר, indicating a *homoioteleuton* 'which could not have happened unless the eye of the translator, or scribe, had leaped from the first הבלך to the second'. This is probably sound evidence for supporting the *Massoretic Text*; but a number of scholars (Crenshaw, Fox, Ginsburg, Gordis) see the poetic or rhetorical value of repetition at work here in 9.9. הבל might well have the nuance of 'fleeting' here. An identifiable subject for נתן is lacking; but it probably refers to God as elsewhere in *Qoheleth*.

The explanatory clause for 9.9b introduced by כי seems cumbersome. Some texts read היא for הוא, which would then refer to the *woman* as 'your lot' rather than the 'enjoyment of life' as a whole implied by הוא; but this would be an anomaly unprecedented in *Qoheleth* where 'enjoyment' and 'lot' go together (cf. 3.22; 5.17-18). The noun עמל may indicate the material benefits of one's work and the verb עמל may emphasise the 'means' of obtaining with the implication of both being a part of one's lot to be enjoyed (cf. 3.22; 5.17-19; 8.15).

A reasonable translation of 9.7-9, in the light of the above exegesis, would then be: 'Go, enjoy your food and

drink your wine with a glad heart – because God is already pleased with your works. Let your clothes be white at all times and let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with a woman you love – all the days of your *hevel* life which God gave you under the sun – all your *hevel* days: because this is your lot in life and in the material benefits which you worked [for] under the sun'.

Perhaps nowhere else in *Qoheleth*, is the meaning of הבל so pertinent for interpreting what this statement means. Earlier it was argued that הבל is likely to be used as a very *loaded* term in *Qoheleth*, with mostly *negative connotations* ('fleeting', 'insubstantial', 'absurd'), and the doubling up of הבל may represent an intensification of negative frustration in life for Qoheleth. A number of commentators (Ginsburg, Ogden, Whybray) view Qoheleth's advice here in 9.7-9 as a concession, i.e., in the light of the harsh realities of life demonstrated in 9.1-6, one should make the most of the good things in life. Thus Ogden interprets the verse to mean 'that the sage knows how, under God, to enjoy life in this world of ironies'; but the ironies or ambiguities of the verse should urge *caution*, and its interpretation is not so straightforward linguistically and grammatically as some of the other joy statements (cf. 2.24-25; 3.12). Indeed, the joy statement of 9.7-9 might be the most *sublime* thus far; in contradistinction to Ogden who views the imperatives in 9.7-10 as empowering the *carpe diem* joy statements. In conjunction with the negative nature of הבל, as well as the 'lot' (deterministic) statements, it

might well be that the imperatives are far from empowering *carpe diem* and indeed might well be empowering the ambiguity of the joy statements or indicating *irony* or sarcasm.

7. QOHELETH 11.8-9

The joy statement in 11.8-9 is perhaps the most complicated one. This is not only because of its grammar but also in terms of its interpretation.

Ogden views the use of the two jussives יִשְׂמַח and יִזְכֹּר as the 'theme-setting' verbs of the pericope he marks off as 11.7-12.8. Four imperatives follow in 11.9-10. 11.8 may be an explanatory statement or causal clause related to 11.7 as indicated by the use of כִּי. 11.7 essentially tells the audience that 'light is sweet and it is good to see the sun'. The *N.I.V.* is possibly right when it renders the אִם כִּי construction of 11.8 as: '*however* many years a man may live'; but while this makes good sense in the context it would be an anomalous rendering flattening the explanatory nature of the כִּי אִם construction and in fact making 11.8 an independent statement from 11.7; though the LXX preserves the כִּי אִם construction literally as οτι και. Nevertheless, an explanatory clause introduced by 'because' or 'therefore' (so Artom) does not make much sense: How does the 'sweetness of light' or 'seeing the sun' relate to the length of life? The כִּי could then be viewed as coordinate and thus 11.7 and 11.8 are two independent statements coordinating one idea: reasons why one should enjoy life.

Therefore, the *N.I.V.*'s rendering the כי אם construction as indeterminate is probable: '*However* many years a man may live'. Crenshaw is mistaken when he says that שנים is feminine and that the pronomial suffix of בכלם does not match it.

The deficit of *grammatical mood* in the Hebrew verbal system can be hazardous for translation. יחיה probably has the subjunctive mood: 'However many years a man *may* be', or perhaps a better dynamic equivalency would be: 'However many years a man may live'. The same problem of mood also applies to what are often viewed as the jussive verbs in 11.8: ישמח and יזכר. While the jussive may be indicated by the use of the apocopated form of the imperfect, ישמח and יזכר simply take the imperfect form and not the apocopated form. Their context in 11.8, however, indicates that it is appropriate to interpret them as jussives: they are third person commands to 'enjoy' (on the basis of 11.7 and 11.8a) and 'remember' (the shortness of one's life); though DeWette and Noyes view them as simply indicative: 'because if a man live many years he rejoices in them all'. But this contradicts the previous view of Qoheleth that long life is not necessarily a blessing (cf. 5.16; 6.12; 9.9) and misses the import of the third clause to remember how short life is; and, as Ginsburg points out, the verbs are obligatory relative to the previous ideas in 11.7, 8.

חשך is often used in the Hebrew Bible as a metaphor for death or *sheol* (cf. I Sam. 2.9; Job 10.21; 17.3; Ps. 88.13; Prov. 20.20). הרבה, an *hiphil* infinitive absolute, is used adverbally to simply mean 'many'; and in the

explanatory clause: 'for they will be many', referring to the days of darkness.

Qoheleth's use of the perfect שבא is another example of the erratic nature of his Hebrew style: clearly the reference to 'many days of darkness' is in the future; though the LXX preserves the perfect sense (ερχομενον). There is a slight problem with what the *hevel* statement is in reference to: Is it the future in general or *post mortem*? It is most likely to be after death and or *sheol*.

The *Vulgate* may be influenced by, or used as a pretext, the rabbinic interpretation (cf. *Rabbah Midrash Ecclesiastes*), for its translation: *si annis multis vixerit homo, et in his omnibus laetatus fuerit, meminisse debet tenebrosi temporis, et dierum multorum, qui cum venerint, vanitatis arguentur, praeterita* ('if a man live many years, and has rejoiced in them all, he ought to remember the dark time, and the many days wherein, when they shall come, the things passed shall be accused of vanity'). *Rabbah Midrash Ecclesiastes* interprets 11.8 as being related to Torah and the messianic age:

> The Torah which a man learns in this world
> IS VANITY in comparison with the Torah
> [which will be learnt in the days] of the
> Messiah.

Rashi and Rashbam understand 11.8 to refer to the status of the person (sinner or saint) and as a caution to avoid sin. Ibn Ezra simply sees the absurdity of one being brought into the world; and Gordis challenges his interpretation saying:

> The final clause is not a moralizing phrase,
> "when a man understands that the days of

> darkness are coming, all the pleasures of life will become worthless in his eyes" (Ibn Ezra), but, on the contrary, a justification for seeking enjoyment in this world.[30]

Holden and Stuart understand 11.8 to be a reminder that even if there is enjoyment in this world, one also suffers. Whybray understands the verse wholeheartedly as positive:

> Qoheleth's intention here is not to introduce a note of gloom to negate or qualify the cheerful note struck in v. 7, but to use the backdrop of inevitable death to highlight the positive opportunities for joy in this life.[31]

But Whybray's interpretation begs a number of questions: Is 11.7 really 'cheerful' or is this a subjective interpretation applied to the text? Is the thought of death not *gloomy*? Is not the adversative ו on ויזכר (perhaps an interpretation itself) indicative of a challenge or qualification? The only answer to these questions can be affirmative, or at least, indicative of the ambiguity surrounding the interpretation of 11.8.

11.9 בחור refers to a 'young man', and perhaps, related to the idea of 'chosen one' with the implication of being in his 'prime' (so *B.D.B.*; LXX ευφραινου). The וֹת ending on בחורותך is indicative of late biblical Hebrew; but as Barton points out there is an Aramaic equivalent (בָּחרוּת). *Editio Bombergiana Iacobi ben Chajjim* lacks the connecting yod on בילדותיך and yet includes the connecting *yod* on בחורותך. This is not a serious textual problem and can probably be explained on the grounds of a combination haplography with בילדותיך and a dittography with בחורותך, i.e., mixing the two words and the connecting *yod* up. The ב of בילדותיך probably has a temporal force: '*while* you are young'.

Loader thinks that the switch from third person commands to proper imperatives (second person) is an indication of intensification of the commands; and he is possibly right.

The use of the *hiphil* with טוב in the second clause is confusing. What does ויטיבך לבך mean? Some manuscripts have וְיִטַב.[32] The *hiphil* probably does carry the causative force and the jussive mood is indicated by the immediate context: '*Let* your heart be good'. Is there some moral connotation to טוב here? Probably not; if so it would be a first in *Qoheleth*. The nuance is probably that of 'glad', and therefore: 'Let your heart be *glad*'.

The third clause of 11.9 also begins with an imperative: '*Go* in the ways of your heart'. A number of manuscripts like the LXX, the *Syriac* and the *Vulgate* all understand or read ובמראה instead of ובמראי. מראה occurs in 6.9 and Ginsburg suggests that the reason why the plural is used here in 11.9 is to conform to דרכי; but if מראה is in a construct relationship with the dual עיניך, then it is only appropriate that מראה be plural; though the LXX preserves the singular verb (οραση). Gordis argues that the *qere* should be preferred on the grounds that it is used 'In the abstract sense of "sight," "desire," it does not occur elsewhere'. The ב is probably directional in the sense of 'after'; therefore, 'go after', which could be rendered 'follow'; and the ב with the construct phrase במראי עיניך could be rendered dynamically '*whatever* your eyes see' (so *N.I.V.*). Some scholars like Crenshaw and Gordis view the heart and eyes as the 'organs of desire';

though Ogden renders לב as 'mind' saying that 'we are reminded of Qoheleth's notion that pleasure-seeking is an *intellectual* pursuit'. This seems, however, rather far-fetched and an attempt to import into the text something which is not there. 11.9b may be a response to Num. 15.39 (so Salters)[33] which is an admonition not to follow one's heart and eyes, i.e., 'desire'; and Ginsburg says that

> Moses prohibits *illicit* gratifications, whilst Coheleth recommends *innocent* pleasures, which pleasures are to be in harmony with our preparation for a future account of all our doings at the bar of judgment.[34]

Ginsburg also points out that, in the light of rabbinic problems with *Qoheleth's* heterodoxy (cf. *Rabbah Midrash Ecclesiastes*), the LXX attempted to alter the intended meaning of 11.9 by adding the adjective αμωμος and the particle of negation μη: και περιπατει εν οδοις καρδιας σου αμωμος και μη εν ορασει οφθαλμων σου; which Ginsburg, along with the *Vulgate* and the *Syriac*, rightly reject as dishonest. Ginsburg further points out that Rashi, Rashbam and Ibn Ezra are against this arbitrary treatment of the text and view the statement as 'ironical'.

A number of scholars view 11.9c as an editorial gloss saying that it is inconsistent with the immediate context of 11.9 and the overall mentality of *Qoheleth* (Barton, Galling, McNeile, Zimmerli). Gordis is surely wrong when he views the ו conjunction on the imperative דַּע as consecutive (despite the support of the LXX, the *Vulgate* and *Peshitta*). Clearly this is an adversative use of the *waw* conjunction in order to contrast the previous two clauses and provide a warning against pure hedonism – which

seems consistent with Qoheleth's view of the enjoyment of life, moderation and wisdom *vis-a-vis* folly (cf. 2.24-26; 3.12-13; 5.17-19; 7.15-18; 9.7-9). It is unlikely, therefore, that 11.9c is a gloss.

A reasonable translation of 11.8-9, in the light of the above exegesis, would then be: 'However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all; but let him remember the days of darkness – for they will be many. Everything to come is *hevel*. Be happy, young man, while you are young; and let your heart be glad during the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever you eyes see; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment'.

8. CONCLUSION TO THE EXEGESIS OF THE JOY STATEMENTS

A reasonable translation of the joy statements in *Qoheleth*, in the light of the above exegesis and some textual emendation, would then be:

1. 2.24-25: 'There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and show himself his work is beneficial. I saw that this too is from the hand of God – because who can eat and enjoy without him?'.

2. 3.12-13: 'I know that there is nothing better for them than to enjoy and do good while one lives. Moreover, every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his work – this is the gift of God'.

3. 3.22: 'So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work – for that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?'

4. 5.17-19: 'Then I realised that it is good and beautiful for a man to eat and drink and see good in all his work which he worked for under the sun – during the few days of his life which God gave him – because that is his lot. Moreover, when God gives a man wealth and possessions – and enables him to consume them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work: this is the gift of God. For he does not remember much the days of his life – because God occupies his heart with enjoyment'.

5. 8.15: 'So I commend the enjoyment of life: because there is nothing better for a man under the sun than to eat, drink and be happy. Then joy will accompany him in his work – all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun'.

6. 9.7-9: 'Go, enjoy your food and drink your wine with a glad heart – because God is already pleased with your works. Let your clothes be white at all times and let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with a woman you love – all the days of your *hevel* life which God gave you under the sun – all your *hevel* days: because this is your lot in life and in the material benefits which you worked for under the sun'.

7. 11.8-9: 'However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all; but let him remember the days of darkness – for they will be many. Everything to come is *hevel*. Be happy, young man, while you are young; and let

your heart be glad during the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever you eyes see; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment'.

There can be little doubt, linguistically and grammatically, that a number of the joy statements, or clauses thereof, are *indicative* of what they appear to be on face value: *carpe diem* joy statements; though there are various other forms such as rhetorical questions and imperatives mixed with ambiguous statements or clauses which make interpreting them hazardous. If the joy statements should be considered in the *indicative* and *imperative moods*, the question then arises: What should one make of them, i.e., how should they be interpreted? A form critical analysis of the joy statements might inform such a question.

CHAPTER THREE

FORM CRITICISM OF THE JOY STATEMENTS AND ADDITIONAL EXEGETICAL NOTES

This chapter will use form criticism in order to understand the literary nature of the joy statements and provide additional exegetical notes which *inform* the *process* of form criticism.

Form criticism has traditionally dealt with four aspects of biblical texts: literary structure (which demarcates individual pericopes and *Gattungen*), genre or *Gattung* (which looks at the specific types of literary forms or genres in a given text), historical setting (*Sitz im Leben*), and literary function or intention (what is the form attempting to convey literarily?).[1] The historical setting of *Qoheleth* has proven an elusive and contentious subject which will prove irrelevant in this *literary analysis* of the joy statements.

This chapter will *focus* on a detailed analysis of the *Gattungen* of the joy statements in the overall context of pericope in which they are found and the immediate context *surrounding* the joy statement, as well as their possible literary *function* or *intention*.

Additional exegetical notes will be given as appropriate to the joy statements in their overall and immediate contexts; and it should be noted that it is often difficult to distinguish the literary nature or *Gattungen* without proper exegesis *informing* the *process* of form criticism. The crudity of Hebrew grammar and the inflexion

of verbal stems, inevitably lead to confusion regarding their exact nature and grammatical relationship to other words in sentences. Unlike Greek, where the inflexions of the verbal stems provide concrete evidence of *mood*, Hebrew does not have this luxury.

While each joy statement may well be a self-contained statement (a matter which form criticism might well challenge or call into question), it is important to note that they are often a series of clauses and sentences which take different literary forms within the one statement. For sure, there are some *indicative* forms; but there are also questions, and perhaps even scepticism or *irony* – matters which can only be determined in the book's overall literary structure and content (and will be dealt with in chapter six) – and even then 'determination' may be a dubious or elusive concept, as scepticism (in chapter four) might well show.

Dell, in her form critical analysis of the Book of Job, finds parallels with *Ecclesiastes*. She says that

> Ecclesiastes, like *Job*, can be divided up by working with various genre levels. The quest to find an overall genre for the book has been almost as fruitless as the search for an overall genre for *Job*. . . . There has been more success in recognizing various subgenres for Ecclesiastes than in recognizing an overall genre.[2]

Some overall genres for *Qoheleth* from comparative literature are the 'Royal Testament', as in the *Instruction for Merikare* and the *Instruction of Amenemophet*;[3] though Dell would ultimately categorize *Qoheleth* as 'Protest Literature'.[4] Ellermeier suggests that *Qoheleth* is a *mashal* broken down into the two main subgenres of 'sayings'

and 'reflections';[5] and Braun views *Qoheleth* to essentially be comprised of three main genres: 'Meditative Reflection' (*betrachtende Reflexion*), 'Meditation' (*Betrachtung*) and 'Instruction' (*Belehrung*).[6]

Part of the problem in determining an overall genre for *Qoheleth* is the fact that there are so many different forms in the book. Loader analyses some thirteen different forms or *Gattungen*: *royal fiction*, *Wahrspruch* and *maxim*, the *tob-saying*, *comparison*, *metaphor*, *parable*, *allegory*, *observation*, *self-discourse*, *woe-saying* and *benediction*, *antilogion*, *rhetorical question* and *admonition*.[7] The sheer number of different forms in *Qoheleth* makes for hazardous interpretation. Careful attention will now be given to form criticism of the joy statements.

1. QOHELETH 2.24-25

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and show himself his work is beneficial. I saw that this too is from the hand of God – because who can eat and enjoy without him?

A. The Overall Context of the Pericope 1.12-2.26

The first joy statement comes in the overall context of the *royal testament* of *Qoheleth* 1-2 (so Barton, Crenshaw, Dell, Loader, Whybray). As Loader, following Ellermeier, points out: the royal fiction may be limited to 1.12-2.11 because this is the only pericope in which the royal fiction is

specifically mentioned (1.12) and used in the book except for the superscription; but Crenshaw and Whybray both see the fiction extending to 2.26 – and in this regard they should be considered right: 1.1 opens with the allusion to Solomonic authorship (the motto, thematic question and first *poem* obviously do not belong to the royal fiction) and this is later picked up again in 1.12-18 on the יתרון of intellectual pursuits (wisdom) and 2.1-26 on pleasure, achievements (building projects), wisdom, work and estates – all of which relate to the pursuits and lifestyles of kings.

1.12-2.26 is also understood to be the *Gattung* of *reflection*, whereby the author reflects on some aspect or aspects of life and often, though not necessarily always, draws some conclusion or conclusions; and this in contradistinction from the *observation* which typically utilises the use of the first person ראיתי or ידעתי and does not draw any conclusions; though some dispute still remains as to the exact use of these terms and concepts.[8] Moreover, as Loader points out, 1.12-2.26 is not a group of *independent* literary units on various *topoi* but one pericope, which he labels the 'Worth(lessness) of Wisdom'.[9] He could have further added that it is a collection of *observations* (his terminology) in one setting: the royal setting or on *aspects* of royal life. Thus, 2.12-16 is not an independent unit, in the sense of being isolated (so Ellermeier), but rather is an excursus on the royal theme of the pursuit of wisdom (which also provides the *means* for generating wealth and pleasure) in the light of the vanity

of work and material benefits in 2.1-10 (cf. 2.12 which explicitly uses המלך).[10]

The opening phrase of 2.24 אין טוב is also known as a 'better-than' saying (*tob-Spruch*), whereby some comparison is made between one aspect of life and another, often indicated by the use of מן in the sentence; though not always (cf. exegesis and 3.12, 22; 8.15).[11]

Clearly by the use of the *tob-Spruch* form Qoheleth was trying to make some comparison. The comparison is correlated to the pericope in 2.17-23: a very negative observation of Qoheleth indeed! Qoheleth used a *conclusive waw* conjunction to say: '*So* I hated life' (את־החיים ושׂנאתי). Why? 'Because of the evil work upon me' (המעשׂה כי רע עלי). The phrase רע עלי could also be rendered 'evil upon me'; but this is unlikely and more probable that the adjective רע qualifies the noun מעשׂה instead. The *conclusive reflection* in 2.17-23 was in turn a response to Qoheleth's negative *evaluation* of pleasure, materialism and wisdom in 2.1-16. The proleptic conclusion to 2.17-23 in 2.17c is that 'everything is *hevel* and a vexation of spirit'. The wordplay on רעות רוח ('chasing the wind' and 'vexation of spirit') may be present because of the possible pun in מעשׂה which can reflect the 'means' and 'ends' ('material benefits') of work elaborated on in 2.18, which are both evaluated as *hevel*. 2.23, which closes the pericope of 2.17-23, is also a dreadful conclusion or *evaluation* of 'work under the sun': 'For all his days are painful (מכאבים) and his occupation vexing (כעס ענינו) – even at night he cannot sleep. This too is *hevel*'. There

may also be a pun with עָנָה reflecting work and affliction. The sheer number of negative ideas and terms used in 2.17-23 lead Qoheleth to his statement in 2.24-25, which probably includes 2.26.

B. The Immediate Context 2.17-26

The first sentence of 2.24 demonstrates the problematics of verbal inflexions which do not specify *mood*. By its immediate context 2.24a appears to be in the *indicative mood*, 'a simple statement of fact':[12] 'There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and show himself his work is beneficial'. One should note, however, that it is the author's statement of fact in the literary sense and not necessarily a fact based in reality.

Both the *Gattungen* of *royal testament* and *reflection* epitomise the first person *ego*. 2.24b is a *reflection* correlated to 2.24a and again appears to be *indicative*: 'I saw that this too is from the hand of God'. The difficulty is the מִמֶּנִּי of 2.25; but as has already been argued in the exegesis, the emendation to the third person singular pronoun 'him', is warranted. 2.25 provides the *explanatory* clause put in the *Gattung* of a *rhetorical question* as indicated by the use of כִּי and the interrogative particle מִי: 'because without him [God] who can eat and enjoy?' The *rhetorical question* demands an emphatic 'no one!'.

What is the role of 2.26 in determining the meaning of 2.24-25? Clearly 2.26 properly belongs with 2.24-25 on the basis of the כִּי introducing a *motive* clause; though some

scholars, like Barton and McNeile, view 2.26 as an editorial gloss of a pious chokmatic commentator. The use of the perfect verbs are, again, probably to be taken as imperfect. Crenshaw argues that Qoheleth's use of טוב and לחוטא, a participiple with the inseparable preposition ל, are emptied of any 'moral' content, saying that here they simply represent the concepts of 'fortunate' and 'unfortunate'; but Whybray points out that there are 231 occurrences of the verb חטא and 356 of the noun in the Hebrew Bible (see *Qoheleth* 7.20, 26; 8.12; 9.2), 'where the meaning is undoubtedly "sin"'.[13] Gordis views חוטא as synonymous with 'fool', the 'one displeasing to God' *vis-a-vis* the 'one who pleases God' (לטוב לפני האלהים), and thus a contrast between the 'wise' and the 'fool'.

The positive motive for *carpe diem*, it seems, is that 'God gives to the man who is good before him: wisdom, knowledge and joy'; the adversative and negative motive: 'but to the sinner he gives the affliction to gather and collect so as to give to the one who is good before God'. What brings the whole positive interpretation of 2.26 into question, as either a pious gloss or simply a statement of fact which contradicts 2.21 (so Ogden and Whybray), is the negative *evaluation* of 2.26ab in 2.26c: '*hevel* and a vexation of spirit'. This is an amazing twist to the *motive* statement. This negative *evaluation* of the *motive* clause, if not the whole pericope and its negative *evaluation* of pleasure, achievements, materialism, wisdom, estates, work, retributive justice, raises doubts as to the exact literary nature of both the joy statement and *motive*

clause – and calls into question the straightforward *indicative* interpretation, on face value, as a *carpe diem* joy statement.

The question, therefore, must be asked: Why would retributive justice, a standard of traditional wisdom circles, be so negatively evaluated? The answer might be, in conjunction with Qoheleth's other statements on the lack of retributive justice shown by God (see 3.16; 4.1-3, 13-16; 5.7-16; 6.1-2; 7.13-18; 8.9-10, 14; 9.1-2, 11-12; 9.13-10.1), that 2.24-25 is not an *indicative* statement but an *ironic* statement – with the idea being: 'Enjoy life (if you can! [irony]) but do not count on it: Look at God's capricious way in which he deals with sinner and saint alike!' (cf. also 2.12-16). So the joy statement of 2.24-25, and even the *motive* statement of 2.26 which is properly a part of that joy statement, cannot be adequately evaluated in isolation from the rest of the pericope, the book and its themes.

From the *Gattungen* analysis of 2.24-25, a number of conclusions can be drawn. First of all, 2.24-25 is a part of the larger *Gattung* of *royal testament*. Within the *royal testament* are a number of different *Gattungen* (e.g., *reflection* and *observation*), which in turn contain a number of sub-*Gattungen* (e.g., *indicative* statements, *rhetorical questions*) in a number of pericopes (1.12-18; 2.1-11; 2.12-16; 2.17-23), which in turn lead to the author's final analysis (or *reflection*)of his observations (2.24-26).

The exact literary nature of the joy statement has come into question because the overall context in 1.12-

2.26, the immediate context of 2.17-23 and including the *motive* statement of 2.26 and its grammatical connection to 2.24-25, all call into question an *indicative* interpretation of joy statement; though when isolated in exegesis, the linguistics and grammar support such an interpretation. For this reason, the joy statement of 2.24-25 is possibly, if not probably, an *ironic* statement not an *indicative* statement.

2. QOHELETH 3.12-13

I know that there is nothing better for them than to enjoy and do good while one lives. Moreover, every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his work – this is the gift of God.

A. The Overall Context of the Pericope 3.1-15

The joy statement in 3.12-13 comes after a *poem* on the times of everything under the heavens in 3.1-8; that it is *poetry* is indicated by the bicolon *antithetical parallelism* used in it. As Loader rightly points out: The *poem* is isolated by the concluding *hevel* and vexation of spirit statement of 2.26 and the *rhetorical question* of 3.9.[14] The *poem*, whether attributable to Qoheleth or not, seems to deal with, as Loader puts it: 'the contents of time'.[15]

The interpretation of this *poem* and its contents of time, however, has proven an elusive exercise. Hoffmann interprets chapter 3 of *Qoheleth* as subtle *irony*.

Blenkinsopp views 3.2-8 to be quoted by Qoheleth, of which he added the title 3.1 and a brief commentary on the *poem* in 3.9-15.[16] His interpretation, however, seems far-fetched on the basis that he views the ideas of the *poem* to have been borrowed from Stoic philosophy by a 'stoicizing Jew' and on the dubious translation of למות as 'to put an end to one's life', which he argues brings למות into line with a literal rendering of ללדת as 'to beget' or 'to bring a child into the world' – thus connecting the *poem* with the Stoic idea of suicide.[17] But the *antithetical parallelism* of ללדת with למות suggests that ללדת should be rendered 'to be born' and does not necessarily require the *reflexive niphil* (*contra* Blenkinsopp, Crenshaw): the erratic nature of the Hebrew verbal system is well known and the literal rendering would upset the *poetic* idea of polar opposites.

The introductory statement of 3.1, however, seems to capsulise, or at least adequately introduce the poem's theme. As Crenshaw rightly points out: The concept of opposites in the Hebrew Bible often indicates completeness or totality.[18] זמן generally means 'be fixed' or 'appointed time'; though often thought to be exclusively a late Hebrew loanword from Aramaic, Fredericks, as does *B.D.B.*, point out that its Akkadian cognate, *simanu*, occurs from 1800 B.C.E. on. Fredericks further says that

> The need for a parallel and near-synonymous term to pair with עת, could have been the reason for selecting this word from a common semitic word-stock. Its meaning of "appointed time" as opposed to "time" in general (עת) specifies the providence of God in a most exact expression.[19]

The use of זמן, in conjunction with the contents of the *poem*, indicates that there are 'fixed times' or 'seasons' for all activities in the world: 'a time to be born, and a time to die', etc. Surely there is a connection between this *poem* and the creation *poem* of 1.4-11 which also addresses the same *rhetorical question* in 3.9 of 'what profit is there to one's toil?'. In the case of the *poem* in 1.4-11, the *rhetorical question* in 1.3 is put to rest by the seemingly monotonous and meaningless activity of creation; in 3.1-8 there is the same lack of human control in the activities of the world which are determined by God (cf. 3.9-14); though Garrett argues against this interpretation of 3.1-8 by saying:

> Ecclesiastes is not concerned about questions of "cyclic" versus "linear" time. These verses concern not divine providence or abstract notions of time but human mortality.[20]

But Garrett does not specify the reasons for this view; nor can he: death is but one event in a man's life, and life from birth to death has many other events as indicated in the *poem*. The literary purpose of the *poem* in 3.1-8, then, seems to be to use creation, and its activities determined by God, as an illustration to prove the inadequacy and impotency of humans to alter the fixed course of events (cf. a similar *illustrative* use of 1.4-11 and 11.7-12.7).

As Crenshaw rightly points out:

> Ancient sages believed that there was a right time and a wrong time for everything, and they devoted considerable energy to discerning proper times.[21]

This was the whole driving force behind astrology.

Qoheleth apparently used this *poem* in 3.1-8 as a pretext

for his following *rhetorical question* in 3.9 and commentary in 3.10-14. Fox argues that the *rhetorical question* properly belongs to the *poem* as its conclusion anticipating a negative response, and 3.10-14 are the commentary on the *poem* which deals with the *implications* of the *poem* and the guiding *rhetorical question*. The *poem*, however, is obviously a *poetic Gattung* and the *rhetorical question* really belongs to the *Gattung* of *discourse*.

B. The Immediate Context 3.9-15

The immediate context of the joy statement in 3.12-13 raises certain questions or problems concerning the demarcation of the pericope: Is it from 3.9-14 or 3.9-15? A number of commentators (Crenshaw, Gordis, Ogden, Whybray) all view the pericope running from 3.1-15, obviously inclusive of the *poem*. The distinctions of pericopes are probably artificial, and the *poem* can be included with the commentary; but 3.1-8 is clearly a *poetic Gattung* and 3.9-15 is *discourse* using a variety of *Gattungen*. 3.15c remains problematic; but is probably transitional and should be interpreted with 3.16-17 (so Garrett); though Salters comes to no firm conclusions on the matter but simply outlines the various interpretations.[22]

There are the *Gattungen* of *observation* (3.10) and *reflection* (3.11). An *observation* is when one simply observes some phenomenon in the universe without passing comment or evaluating it. A *reflection* is where one

actually thinks about certain phenomena and explores, comments and evaluates them.

Qoheleth observes the 'affliction' (ענה) God has given man; and reflects that he 'makes all things beautiful in its time'. 3.11a could also be rendered: 'He [God] made everything beautiful in *his* time'. There are three good reasons why the antecedent of the pronomial suffix ו attached to עת could be God himself and not those things created. First of all, the pronomial suffix ו is a third person, masculine, singular pronoun and may have a grammatical and conceptual connection to the subject of the verb, which is also third person, masculine and singular. Secondly, created 'things' do not determine their own completion date. Thirdly, that God is creator is clear from the text (אלהים in 3.10 is the antecedent to the subject of the verb עשׂה in 3.11), and must therefore, be seen as the antecedent to the pronomial suffix. This makes the most grammatical sense of the statement. Thus, God both creates and is sovereign in his creative processes; though Fox argues that 'everything' in 3.11 resumes the 'everything' of 3.1; and this is quite an attractive and persuasive argument.

From this *reflection* comes a second and third *reflection* in 3.11bc: 'God has set eternity (עלם) in their hearts', and consequently man cannot comprehend or take in *all* that he has done from beginning to end'. The interpretation of עלם has reeked havoc amongst commentators. The LXX renders it αιωνα. Barton argues vigourously against McNeile, *et al*. that it cannot possibly

mean 'eternity' in this context; though he does not dispute Qoheleth's use of the term elsewhere as such (1.4, 10; 2.16; 3.14; 9.6; 12.5).[23] Barton further argues, on etymological grounds, that the root עלם often has the sense of 'hidden' or 'unknown' and is used in this sense in 12.14. Gordis argues along rabbinic lines that עלם is used in the mishnaic sense of 'world', i.e., 'love of the world' (so *Rabbah Midrash Ecclesiastes*), and he gets some backup from the *Vulgate* which renders it *et mundum tradidit disputatione eorum* ('he [God] has handed over the world to their contention') on the basis of a textual emendation of בלבם to לרבם from the root ריב (cf. Job 31.13 [*N.I.V.* 'grievance']). But Barr says that Gordis' interpretation 'requires the rather difficult amplification as the "love of the world"';[24] and Fredericks adds, concerning Gordis' attempt to refute this by saying 'love' is implied in לב,[25] that 'this is loading the word too heavily with a subjective preference'.[26] But as Ginsburg points out, concerning עלם in the Hebrew Bible, it usually refers to an unspecified time in the future and thus 'eternity', and in the case of 3.11, it is probably in antithesis with עת or זמן which is a specific or limited period of time: for these and other reasons he should be considered correct. Perhaps there is even a pun on the roots עלם for 'ignorance' and eternity related to man's inability to know or relate to the future; and Qoheleth certainly advocates this idea in his book (cf. 3.22c; 6.12; 9.11-12). These *reflections* immediately lead to the joy statement of 3.12-13.

For all intents and purposes, there only appears to be one *Gattung* inside this *reflection Gattung* in the joy statement of 3.12-13: *indicative* statement. That **ידעתי** is used implies, as previously noted, 'experiential knowledge', and thus strengthens the *indicative* interpretation: Qoheleth knows *for sure*, on the basis of experience, that this is good and the gift of God. As far as he was concerned, this is a simple statement of fact. The following statements in 3.14-15 also seem to support the *indicative* interpretation on the basis that they demonstrate a *rationale* for enjoying life: time, events and eternity all overtake humanity, but God's eternal nature persists regardless. In addition, 3.12-13 does not have the encumbrances of the dubious *rhetorical question* on God's nature and the *hevel* and vexation of spirit statement of 2.24-25 which brought that joy statement into question. On the basis of the context, one can probably say that an *indicative* interpretation of 3.12-13 is a sound one. So, on the basis of form criticism, 3.12-13 is what it appears to be on face value: an *indicative carpe diem* joy statement.

3. QOHELETH 3.22

So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work – for that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

A. The Overall Context of the Pericope 3.15-22

The joy statement of 3.22 comes shortly after the *indicative* joy statement in 3.12-13. 3.15 appears to be in the *poetic* mode as indicated by the Hebrew *parallelism*. 3.15ab appears to be *synthetic parallelism* stating that 'whatever is has already been, and that to be already has been'. Qoheleth used the interrogative particle with the ש preposition as an indefinite pronoun (מה־ש), 'whatever', and not as an *interrogative* (so Fredericks, Ginsburg, Schoors). As has already been noted, 3.15c presents considerable difficulties for commentators. It too appears to be in the *poetic* mode; but its exact relationship with 3.15ab is unclear. It looks like another *synthetic* stich adding to the idea of the in 3.15ab; but it is also likely to *function* as a *transitional* statement for the following pericope, relating the past with future divine judgment in 3.16-17.

3.16 is an *observation Gattung* as indicated by the use of **ראיתי**; followed by, what is in essence, a *synonymous parallelism* made up of two *antithetical parallelisms*: observing that where judgment is, so is wickedness. 3.17 is a *reflection Gattung* as indicated by **אמרתי אני בלבי** ('So I said in my heart . . .') and an *evaluation*; whether or not what follows is *poetic* or simply *discourse* is debatable – but it might well relate the concept of divine judgment in 3.16-17 with the *poem* of 3.1-8 and appropriate times.

B. The Immediate Context 3.18-22

Loader argues that the pericope properly runs from 3.16-22 on the basis that 3.16 properly begins a new *reflection*, as does 4.1, and thus his demarcation between 3.16-22. Fox too connects this pericope with 3.16-17, saying that

> Inasmuch as *everything* has a time, Qohelet reasons, divine judgment must too come to pass. But this thought is small comfort, because if the sentence is death, the universiality of death makes that sentence meaningless as punishment.[27]

But it is difficult to see the connection between jurisprudence and the death penalty here. Again, the demarcations of the pericopes might be somewhat artificial for the purpose of analysing the *Gattungen* of a given joy statement. 3.18 does not begin with a conjunctive ו; but its use of אמרתי probably indicates continuity with what precedes it in 3.16-17; though the *N.I.V.* perhaps goes too far by translating it as 'also' ('I *also* thought . . .').

3.18 also begins another new *reflection discourse* through to 3.21, as indicated by the use of אמרתי. The interpretation of 3.18 and the following pericope hinges on the understanding of לברם. Most manuscripts and commentators take לברם from the root ברר, which usually means to 'purify' (e.g., Ez. 20.38; Job 33.8), but in later Hebrew could mean 'select', 'choose' (e.g., I Chr. 7.40; 9.22; Neh. 5.18). The LXX renders ברר as διακρινει; but though Whitley, following Barton, argues that the LXX understood ברר in the secondary sense of 'choose', it seems difficult to understand how the LXX could when the Greek equivalent for 'select', 'choose', would be εκλεγω;

though Ginsburg explains the LXX's rendering as a substitution for יִשְׁפֹּט in the preceding verse. The *Targum* and *Vulgate* probably are closer to the mark when they render לִבְרֹם as לְנִסָּאיְהוֹן ('test', 'try') and *probaret* ('prove') respectively. The *Peshitta* understood לִבְרֹם to be from the root בָּרָא, 'create'; but this is far-fetched on the basis that it does not suit the context. 'Proved' is probably the best rendering of בָּרַר in the context. The other problem with לִבְרֹם is the inflexion: Is the לְ preposition indicating emphatic preposition on the finite verb, the infinitive or the introduction of indirect speech? Gordis prefers the emphatic preposition on a finite verb interpretation with apocopated form on the basis of similar grammatical uses in Akkadian, Ugaritic and Arabic, and thus he renders it: 'He *surely* has tested them'. This grammatical inflexion is recognised in 9.4: כִּי־לַכֶּלֶב חַי הוּא טוֹב ('for *indeed* a living dog is better . . .'). The *infinitive* interpretation, as Whitley points out, would mean that the clause lacks a finite verb; but this is not uncommon in Hebrew, and may moreover, be seen as coming under the אָמַרְתִּי introduction to the *reflection*. The ם suffix likewise has created controversy: Is it simply the third person masculine plural pronoun 'they', 'them' or should it be emended to something like שָׁם as in 3.17? There is no reason to emend it, however, and the clause makes better sense when rendered: 'God tested them' or 'God proved to them'. Finally, with regard to the syntax of 3.18, where does עַל־דִּבְרַת (LXX περι λαλιας) belong: with the first clause or the second? דִּבֵּר is probably best rendered

here in the sense of the 'affairs' or 'matters' of the 'sons of man' ('humanity'); though Fox suggests, rather strangely, that perhaps a word is missing in between these first two clauses but for unspecified reasons. The first two clauses should be rendered: 'I said in my heart concerning matters of humanity: "God proved to them . .."'.

The next clause of 3.18, ולראות שהם־בהמה המה להם, also proves difficult. The *Massoretic Text* (so too the *Targum*) views וְלִרְאוֹת as the *qal* infinitive; but the LXX (και του δειξαι), the *Peshitta* and the *Vulgate* all read it as the *hiphil* (וְלַרְאוֹת). The two possible understandings of the clause, depending on how one reads the verb, would be either that the infinitive belongs with the preceding infinitive with God as their subject (*hiphil*: 'surely God has tested and *shown*') or that the subject remains Qoheleth (*qal*: 'I said to my heart concerning the matters of humanity . . . and [I] *saw* that they are beasts'). Whitley further adds that 'לברם האלהים would then be in the nature of a parenthesis, and may not even be original'.[28]

The final phrase of 3.18, שהם־בהמה המה להם, is also notoriously difficult. המה is often considered a dittography with בהמה, and this is very reasonable on the grounds that two pronouns are not necessary (המה להם); though the LXX represents the phrase in its entirety (και του δειξαι οτι αυτοι κτηνη εισι), but the LXX translators thought להם belonged to the following line (και γε αυτοις συναντημα).

The rather morbid subject matter of 3.18-21 is mostly comprised of *indicative* statements, including a *hevel* statement in 3.19f. 3.20 possibly makes use of a *quotation*

or *allusion* to the *poetic Gattung* found in Gen. 2.7 (הָיָה לְנֶפֶשׁ = 'breath of life'), as in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (cf. Gen. 3.19c, 7.15; Ps. 104.29), as well some form of wisdom concept like the human constitution as 'dust' (cf. Sir. 40.11); and 3.21 takes the *Gattung* of an *unanswerable rhetorical question*. The literary *intent* or *function* of 3.18-21 seems to be for God to 'show' or 'prove' to humans that they are mortal and that this makes 'everything' in life *hevel* (3.19).

The general *Gattung* of 3.22 is that of *reflection*, whereby the ideas in the previous pericope are *evaluated*, as indicated, again, by וְרָאִיתִי, with a *reflective* and *conclusive* 'so'. Both 3.22ab appear to be *indicative* statements, at least as far as Qoheleth was concerned. The last clause of 3.22, an *explanatory* clause as indicated by the כִּי conjunction, takes the *Gattung* of a *rhetorical question* and inevitably has the literary *effect* or *intent* of 'inducing mystery', and thus, perhaps, ambiguity into what was being said (cf. chapter six).

The subject matter (mortality), the *hevel* statement and the unanswerable *rhetorical question* of 3.18-21, can be seen, again, to illustrate the *rationale* for the *carpe diem* joy statement. The *purpose* clause, given in the *Gattung* of a *rhetorical question*, which requires an emphatic negative response, underlines the mystery of existence and the ambiguity of life *post mortem* which may also *illustrate* the reason for the *carpe diem* joy statement (so Loader). However, the inverse might also be true since the mystery of the questions asked might also render the

appropriateness or ability to enjoy, under such ambiguous circumstances, *hevel*. Surely the *hevel* statement in 3.19 also has ramifications for the joy statement in such circumstances.

4. QOHELETH 5.17-19

Then I realised that it is good and beautiful for a man to eat and drink and see good in all his work which he worked for under the sun – during the few days of his life which God gave him – because that is his lot. Moreover, when God gives a man wealth and possessions – and enables him to consume them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work: this is the gift of God. For he does not remember much the days of his life – because God occupies his heart with enjoyment.

A. The Overall Context of the Pericope 5.7-6.9

The pericope of 5.7-6.9 deals with the subject of wealth and its implications. 5.7-8 takes the *Gattung* of an *observation* (אם . . . תראה) of oppression and its political context. Since the statements are simple *observations* they are probably in the *indicative mood*. 5.7-8 are probably a part of 5.9-6.9 because the political realm provides the infrastructure for making profits. 5.8 is one of the most notoriously difficult verses in *Qoheleth* to translate. If the noun יתרון is used as a predicate adjective with an adversative conjunction, and הי֫א is the

copula, the opening clause would then be: 'But the land is profitable for all'. The second clause is the problematic one; but clearly there is some sense of *mutual advantage* for the land (a metaphor for the people) and the king. מלך לשׂדה נעבד could be literally rendered 'a king to a cultivated field', with the literary *intent* of the second clause to predicate the first and indicated in English by way of a comma: 'But the land is profitable for all, a king to a cultivated field'. Thus the saying is *poetic* and takes the literary form of a *synthetic parallelism* with the literary *effect*: 'Just as the land is profitable to the people, so too is a cultivated field to a king'. Perhaps there is some kind of word play between 'land' ('the people') and 'cultivated field'. The sense of the verb נעבד cannot be in question (LXX του αγρου ειργασμενου; so too reads the *Peshitta*) even though there is an attempt to do so. Whitley is far off the mark when he thinks that נעבד should be construed with מלך rather than with לשׂדה: 'a cultivated king'(?). Whatever else might be a part of the interpretation, the sense of mutual profitableness is certainly there (cf. Barton, Ginsburg, Gordis, Whitley). 5.7-8 make the *transition* from religious matters to economics and divine activity, or lack of activity, therein.

It is difficult to discern, at every point, what specific *Gattungen* are being used in 5.9-17. At times it appears that a *poetic Gattung* is being used as indicated by the *parallelism* in some of the statements; though it is also clear that they also take, for the most part, the

Gattungen of *reflection*. There is also the *evaluative* use of *rhetorical questions* anticipating emphatic negative responses (5.10c, 15c). The joy statement of 5.17-19 is framed by two *reflections* on either side of it: 5.15-16 and 6.1-2.

Qoheleth began with a proleptic *reflection* in 5.15a: וגם־זה רעה חולה ('and this too is a sick evil'). The antecedent to וגם־זה is obviously related to Qoheleth's previous reflection in 5.12-14 which deals with the fact that one cannot secure material benefits for either an heir or oneself because of fate and death. There is the *poetic Gattung* in 5.15b as indicated in the *parallelism* of כן ילך כל־עמת שבא ('as every man comes, so he departs'). עמת is from a rather rare root meaning 'near' or 'juxtaposition'; and in 7.14 there is the use of לעמת־זה as 'together with this'. The LXX reads כל־עמת as כִּלְעֻמַּת (ωσπερ γαρ) and the phrase is used to make a *comparison* between ('just as . . . so . . .') the 'coming and going of a man' with 'toiling for the wind' (so Whybray). The *rhetorical question*, לרוח מה־יתרון לו שיעמל ('what profit for him who works for wind?'), again requires the emphatic negative response 'nothing!'.

The final statement before the joy statement of 5.17-19 in 5.16 may either take the *Gattung* of *poetry* (so *N.I.V.*) or as a simple *indicative* statement. The LXX, *Syrohexaplaris* and *Coptic* versions all read וְאֶבֶל ('grief') for יאכל in the clause בחשך יאכל ('in darkness he eats'; LXX εν σκοτει και εν πενθει: 'in darkness and grief'), which makes the use of the synonym כעס ('grief', 'vexation')

repetitive and redundant. The *Peshitta*, *Targum*, *Vulgate* and LXX all read the verb כָּעַס as the noun כַּעַס (LXX και θυμω ['and anger']; *Vulgate in curis multis* ['in many cares']); the 3.m.s. suffix on חליו is an obvious dittography off of וקצף.

Gordis and Ginsburg (*contra* Whybray), following Ibn Ezra, go to great lengths to give an interpretation of 5.16 as that of an illustration of the 'miser' who is so cheap he will not pay for lighting and eats alone to avoid expenses. But there is no indication from the overall (5.10-16) or immediate (5.15-16) contexts that: one, '*any* man' does have wealth; because two, it is not certain that one can have wealth outside of fate; three, it appears that the man seems to work for nothing because death ultimately squanders any material benefits by not allowing him to take them with him; and four, that toiling for the wind indicates the lack of יתרון and thus demonstrates the every day frustrations of eking out a living as represented in 5.16. There is also no warrant for a number of commentators who view the pericope from 5.9-19 as dealing with a miser of wealth (*contra* Fox, Ginsburg, Gordis). Nevertheless, this pericope of assorted statements, both *poetic* and *discourse*, provide the overall context in which comes the lead-in of 5.16 to the joy statement of 5.17-19.

Whybray says of this lead-in:

> Whatever may be the correct interpretation of the verse in detail, it is clear that Qoheleth's intention was to emphasize the futility of an obsessive devotion to money-making by piling up a series of exaggerated expressions of misery, thus providing an effective contrast to his recipe for happiness in the verse which follows.[29]

Despite the questionable statements regarding 'misery', Whybray's comments here have much to commend to them. There may be, however, a number of reasons to doubt or question the so-called contrast with 5.17-19.

6.1-2 (which could be extended to 6.9), and its place in the literary structure immediately following the joy statement, might well be the main reason to doubt the straightforward *carpe diem* interpretation of 5.17-19, along with being *enveloped* by two such *negative reflections* (5.16 and 6.1-2). 6.1-2 takes the *Gattung* of a *reflection*: Qoheleth makes a moral *evaluation* related to the nature of God (6.2). Salters says of 6.1f.

> In 6.1f. Qoheleth is concerned to show that one of the greatest evils he has observed is the fact that some men are not given the ability to enjoy what wealth and substance they have. They seem to be *constitutionally* incapable of taking any enjoyment from the good things which are at their disposal.[30]

Salters also argues that the main question that Qoheleth was trying to answer for himself, which a number of commentators like Jerome and Rashi try to answer for him, is: 'Why are some wealthy men unable to enjoy their substance?'; and Salters should be considered correct on this point. There are a number of tricky grammatical problems to unpack before one can assess the literary *effect* of 6.1-2 on the joy statement of 5.17-19.

Some twenty Hebrew manuscripts have חולה following רעה; but this is probably a scribal accommodation to link 6.1 with the reflections of 5.12 and 5.15 (so Gordis, Whybray). 6.1-2, nevertheless, should probably be viewed as 'another' *reflection* of Qoheleth along the lines of

5.10-16. This raises the question of whether or not the joy statement is an editorial gloss which disrupts the literary structure. But that is unlikely. The fact that Qoheleth used the adjective רבה to describe the frequency of the *evil* he has seen, indicates that a rendering of it as 'common' or 'prevalent' is acceptable, if not the best choice (so Gordis); this argues against Fox who views 6.1-2 as an anomaly. Salters argues that אכל must also be taken in its more dynamic sense of '*enjoy*' rather than just 'eat' or 'consume' on the basis that these more literal interpretations are inadequate for the context in 6.2. So Qoheleth made clear in 6.2 that God may give a person all the food, drink and wealth that one could want – and still deprive them of the joy of it all.[31] Salters also says that 'The implication is that God is to blame, since he is the author of it'. He further adds that

> As a result of this fierce accusation, there have been attempts in the history of the exegesis of this passage to justify God's action on the grounds that such a man, as here referred to, does not deserve to enjoy his wealth.[32]

Salters demonstrates how the *Targum* interprets the withholding of the power to enjoy on the basis of the man's sin (על חובתיה) with the commentary 'all this his sins have brought upon him, because he effected no good with it [i.e., the wealth]'; whereas Jerome and Rashi blame the man's greed or misery; and Mendelssohn, following Rashbam, simply *underplay* the role of God in the situation, placing the words in the mouth of an *objector*. But Qoheleth gave his negative moral *evaluation* of God as giver of food,

drink and wealth but no power to enjoy them in 6.2e: 'This is *hevel* and a sick evil' (זה הבל וחלי רע הוא).

One cannot but feel that there is a tone of bitterness in Qoheleth's view of God as giver of food, drink and wealth. This may be implied in the fact that these explicit statements come always in response to very negative circumstances he was discoursing on.[33] Also, the determinism of God in his gifts seemed to be disturbing to him. This may be more acute coming from a wisdom model where an orderly creation was the basis for human control of destiny.[34]

That Qoheleth was in conflict with traditional wisdom circles is undeniable.[35] 4.7-8; 5.9-16 and 6.1-2 present considerable problems for their view that the good get good things and enjoyment in life and the bad get bad.[36] However, Qoheleth's view is quite clearly the way things actually are the world; though he did seem to sympathise with the above mentioned wisdom principle.[37] Consequently, he seemed troubled by the fact that bad things happen to good people, and this is confirmed in 6.1-2. So whatever Qoheleth's view of God as giver of food, drink and wealth may have been, it does not seem to be as positive as many think it is on face value. While there may be some intrinsic value to traditional wisdom principles, they do not seem to be so because God makes them so. They seem to be concessions to Qoheleth's *hard* determinism.[38]

B. The Immediate Context 5.15-6.2

5.17-19 takes the *Gattung* of *reflection*, making an *evaluation* in the light of the previous *reflections* in 5.10-16. The *Gattung* of all the sentences seem to be in the *indicative mood*.

A number of conclusions can be drawn about the joy statement in the light of the above form criticism and exegetical notes. There are a number of reasons why the *indicative* nature of the joy statement should be called into question, or present considerable doubts, as to its exact literary nature, *effects* and *intent*. The issue, between 5.15-16 and the joy statement in 5.17-19, then becomes: How can one eat and drink in joy (5.17-19) if there is no יתרון to toil and if all one's eating and drinking is in darkness, vexation, affliction and anger? While Whybray's interpretation of 5.10-16 as a contrast for the joy statement has much to commend to it, there are a number of reasons which argue against it, or make it appear dubious. First of all, Qoheleth states that the *evil* of 6.1-2 is *prevalent* upon man; of course the veracity of such a statement might well be in question. Notwithstanding, the idea in 6.1-2 on the sovereignty or capricious determinacy of God has the literary *effect* of turning the joy statement of 5.17-19 into either *sarcasm* or a joke: 'Enjoy *if you can* but that all *depends upon God – and he is fickle*'. This leads to either an acute contradiction or the *carpe diem* statement being contingent either upon fate or God for individual cases: thus not 'everyone' can enjoy

life, work and its material benefits (even if they are *lucky* enough to *have them*). Secondly, the negative evaluations of the *hevel* and 'sick evil' statements throughout the overall context of the pericope running from 5.7-6.9. The joy statement is enveloped in the ideas of 5.15-16 and 6.1-2, then, have the literary *intent* or *effect* of either *irony*, sarcasm, a joke, or certainly a contradiction or ambiguity. 6.1-2, moreover, is acutely *subversive* to the idea of the *carpe diem* joy statement; though it may be argued inversely that the joy statement(s) is/are subversive of the rest of the pericopes. But this is highly unlikely, especially in the overall and immediate contexts of 5.17-19 where the literary structure of 6.1-2 following 5.17-19 indicates that 6.1-2 *is subversive* of the joy statement and not vice-versa because it follows and envelops the joy statement – which has the literary *effect* of, in a very real sense, *swallowing it up*. Perhaps nowhere else in Qoheleth is the joy statement so ambiguous because of the powerful *effect* of the literary structure *surrounding* 5.17-19.

5. QOHELETH 8.15

So I commend the enjoyment of life: because there is nothing better for a man under the sun than to eat, drink and be happy. Then joy will accompany him in his work – all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.

A. The Overall Context of the Pericope 8.1-10.20

If the overall context of 8.15 is inclusive of 8.1-10.20, dealing with politics in general,[39] then there may be an unprecedented number of different *Gattungen* in this pericope. Thus, it would be impossible to deal extensively with them all in relation to 8.15. Therefore, it may be apposite at this time to explain the literary construction, or the anomalies of the literary construction, of the political treatise in 8.1-10.20.

Loader is correct to say that 8.1 actually belongs with the previous wisdom pericope of 7.23-8.1, or perhaps even 7.1-8.1. Clearly 8.2 begins another pericope dealing with politics which takes the *Gattung* of *reflection* or *instruction* (in which *commands* and *prohibitions* are the main sub-*Gattungen*[40]); but Loader is surely wrong to break the pericope up between 8.2-9 and 8.10-15 — for 8.10 obviously continues to deal with the injustice of oppression in politics, and then deals with jurisprudence in 8.11-14, and all jurisprudence is related to the state or politics (theodicy excepted). The joy statement in 8.15 might indicate that it is in fact a literary ellipsis in Qoheleth's political treatise in 8.1-10.20; this could also explain the joy statement in 9.7-9. An ellipsis may be indicated because 8.16-17 may be a comment on the injustices of life in 8.9-14 whereby Qoheleth asserted that no one can really make sense of the way life is in the world. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the joy

statement is immediately followed by rather ambiguous statements regarding wisdom's efficacy.

9.1a begins with another כִּי clause indicating continuation on the same political theme as before in 8.1-14 and 16-17. 9.1a is not as Whybray assumes, a summary of 8.16-17.[41] Rather, 9.1a is a *transitional* sentence which links the previous political treatise in 8.1-14, 16-17 with what follows in 9.1-6. The כִּי is a conjunctive and *conclusive so*. The כִּי clause of 9.1 *rejoins* Qoheleth's political treatise, where he picks back up on the theme of the good and wicked of 8.12-14, described as a senseless situation in 8.16-17. Qoheleth's conclusion of that *reflection* of 8.1-14 and 16-17 comes in 9.1b. There is no doubt that Qoheleth was perplexed if not painfully vexed over the issues of theodicy and human injustice.[42] Qoheleth settled for a rather fatalistic view of these matters in 9.1-2. Furthermore, that Qoheleth might have been emotionally vexed over, the capriciousness of God's dealings with humanity and human injustice, may be evidenced in the emotional aspect to 9.1ab in 9.1c. 'Love' (אהב) and 'hate' (שנא) are strong words in this context. The reality, at least insofar as Qoheleth was concerned, is that no one knows whether God loves them or hates them. Qoheleth illustrated this point in 9.2 by saying that the good and the bad share the same מקרה ('fate', 'destiny'). This destiny could either be the oppression and injustice of a base world, or death, or both. Both are more likely due to the literary structural position between the injustices of the world in 9.1-2 and death in 9.3-6.

The fact that God does not redress these injustices only compounds the political issue with the issue of theodicy. Qoheleth's *evaluation* of human destiny to suffer the injustices of a base world at the hands of a capricious and arbitrary God in 9.3a is that: השמש כי־מקרה אחד לכל זה רע בכל אשר־נעשה תחת ('This is the evil in everything which is done under the sun: one fate for all [death]'). That humanity must suffer oppression and injustice of both politics and God makes everything in life *evil*.[43]

The joy statement in 9.7-10 will be dealt with in the next section; but how 9.11-12 fit into the literary structure of *Qoheleth* is a mystery. 9.11-12 might well be a dislocated fate statement; or perhaps 9.11-12 might possibly go with the *illustration* of 9.13-16. Maybe 9.11-12 relate to both 9.7-10 and 9.13-16. In that case, 9.11-12 is *transitional*, indicating fate is in control and it is unpredictable: no one can predict the future. After this, its literary *function* might be to foreshadow the event of a city's siege and the fact that 'bad times' (עת רעה) can fall upon people 'unexpectedly' (פתאם), and that political wisdom can be usurped by base folly in such unexpected situations. Thus, wisdom is impotent or of limited value in predicting or having any lasting effect in political situations (so Loader). That Qoheleth almost equated foolishness and folly with human baseness may find its best support in 9.13-10.7 by way of *negative examples*.

Many scholars consider 10.1-20 to be a collection of unrelated aphorisms or aphorisms comparing wisdom with folly.[44] However, if one closely scrutinises the content

of 10.1-20 it becomes apparent that a number of statements relate directly to politics (see 10.4-7, 16-17, 20) and some may be *illustrations* in *poetic Gattung* of how to do and not to do political work (see 10.2-7, 8-15, 18-19). Moreover, there are certain wisdom themes in play which interconnect these aphorisms under the rubric of politics in 8.1-10.20.

The number of *Gattungen* within the overall pericope is impressive: *instruction* which often used the *Gattung* of *imperative* (8.2-6), *imperatives* and *synthetic parallelism* (8.3-4), followed by more *synthetic parallelisms* (8.5-6), a *rhetorical question* (8.7) and another *synthetic parallelism* (8.8). 8.9 begins another *reflection*, still on the topic of politics, but dealing specifically with injustice and oppression, with the moral *evaluation* of a *hevel* statement. There are more *reflections* in 9.1-8, 11-12 (possibly in *poetic* form), the *Gattung* of *illustration* (9.13-16) followed by a number of *antithetical parallelisms* in 9.17-10.20.

B. The Immediate Context 8.10-17

The variety of *Gattungen* and the intricate nature of the literary structure of the overall pericope of 8.1-10.20 makes discerning the literary *intent* of the joy statement in 8.15 (and 9.7-9 for that matter) an obscure and a difficult task: 8.15 is flanked by two *discourses* taking the *Gattungen* of *reflection*.

Galling thought that this pericope should end at 8.15; whereas Hertzberg thought it should end at 8.17. But it is clear that the subject matter of 8.1-10.20, dealing with politics, and 8.16-17 are related – with 8.16-17 *functioning* as a *transition* to 9.1ff. Ginsburg says of 8.16-10.7, relating to politics and beginning at 8.16, that

> To shew more strikingly the force of the final conclusion, submitted at the end of this section, Coheleth gives first a *resume* of the investigations contained in the foregoing three sections. He tells us, that in the course of his enquiry he found it utterly impossible to fathom the work of God by wisdom.[45]

This analysis, which must be viewed as correct on the basis of the literary structure and content of the overall pericope (though not through to 12.7 as Ginsburg suggests), demonstrates the continuity of 8.16ff. with 8.2-8, 9-14, 15, but also the literary *function* of 8.16 as an *evaluation* of the previous pericopes *including* the joy statement of 8.15. Whether the joy statement is original or an editorial gloss, the final redactor must have had some reason for *framing* the joy statement between two such *antithetical* ideas to it in 8.14 and 8.16-17.

But what is the relationship of the joy statement with 8.14 and 8.16-17? Why this *antithetical* statement in the midst of so much trouble? This may support Whybray's *et al.* view that the joy statements *function* as *compensation* for the harsh realities of life; but how can one have joy in the midst of such injustice, pain and uncertainty? Indeed, even if it were possible, one cannot be sure that one will find God's favour to the end of joy (cf. 2.24-26;

5.17-6.2); and 8.16-17 only accentuates this problem because of man's epistemological limitations.

The immediate context, being flanked by two negative *evaluations*, makes understanding the literary *intent* of 8.15 difficult. Perhaps 8.16-17 *function* very much in the same way as the last clause of the joy statement of 3.22, which is actually connected to the joy statement by the כי conjunction, obscuring the possession of, or potential for, joy in the light of future uncertainties. The literary structure may also indicate that 8.15 is a literary ellipsis of some sort because it comes almost without regard to its immediate context; or could it be that the literary structure, context and content all work against (*subversively*) the joy statement or *it* against them? Dell makes the observation, regarding 8.16-17, that

> . . . Qoheleth reflects on man's inability to know the 'doing' of God. These reflections provide examples of the 'new' scepticism found in Qoheleth's thought, but it is the content that is new, not the form. Where traditional forms are used they are put into a context of reflective thinking which changes their nature. The three reflections in this chapter [8] are at one in agreeing about the absence of justice and (divine) judgment in the affairs of the world and man's impotence in dealing with these things.[46]

This could also apply to the joy statement of 8.15, which is a part of the overall, if not the immediate, context of 8.16-17. Perhaps this explains the literary *intent* of the joy statement(s): *a use or reuse of forms in order to express scepticism* (so Dell). The literary structure and content of the pericopes flanking the joy statement of 8.15 certainly seem to indicate this, and thus, the *indicative* nature of the joy statement(s) comes into question: it may

be *subversive* to the surrounding pericopes and itself – and indicates *scepticism* not *indicativeness*. But the literary *function* or *intent* remains ambiguous.

6. QOHELETH 9.7-9

Go, enjoy your food and drink your wine with a glad heart – because God is already pleased with your works. Let your clothes be white at all times and let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with a woman you love – all the days of your hevel life which God gave you under the sun – all your hevel days: because this is your lot in life and in the material benefits which you worked for under the sun.

A. The Overall Context of the Pericope 9.1-12

Much has already been said on the overall context with which the joy statements of 8.15 and 9.7-9 come (8.1-10.20) in the previous section dealing with its political context. So this section will only deal with 9.7-9 in the sub-pericope of 9.1-12.

9.1 continues, or rejoins, the theme of injustice in the world in the overall context of politics, as indicated by the כי conjunction and the content of the pericope from 9.1-6 dealing specifically with death, the injustice of death, and the *leveling* effect of death which renders all human qualities such as character ('righteous' or 'wicked') *equal* and *indiscriminate*. The joy statement of 9.7-9 (which probably includes 9.10) may be another literary

ellipsis on the basis that 9.11-12 rejoins the theme of indiscriminate determinism or fate.

The overall *Gattung* of 9.1-6 is again that of *reflection*. Thus it is probably in the *indicative mood* for the most part with variety of sub-*Gattungen*.

9.1 opens with a rather unusual clause: אל־לבי ולבור כי את־כל־זה נתתי. First of all, what is referred to in את־כל־זה? The conjunction, followed by the definite direct object marker, may indicate continuity with the previous statement in 8.17. The כי conjunction in 9.1, therefore, indicates an *explanatory* clause: 'because . . .'; though Whybray simply views the כי as an assertative particle. The LXX tacks the first clause onto the last clause of 8.17. If את־כל־זה is the direct object of the subordinate subject and verb in 8.17d (החכם and יאמר), then 9.1a explains that Qoheleth (the subject of the clause in 9.1a [נתתי]) 'put all of this (the wise man's inability to find or comprehend the works of God) into my heart'; but if את־כל־זה refers to the main subject and verb of 8.17a (ראיתי), then 9.1a explains 'the whole mystery of God's work on earth' [*sic*] is what 'I [Qoheleth] put into my heart'. The latter is more likely since 9.1-6 has broader concerns than the wise man's epistemological limitations; and the clause should be considered an *explanatory* clause with a כי conjunction which *functions* as a *transition* and not the assertative particle (*contra* Whybray). It should be noted that even though there are a number of manuscripts with אל being את,[47] this is highly unlikely on the basis that a specifying preposition is more appropriate and

necessary for the object of the verb (נתתי) than the definite direct object marker, which is not necessary. Nevertheless, 9.1a probably acts as a transition from the *discourse* on wisdom to the new subject of retributive justice.

לבור is also problematic, with a number of manuscripts (*Vulgate*, *Targum*, *Arabic*) emending לבור to לתור from the root תור, 'spy out'; and others (LXX [ειδεν], *Coptic*, *Peshitta*) reading ראה. Gordis explains לבור as 'an infinitive construct consecutive equivalent to a finite verb' from the root ברר 'test', 'prove' (cf. 3.18), which he renders as 'clearly understood'; but this remains dubious and requires due caution (cf. Whitley, Whybray).

The last phrase of 9.1 is also very difficult to render (הכל לפניהם). The LXX, *Symmachus* and *Vulgate* all accept a textual emendation of הַכֹּל at the beginning of 9.2 to הָבֶל and view it as a part of the end of 9.1c instead of the beginning of 9.2. The LXX has τα παντα προ προσωπου αυτων, ματαιοτης εν τοις τασι ('everything before them, futile in all things'); but the *Peshitta* emends the plural suffix to a singular and reads 'everything before him . . .'; *Symmachus* follows similar lines and the *Vulgate* has *sed omnia in futurum servantur incerta* ('but all things are kept uncertain for the time to come'). As Gordis points out, nevertheless, these latter ideas are irrelevant here and better expressed by the *Massoretic Text* as הכל לפניהם ('everything is before them'), i.e., 'anything may happen to them', which the *Vulgate* supports in principle.

As the *Gattung* of *reflection*, 9.1-2 appear to be in the *indicative mood*, simple statements of fact as Qoheleth understands them; and their content relating the wisdom subject of retributive justice, or lack thereof, indicates that 8.16-17 (which rejoined the theme of oppression, injustice or lack of retributive justice in 8.9 related to the political realm) through to 9.6, are along the same theme and should be considered a single pericope.

9.2 uses the *Gattung* of *merismos* (a form of *parallelism*) to represent the 'whole'; but 9.2f probably turns to the *Gattung* of *poetry* as indicated by its *synonymous parallelism*. The point of the *reflection* is clear: death is the common destiny (מקרה) of the good and bad, righteous (wise) and wicked (fools).

9.3 returns to the *Gattung* of *reflection*, probably in the *indicative mood*, *discoursing* on the theme of death, but with an ellipsis on the evil and madness in life before death. 9.3a makes the proleptic moral *evaluation*, השמש זה רע בכל אשר־נעשה תחת ('this is the evil in everything which is done under the sun'), with זה רע בכל possibly being a Hebrew form of superlative, 'the greatest evil amongst all' (see Barton; cf. Josh. 14.15; Judg. 6.15); and נעשה is probably used as the perfect and not the participle, though the difference of meaning is slight (so Gordis). הוללות, from the root הלל, generally means either to 'shine' or 'boast', but in this feminine plural form means 'folly' or 'madness'. Gordis adds that הלל is

> . . . a word which Koheleth uses to describe unbridled and unprincipled conduct, which results from the conviction that life is meaningless and that there is no moral law

> operating in the world.[48]

This, however, may be reading too much into the text. ואחריו is variously understood by the different manuscripts: the LXX has και οπισω αυτων, and the *Peshitta* follows this plural reading of the pronomial suffix ('after them'); but the *Syriac* and *Symmachus* (τα δε τελευτετα αυτων) read it as the plural ending הם ('their end'), as do Galling and Barucq; and the *Vulgate* reads *post haec* ('after these things'). Gordis explains the singular suffix as a 'petrified ending' and the whole word ואחריו means 'afterward'; though it is possible to understand the singular pronoun as the neuter 'it', referring to what was just mentioned ('life'), as in: 'after it (life) to the dead'. Some ancient versions and commentators (*Midrash Rabbah Ecclesiastes*, Rashi) understand המתים as meaning 'hell'; thus the *Vulgate* renders it *et post haec ad inferos deducentur* ('and after these things they shall be brought down to hell'); but these are over-interpretative.

9.5-6 also indicate that they take the *poetic Gattung*, with six ideas or statements being represented in a bicolon *antithetical parallelism* (9.5ab), of which is added two further ideas in *synthetic parallelism* (9.5cd), followed by another two ideas in *synthetic parallelism* (9.6ab). Luther, interestingly enough, coordinates 9.5d with 9.6a and translates it: *Daß man sie nicht mehr liebet, noch baffet, noch neidet* ('for their memorial is forgotten, so that they be neither loved, hated, nor envied'); and Gordis comments that

> Consciousness on any terms is preferable to non-existence, and knowledge, however limited

> and melancholy in content, is better than ignorance.[49]

But this begs a number of questions: Is a tortured life of acute physical ailment better to unconsciousness (a state which is the body's natural defence mechanism against acute trauma and pain)? And how can one prove there is no consciousness after death? Whybray comments that love, hate and envy are the strong passions which are the mainspring of human activity; but he too draws a questionable conclusion by saying:

> Better to participate in the stimulating ferment of life than to be dead, with no passions and no activities at all![50]

One could, or perhaps should, add that this is the way Qoheleth seemed to see things; and clearly 9.1-6 have the literary *intent* to *demonstrate the inevitable fate* of all living creatures to die, to contrast life and death, and to draw the conclusion that any form of life is better than a state of death; though Qoheleth *et al.* may be questioned on this point (Why have people committed suicide all throughout history? Why have tortured people begged to be killed?).

9.11-12 forms the other side of the frame to the joy statement in 9.7-9(10?) and rejoins the original theme of fate (9.11) and one's fate in death (9.12). They appear to take the *Gattung* of *poetry* as indicated by *synthetic parallelism*. The grammatical force of **לא לקלים המרוץ**, as Fox correctly points out, 'does not mean that the swift [**קלל**] never win, but that they do not possess the race, thus do not control it';[51] though **קלל** ('runner') probably denotes a 'courier' and not an 'athlete' (so Crenshaw), and

thus the analogy is a military one in keeping with the second stich of the *synthetic parallelism* in 9.11bc dealing with 'battle' (המלחמה). Nevertheless, the connecting idea is that of 'fate' and 'death'. So too in 9.12, where an initial *indicative* statement is made, לא־ידע האדם את־עתו כי גם ('moreover, a man cannot know his time [to die]'), followed by a *synonymous parallelism* on the deathly fate of fish and birds, and concluded with a *synthetic parallelism* relating that same deathly fate with humans.

Both the grammar and *Gattungen* of 9.1-6 and 9.11-12 clearly emphasise the theme of death and fickle fate, and act as the frame to the joy statement in 9.7-9(10?). There must certainly be some reason or meaning for framing the joy statement in such a fashion.

B. The Immediate Context 9.7-10

The joy statement in 9.7-9 again appears to take the form of a *reflection*, but with a combination of statements in both the *imperative* and *indicative moods*. 9.7 opens with a commands to 'Go (לך), eat and drink!', with the *explanatory* clause 'because God is already pleased with your works' (כי כבר רצה האלהים את־מעשיך). This statement is followed by another *imperative*, the *jussive* יהיו, to be well clothed and anointed (9.8); followed by a third *imperative* statement saying to 'enjoy life with a woman you love', with the *explanatory* clause 'for this is your lot in life' (9.9). Gordis argues, by using comparative literature in

the ancient Near East, that 9.9 uses both the *Gattungen* of *prose* and *poetry* in the same sentence.

It is very likely that 9.10 is also a part of the immediate context of the joy statement in 9.7-9. This is because of its thematic similarities: fate, work and death; and though grammatically it does not take the overall *Gattung* of an *explanatory* clause, and lacks a conjunction to this end, it does *function* as one. 9.10 also uses a number of *imperatives* (לעשות, עשה, דעת [this last imperative is used substantively]). כל אשר should be viewed here as the indefinite pronoun 'whatever'. There is widespread confusion over the accentuation of the *Massoretic Text*, which puts the infinitive לעשות with בכחך instead of the imperative עֲשֵׂה ('to do in your strength'); the *Vulgate*, *Targum* and several Hebrew manuscripts put בכחך with עֲשֵׂה ('in your strength do'); though Fox argues that, in relationship with the LXX's ως η δυναμις σου,

> Qohelet does not recommend all-out expenditure of effort (as would be implied by *b^{e}kohaka*), but only moderate exertions in accordance with one's abilities.[52]

But either way makes little difference: the *force* of the sentence relates to 'doing', *with as much vigour as possible*, this side of death. Ginsburg suggests that מצא with יד means whatever the 'hand *gains*'; and this is a reasonable translation in relation to work and the material benefits of work. The use of the *imperatives* indicate a *strengthening* of 9.10's statement: 'whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength', with the *explanatory* clause, 'because there is no work, planning,

knowledge or wisdom in *Sheol* ('grave'?) – where you are going'.

Loader may be right with regard to his sub-points, but not with regard to his overall conclusion, when he says:

> A comparison of the two passages [8.10-15, 16-17 and 9.1-10] yields the following similarities which confirm the delimitation given above: The invalidity of the doctrine of retribution, the motif of death and that of abundant evil among men, polemic against the general *hokma* by the ironical use of sayings which in themselves can have a pure chokmatic function, and a concluding *carpe diem* section.[53]

Loader is probably right with regard to *irony* being present in the above passages; but it is doubtful that he has taken the ambiguities of the text seriously enough, or got it right as to the literary *intent* of the irony *supporting* a straightforward *carpe diem* interpretation: the *irony* may be *subversive* of the straightforward *carpe diem* interpretation.

The use of the *imperative mood* obviously intensifies the statements in 9.7-9; but to what *purpose*? Maybe the statement on eating and drinking, in the context of death, is a *joke* on the basis that *if one does not eat or drink – one dies*. The theme of fate and death may also indicate, in conjunction with the statements in 9.9bc which qualifying 'enjoying life with a woman' in 9.9a with 'all your *hevel* days which he [God] gave to you under the sun – all your *hevel* days', and in conjunction with the statement in 9.9d which says 'this is your lot' (חלק), that the joy statement and the *imperatives* are a *Gattung* of *taunt* or *sarcasm*. In other words: It is impossible to do these things (enjoy) under such circumstances, because not only

do fickle fate and death render these activities *hevel* in the long run, but life itself is *hevel* on account of them. Thus there may be *irony* in the joy statement; and this may be given support if 9.10 is also a part of the joy statement, which it appears to be. The interpretation and literary *intent* of 9.7-9, therefore, remain ambiguous.

7. QOHELETH 11.8-9

However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all; but let him remember the days of darkness – for they will be many. Everything to come is hevel. Be happy, young man, while you are young; and let your heart be glad during the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever you eyes see; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

A. The Overall Context of the Pericope 11.7-12.7

Loader argues that the pericope is delimited from 11.7-12.8, saying that 11.7 begins a new *topos* and the end of the pericope is 12.8 because 12.9 begins the epilogue.[54] Fredericks, however, has challenged this understanding by arguing for the literary unity of 11.1-12.8;[55] but there are probably three separate poems redacted together to make that literary unity. Whybray views 11.1-6 with 10.1-20 as 'various sayings'; Crenshaw demarcates the pericope from 11.7-12.7; Gordis and Fox from 11.7-12.8.

For practical purposes here, however, the *poem* of 11.1-6 shall be excluded because of its dissimilar theme of 'risk in life'; and the latter two poems of 11.7-12.7 will be examined as a whole (though the *poetic* style of 12.1-7 is very different from the *almost* 'prosaical' style of the *poetic parallelism* in 11.7-10): for Loader must be considered correct when he says that clearly a new *topos* begins in 11.7 (light and darkness in life and youth), which 12.1-7 also contains – but with an emphasis on approaching death.

The opening statement in 11.7 takes the *Gattung* of *poetry* as indicated by, what could be interpreted as, either *synonymous* or *synthetic parallelism*, but appears to have the *force* of the *indicative mood*. The *Peshitta* reads ויהיר לחזיי שמשא, which Gordis interprets as an interpolation from 7.11 inserted after the original clause fell out; but the *Massoretic Text* is sound here and the literary *intent* of the verse is clear: light and seeing the sun are *metaphors* for the goodness (טוב) of life or living.

11.10 may provide the reason for the joy statement of 11.8-9. Barton argues that כעס is 'here not ethical, but physical evil, hence "misery" or "wretchedness"'.[56] השחרות, from the root שחר meaning 'black', is another term which has played havoc amongst the versions: the LXX renders it ανοια ('folly') the *Peshitta* reads לא ידעתא ('ignorance'), the *Vulgate voluptas* ('desire'; cf. שחר, 'seek'), Ibn Ezra interprets the other meaning of שחר as 'dawn'; and the *Targum* שחר יומי דאוכמות ('the days of the blackness of hair'). The last stich, כי־הילדות והשחרות הבל,

is often regarded as a *Chasid* gloss; but this is wrong on two counts: one, there is strong manuscript evidence to accept the text as it is; and two, the clause is fully consistent with Qoheleth's use of הבל. Jerome has surely led a number astray when he says of 11.10: *in ira omnes perturbationes animi comprehendit; in carnis malitia universas significat corporis voluptates* ('in anger [Qoheleth] comprehends all the passions of the mind, and by wickedness of the flesh he indicates all the pleasures of the body'); and Luther rightly rejects Jerome on this point. 11.10 takes the *Gattung* of an *explanatory* clause which may have the literary *intent* to provide the *rationale* for the *carpe diem* statement in 11.8-9.

Only a few cursory comments will be made about the *poem* in 12.1-7. That the pericope of 12.1-7 takes the *Gattung* of *poetry* is without question on the basis of the extensive use of *parallelism*; but many commentators (Garrett, Gordis, Loader, Whybray) view it as taking the *Gattung* or using the *Gattung* of *allegory*.

בוראיך is universally attested to in the versions; and the plural has been variously explained as 'the plural of majesty' or the mixing of *lamed aleph* and *lamed he* verbs (so Crenshaw, Gordis). Crenshaw thinks that בוראיך ('your Creator') ill suits the context and opts for an emendation to either בְּאֵרֶךָ ('your well', perhaps a euphemism for 'woman' or 'wife') or בּוֹרֶךָ ('your pit', perhaps a euphemism for 'grave'); though Ehrlich also adopts בְּרוֹאֶיךָ ('your well-being'). Crenshaw further adds that

> A thinker of Qohelet's complexity might well have chosen a word that suggests one's greatest

> pleasure (the wife) and one's ultimate destiny (the grave). More probably, he urges young people to reflect on the joys of female companionship before old age and death render one incapable of sensual pleasure.[57]

But the textual evidence and context will not support such a notion. Crenshaw is, moreover, probably wrong on 'the wife' being the greatest pleasure (cf. 7.26: she may be your *worst nightmare*), and given Qoheleth's misogynist tendencies, this is an unlikely interpretation. 'Your Creator' best suits the context, which probably rejoins the idea of God and judgment in 11.9 with God and death in 12.7.

Fox argues that the text of 12.1-7 has three types of meaning: the literal, symbolic and allegorical.[58] He says that

> These meaning-types are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the figurative and symbolic require a literal base line from which both types of the extended meaning may proceed.[59]

The literal meaning provides the visual image (a funeral scene), which in turn provides the symbolic meaning (*your* funeral), which in turn provides the allegorical meaning, albeit in a limited and disparate way (physical decline and images of death). Perhaps Fox, at least as he describes his approach to 12.1-7, should jettison the term allegory and substitute it with 'metaphor', since he seems to in fact resistant to the allegorical interpretation. Fox views 12.1-7 as a funeral scene in which the meaning is 'enjoy yourself before *your* funeral'.[60]

The literary *intent* of 12.1-7, however, is quite clear insofar as there is a call to remember one's Creator because of one's inevitable degeneration into the ultimate

conclusion: death. 12.8, whether original or not, adequately frames the concluding theme both in life and in death (so Fox).

B. The Immediate Context 11.8-9

כי אם is not indicative of an *explanatory* clause but of the indefinite pronoun 'however' (see exegesis). Nevertheless, 11.8 probably takes the *subjunctive* (implied in יִחְיֶה) and *imperative* (the implied jussives יִשְׂמָח, יִזְכֹּר) *moods*; though as has already been pointed out: because of the crudity of the Hebrew verbal inflexion, it is impossible to determine *mood* definitively. If the description of the *moods* in the verbs are correct, as the context indicates, the first clause could be rendered: 'However many years a man *may* live, *let him* enjoy them all!'; with the adversative statement added: 'but *let him remember* the days of darkness – because they will be many'. The final sentence of 11.8 takes the *Gattung* of a simple *indicative* statement, which is typical for the *hevel* statements: 'everything to come is *hevel*'.

11.9 also contains *imperatives*, שְׂמַח, הַלֵּךְ, רָע, and thus take the *Gattung* of *commands*. The three *imperatives* begin each of the three sub-statements of the overall joy statement. The three *commands* are: 'Enjoy young man, while you are young'; 'follow the ways of your heart'; 'but know that God will bring your actions into judgment'.

There are a number of complicating factors to interpreting the joy statement of 11.8-9 at face value as

carpe diem. While a number of sub-statements in the overall joy statement are *commands*, it does not follow that one will be able to execute them or achieve their ends. The straightforward interpretation of 11.8, moreover, is complicated by an *adversative* statement (11.8c) and an outright negative *hevel* statement at the end (11.8d). There is a similar pattern in 11.9 where the two imperatives are also complicated by an *adversative* statement on God's judgment for one's conduct in life (11.9d).

The mixture of *Gattungen* and the overall negative context of the joy statement in 11.8-9, indicate that there might be some subtle *subversion* going on in the text – because the question remains: How can one enjoy life *in such a context* and with such *caveats* on the proposed course of actions?

8. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FORM CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE JOY STATEMENTS

This chapter should demonstrate that form criticism is inextricably linked to exegesis; and literary *function* or *intent* is inter-related to literary structure and content. Source criticism is always an ace up the interpreter's sleeve: the interpreter can always trump the game by pulling this ace out of his sleeve; but the questions must then be asked: Is this done for purely academic reasons or is it simply to undermine any interpretations one does not like in order to subvert them? Does the source critical

ace deal with the text or is it an abandonment of dealing with the text? The sources of the biblical material, nevertheless, always remain elusive and problematic for interpretation; and the history of redaction means that one can never 'prove' beyond a reasonable doubt the state of a text.

As Dell correctly points out: *Qoheleth* operates on several different levels of genre at any given time. The joy statements consistently take the overall *Gattung* of *reflection* (*observation* + *evaluation*). This overall *Gattung* may aid in understanding the sub-*Gattungen* that they take. The joy statements take, by in large, the sub-*Gattung* of statements in the *indicative mood*, which can only be determined *contextually* and because of a lack of *parallelism* or other indicators. A number of them also take the sub-*Gattung* of statements in the *imperative mood* (9.7-9; 11.8-9). These *Gattungen*, taken on their own, would indicate straightforward *carpe diem* statements; but the only joy statement which stands as such, after form criticism, is 3.12-13: this is not a very broad or strong basis to make an overarching interpretation of the Book of Qoheleth.

The overall and immediate contexts of the joy statements, however, indicate that it is dubious as to whether or not they should be taken in a straightforward manner, and indicate (as a hermeneutical clue?) that the use of the *indicative* and *imperative moods* may in fact be *subversive* in both form and content.

The *rhetorical questions* in the joy statements expect emphatic negative responses (none! no one! nothing!). The question is then raised: What literary *effect* can this emphatic negative response have? There are two possible responses to this question: One, the *rhetorical questions* in the joy statements support *carpe diem* because that is the best one can do under the circumstances; or two, the *rhetorical questions* in the joy statements are *subversive* to *carpe diem* because the context makes it difficult, if not, impossible to 'seize the day'.

6.1-2 is, perhaps, the most *subversive* passage in *Qoheleth* for the joy statements – and one cannot, should not, underestimate the literary *effect* that it has on the Book of Qoheleth on the basis that it is highly deterministic, portrays God as capricious and demonstrates how man is a *victim* of these, *not* the maker of one's own destiny – perhaps with the *implication* that *freewill* and *carpe diem* are *impossible*.

Since the exact literary nature of the joy statements cannot be ascertained definitive, as of yet (and possibly not at all!), and the literary *function* or *intent* of the joy statements remain obscure, a look at the philosophy of scepticism (chapter four) and irony (chapter six), may inform the discussion or interpretation further.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT IS SCEPTICISM AND CAN IT BE FOUND IN THE HEBREW BIBLE?

This chapter will provide an overview of scepticism as a philosophy and a working definition of it; followed by a critical assessment. This chapter then deals with, what some scholars see as, a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible. It should be noted here at the very beginning, however, that the purpose for looking at the formal concepts of scepticism is not to draw identical correlations with any literature in the Hebrew Bible, but rather to make certain analogies in an attempt to elucidate an understanding of some of its content. *O.M.E.D.* defines 'analogy' as

> **1** . . . correspondence or partial similarity.
> **2** *Logic* a process of arguing from similarity in known respects to similarity in other respects.[1]

This is the working definition for 'analogy' in this thesis. 'Scepticism' comes from the Greek σκεπτικος meaning to 'inquire' or to 'consider'; and in the case of the philosophy of scepticism, inquiry and consideration are the essential methodology for challenging epistemological assumptions.

1. AN OVERVIEW OF SCEPTICISM

Like most philosophical constructs, scepticism long antedates any formal description of itself. Defining 'scepticism' is elusive; but certainly some general

characteristics are discernible for the purposes of this dissertation. This section will take a brief historical (synoptic) overview of scepticism, deal with the basic tenets and working methodology of scepticism, and then provide a working definition; followed by a critical assessment.

A. A Synoptic Overview of Scepticism

Scepticism arose largely, in the context of the Hellenistic-Roman period, in response to certain 'dogmatic' philosophies (those who claimed to have discovered truth), or more properly, in response to the *epistemologies* of certain philosophies, e.g., Aristotelian, Epicurean and Stoicism. Scepticism is essentially a theory of epistemology.

Epistemology is that branch of philosophy with deals with the 'limits and nature of knowledge' – and asks the questions: How much can one know? How does one know something? Of what can one be certain?[2] These rather large questions can be applied to everything in the universe and in consciousness, and thus leads to an *infinity* of subjects which may be investigated sceptically.

In essence scepticism's epistemology holds 'the possibilities of knowledge to be limited'.[3] Of course there is a wide gamut of sceptical views, from the radical scepticism of Hume to the more moderate or utilitarian scepticism of Kant, who used scepticism as a tool for affirming his 'critical dogmatism'.[4]

Annas and Barnes would characterise the difference between ancient and modern sceptics by saying that 'The Greeks took their scepticism seriously: the moderns do not'.[5] That point is probably debatable, since for Descartes, Hume and Kant, the problems of scepticism proved of utmost importance in the philosophical debate – which no serious philosopher can avoid; though Annas and Barnes may be correct when they say that

> Scepticism was the philosophical disease of the age [the Enlightenment], and the disease had been transmitted by Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.[6]

The *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, first translated and published in Latin in 1562 by the French scholar Henri Etienne, brought epistemology into the forefront of philosophical debate and led to the rise of scepticism in Renaissance, Enlightenment and Postenlightenment philosophy – where it has maintained a prominent role into the twentieth century.[7] Sextus opens his book with the statement:

> Those who investigate any subject are likely either to make a discovery or to deny the possibility of discovery and agree that nothing can be apprehended or else to persist in their investigations. That, no doubt, is why of those who undertake philosophical investigations some say that they have discovered the truth, others deny the possibility of apprehending it, and others are still pursuing their investigations. Those who are properly called dogmatists – such as the Aristotelians and the Epicureans and the Stoics and others – think they have discovered the truth; Clitomachus and Carneades and other Academic philosophers have said that the truth cannot be apprehended; and the sceptics persist in their investigations.[8]

Annas and Barnes further comment that Sextus portrays the sceptics as 'perpetual' or 'persistent students', and

conclude that 'Sceptics are doubters: they neither believe nor disbelieve, neither affirm nor deny'.[9]

There were, of course, other literary sources of scepticism. The work of Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, was available from 1430 and carried a biography of Pyrrho and a 'brief survey of the sceptical approach to philosophy';[10] although sceptical ideas were known to be in Cicero's *Academics*. Montaigne, however, quickly picked up on Sextus' work and became the conduit for scepticism's quick rise to prominence in his 1575 work *A Defense of Raymond Sebond*. Less than a century later, in 1642, Descartes' famous work the *Meditations*, attempted to use radical scepticism in order to overthrow it, for he 'saw scepticism a disease of epidemic magnitude: his whole philosophical activity was given to the search for a cure'.[11]

There are essentially three types of scepticism, spanning from Pyrrho to the modern era, which can be

> . . . defined by means of the objects held to be unknowable. Sceptical arguments have been used to deny that we can get knowledge of any matters of empirical fact, of the external world of material objects, of the minds of others, of the past, of the future, of nature as a whole, of values and of any objects of religious or metaphysical speculation which lie beyond sense experience.[12]

Those sceptics who hold that the *objects in question do not in fact exist* are also generally sceptical towards the existence of God, ethical values or the substantive and immortal soul.

A more moderate view of scepticism is Kant's view, which states that while one may admit that the objects in

question exist, *one cannot know anything more about them*, e.g., inductive scepticism about the laws of nature. Nevertheless, as has already been noted, Kant only used scepticism as a tool to support his *critical dogmatism*.[13]

The most radical form of scepticism is evidenced in those who state that the '*objects in question could not possibly exist* and therefore that knowledge of the sort he is doubting is logically ruled out';[14] though one should note that this is a contradiction because the radical sceptic should also be sceptical about these propositions as well. Notwithstanding, this would then be, in effect, the opposite of Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am': 'I do not exist, therefore I cannot think'. This form of scepticism can be found in Berkeley's view of material substances and Hume's view of real or intrinsic connections between events;[15] but even Hume doubted the veracity of his own philosophy, and was therefore, a true sceptic.[16]

The original purpose for the sceptical approach, at least for Pyrrho, was to attain detachment (objectivity), and consequently, peace of mind (αταραχια) by accepting that the search for 'truth' was inevitably futile. It may be further argued, however, that a major thrust or purpose of scepticism, was to undermine one's philosophical opponents and any certainty which they may hold; and for Pyrrho it was the dogmatism of Aristotelian, Epicurean and Stoic schools. This may, however, have the effect of rendering any peace unattainable because it raises the question: How can one have peace without certainty?

B. The Working Presupposition and Methodology of Scepticism

The working presupposition and methodology of scepticism need to be articulated in order to provide a basis for comparing them with some of the literature in the Hebrew Bible. This section is not meant to be exhaustive but only for the purpose of acting as a *bench mark* for comparative analysis.

The basic working presupposition of scepticism is that *all knowledge is limited*, if not, unattainable. In its extreme form, scepticism contends that nothing at all can be known; but more moderate forms 'support a methodological policy of reserve and circumspection in the formation of beliefs'.[17] The essence of scepticism is a doubting and questioning spirit which suspends belief.[18] The term 'belief' is important to define in contradistinction to 'knowledge': One may believe anything; but believing is not knowing, belief is not knowledge. 'Belief', as Hume understood it, relative to the philosophy of scepticism, was nothing but a *feeling* which causes one to lie in the imagination.[19] In other words: All beliefs are just feelings which are supported by a lying imagination and not evidence or reason.

> The ancient sceptics did not attack knowledge: they attacked belief'. They argued that, under sceptical pressure, our beliefs turn out to be groundless and that we have no more reason to believe than disbelieve.[20]

Sextus outlines the basic working methodology of scepticism by saying:

> Scepticism is an ability which sets up antitheses among appearances and judgements in any way whatever: by scepticism, on account of the 'equal weight' which characterizes opposing states of affairs and arguments, we arrive first at suspension of judgement and second at 'freedom from disturbance'.[21]

Sextus outlined the specific *Ten Modes* in his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* which form the basis of the working methodology for scepticism; but other traditions use anywhere from four to seven to eight.[22] 'Modes' is a translation of the Greek τροπος, which sceptics understood in its most basic sense of 'way'; though the Pyrrhonists also used the Greek λογος, to mean 'argument'.[23] The modes were thus a 'way of argument' by which the 'suspension of judgment is inferred'.[24] The five most basic modes are: the relative or subjective nature of perception, infinite regress of proof, the conflict of opinions between opponents, the inevitably hypothetical character of all ultimate premises, and the rejection of syllogism or circular arguments.[25]

The relative or subjective nature of perception, is again, related to scepticism's working presupposition of limited epistemology. The sceptic doubts all sense perception to the extent that one cannot form solid beliefs about what is seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelled.[26] Or as Unger puts it, in his book *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism*,

> We don't come away with the feeling that we *happen* not to know anything about the external world. Rather, we get the feeling that no matter what we do, no matter how our beliefs may change, we will *never* know anything of the sort in question. . . . So, you *don't know* that there are rocks. The same thing works for anyone in any situation, and in respect of any external matter. Therefore, no one ever *knows* anything about the external world (nor ever can

do so).[27]

This lack of belief or trust in sensory perception inevitably leads to, depending on the extent one wants to push the presupposition, a limited epistemology. One cannot, therefore, form any solid beliefs or gain any true knowledge at all about *anything* because human beings are prisoners of their physical and mental faculties, which may be either *deceptive* or *faulty* in the information they perceive, manufacture or filter.

The second aspect of the working methodology of scepticism is the infinite regress of proof. Barnes talks of the *toils of scepticism* because the nature of scepticism is to question everything in order to verify reality, and this inevitably leads to 'infinite regression', i.e., an infinite amount of questions, problems and arguments can be made against any statement or belief about reality.[28]

> If a philosopher offers a proof, he will then be required to prove the premisses of his proof, and the premisses of *that* proof, and so *ad infinitum*.[29]

The technique of the mode of infinite regression, therefore, leads (if not forces) one to a suspension of belief or dogmatism concerning the veracity of any proposition or knowledge: it cannot be otherwise, i.e., if one *accepts* the presupposition of infinite regress.

The third aspect of sceptical working methodology is the conflict of opinions between opponents. This is related, in an indirect way, with infinite regress. The basic premise is that because there are conflicts of opinions between opponents of any proposition, this in and of itself inevitably leads to doubt over the truth claim.[30]

The fourth aspect, or mode of scepticism, is the inevitably hypothetical character of all ultimate premises. This essentially means that any proposition or hypothesis will, *by its very nature, be questionable and unprovable.* In addition to this,

> Hypotheses are not in any normal sense a *class* of propositions; for we cannot intelligibly ask, in the abstract, whether or not a given proposition is an hypothesis. A proposition is an hypothesis when, and in the context in which, it is hypothesized; and it is thus an hypothesis not absolutely and without qualification, but relatively and within a determinate context of discourse. . . . you may hypothesize absolutely anything so far as the *form* of the hypothesis goes, [but] the purpose and function of hypothesizing may yet put constraints on the content of permissible hypotheses.[31]

The long and short of this statement is that any proposition or hypothesis, by its very nature, means that the actual *form* or *linguistic and grammatical framing* of the proposition or hypothesis, in the specific context in which it is given, will be in doubt and questionable; but *common sense* will rule out a lot of them (so Barnes).

The fifth mode of scepticism, is the rejection of syllogism or circular arguments. This means that the sceptic considers the philosophical mode of stating a proposition, following it with another proposition which provides evidence or argumentative support for the initial proposition, which in turn supports a conclusion about the initial proposition, invalid. For example:

> No man is a quadruped.
> Socrates is a man.
> Therefore, Socrates is not a quadruped.

Syllogism, like the example above, argues from a universal to a particular; 'and yet they must also invoke an argument

from particular to a universal'.[32] Syllogism is a more compact version of the 'circular argument'.

> We might think of three arguments, standing in the following relation to one another: 'P_3: so P_2'; 'P_2: so P_1'; 'P_1: so P_3'. Here there is what we might call circularity – you start with P_3 and end up at P_3 again. And the circles may be as large as you like.[33]

The sceptics' derision of arguments from reciprocity or circularity is used 'for specifically sceptical ends: reciprocity induces εποχη, suspension of judgment'.[34] In other words: Sceptics do not accept circular arguments as proof of anything; but they can and do use circular arguments against dogmatists in order to support scepticism, i.e., a suspension of judgment.

C. A Working Definition of Scepticism

The basic definition of 'sceptic', 'sceptical' in the *O.M.E.D.* is

> . . . a person inclined to doubt all accepted opinions; . . . inclined to question the truth or soundness of accepted ideas, facts, etc.[35]

The definition of scepticism for the purposes of this dissertation, in conjunction with the previous discussion of scepticism as a philosophy, is: 'That disposition which attacks dogmatic assertions (of truth or absolute knowledge) with doubt and questions'.

2. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF SCEPTICISM

Like any philosophy, the validity of scepticism depends on whether or not one *accepts* its terms, and in this case,

limited epistemology and the working methodology of the five basic modes. Even Carneades of Cyrene (ca. 214-128 B.C.E.), a true sceptic because he doubted his own philosophy, advocated a three grade theory of *probability* as a guide for *action*: the probable, the probable and undisputed, and the probable, undisputed and tested;

> . . . the latter being the highest state of belief that is reached when a whole system of connected ideas is formed agreeing logically with each other.[36]

If one *accepts*, moreover, the basic presupposition and working methodology of a philosophy, and work accordingly within that framework, the most one can say of their conclusions is that they are *analytic* truths, i.e., truths which are true on the basis of the *definitions* or meaning of its terms *alone* and not necessarily in fact or reality.[37] There is, moreover, a distinct difference between 'philosophical doubt' and 'practical doubt'. The first three of Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* advocated:

1. That in order to investigate the truth of things it is necessary once in one's life to put all things in doubt insofar as that is possible.
2. That it is useful too to regard as false those things which one can doubt.
3. That we should certainly not use this doubt for the conduct of our actions.

Thus there is a distinction, as Pyhrro and Carneades would agree with Descartes, between 'philosophical doubt' and 'practical doubt': *common sense*, should and will, usually prevail for practical reasons. As Annas and Barnes point out regarding the above Cartesian principles:

> Applying the first principle, the Cartesian sceptic will doubt that he is buying a cup of coffee and doubts that twice ten is twenty; applying the second principle, he will actually regard those things as false. But the third principle warns us that his doubt is philosophical: he will not conduct his actions by it; that is to say, even while 'doubting', he will persist in, and act upon, his ordinary beliefs that the stuff in the cup is coffee and that two ten-pence pieces make up twenty pence.[38]

They go on to say, however, in contradistinction to modern sceptics, that

> . . . the ancient sceptics had no interest in philosophical doubt. The doubt they expected to induce was ordinary, non-philosophical doubt; it excluded beliefs, and it was therefore a practical doubt. Indeed, it was precisely by reference to the practical corollaries of their doubt that they used to recommend their philosophy: scepticism, they claimed, by relieving us of our ordinary beliefs, would remove the worry from our lives and ensure our happiness.[39]

This was certainly Pyrhho's motivation for scepticism; but it could be argued, however, that this practical doubt might well have the opposite effect: if knowledge is limited and belief unattainable, this lack of knowledge and belief may render one neurotic. For as Annas and Barnes later point out:

> . . . why should I philosophise at all if I shall be no happier for it? If there is no way in which philosophy makes my life more satisfactory, then the pursuit of it may seem either perverse or trivial. Pursuing an occupation which leads merely to depression is surely perverse.[40]

On the other hand, they further add that

> The sceptic who demands that his inquiries result in happiness is surely making an unrealistic demand on the world.[41]

Perhaps it would be best to accept those good points of scepticism, use them as profitably as possible and suspend

judgment on its psychological and emotional effects – which are, conceivably, irrelevant – and be sceptical about scepticism.

Criticism can be leveled at infinite regress, depending on the degree to which it is pushed, as approaching a *reductio adsurdum*. This is because, first of all, one cannot comprehend the infinite; two, it is impossible to survey an infinite amount of propositions; and three, it is practically impossible to qualify every proposition or sentence one utters *ad infinitum* – and to require such has little or nothing to do with philosophical debate (see below). Or as Barnes, *speaking* for the *common man*, puts it:

> . . . it is utterly plain both that and why infinite sequences are epistemological absurd – they are absurd because they do not link our beliefs to *reality*.[42]

Since syllogism argues from the universal to the particular, but are dependent upon an argument from the particular to support the universal, they are therefore invalid on the basis that they are truly reciprocal: the initial proposition is supported by a symbiotic proposition which is thus not an independent means of verification; and they are, in some cases, analytic arguments, i.e., true on the basis of the definitions one gives to the terms. Nevertheless, like circular arguments, they can be used legitimately when the evidence and arguments *tally up*. For example:

1. 1 + 1 = 2
2. 2 - 1 = 1; therefore,
3. 1 + 1 = 2

But the bottomline remains: if the evidence does not *tally up*, no matter what methodology of inquiry one uses, faulty results will be produced. There is nothing inherently wrong with the method of syllogism, as the above example demonstrates, because there is a second, independent means of verification (subtracting a total to verify the addition) which proves the initial proposition.

Circular argument is only one method of inquiry. In the case of circular argument, all propositions are verified by evidence or arguments, and all arguments by necessity, must be circular if they are to address the initial proposition or truth claim – and they cannot be otherwise: a thesis or proposition is stated, evidence and or arguments are given to support the thesis or proposition, an evaluation of the evidence and or arguments takes place, and a conclusion is given as to whether or not the evidence and or arguments support the thesis or proposition. The whole argument about circular reasoning or arguments hinges on the issue of whether or not the evidence and or philosophical arguments support the thesis or proposition, not whether or not it is a valid means of inquiry. This is what Barr wants to point out in his inaugural lecture to the University of Oxford:

> A viewpoint expressed by a biblical scholar stands or falls, not by the relation between his opinion and his presuppositions, but by the relation between his opinion and the evidence.[43]

Methodologies are *tools* of humanity; circular arguments are neither here nor there insofar as being a legitimate methodology – but whether or not, in the final analysis,

the evidence or arguments tally up – as the example, again, demonstrates.

1. 1 + 1 = 2
2. 2 - 1 = 1; therefore,
3. 1 + 1 = 2

Circular arguments, as a methodology, can be used legitimately when the evidence and arguments *tally up*.

Thus criticism should be leveled at scepticism's refusal to *accept* circular arguments on the basis that they are legitimate and necessary methodology in order to verify propositions or truth claims, as well as *common sense*. Moreover, it needs to be rejected on the grounds that, like the employment of infinite regression by sceptics, the rejection is passive-aggressive behaviour and not philosophical rebuttal.

To talk of circular reasoning as something unsound, flippant or improper is a nonsense: it is actually psychological manipulation to *undermine* the arguments rather than philosophical rebuttal and is akin to a form of *passive-aggressive* behaviour, i.e., behaviour which appears innocent and to have integrity on the surface but is in fact highly caustic because it undermines fair debate and, in a subtle and deceptive way, corrodes trust and honesty in the philosophical debate by removing the focus from the evidence and or arguments (the issues) and displaces debate by psychologically oppressing the opponent instead of dealing with the arguments.[44] A similar tactic, which is actually passive-aggressive behaviour, is saying something is an *assertion* – when saying 'it is an assertion' is in and of itself an assertion – and not a rebuttal to the

philosophical arguments: it is, as Bootzin *et al*. point out, psychologically and sociologically maladaptive behaviour.[45]

This is also applicable to the mode of disagreement amongst opponents: because an opponent states an opposing argument to a proposition does not make that statement true or valid; but neither does it inversely, necessarily, undermine the truth or validity of the original proposition. Rather, it is the evidence or rational arguments which will determine the counter-statement's veracity or validity. Thus the second, third and fifth modes of scepticism, depending on the degree to which they are pushed, can in an overall sense, be criticised in similar fashion together as being passive-aggressive behaviour and not philosophical rebuttal.

The ultimate value of, the second, third and fifth modes of scepticism, is that they demonstrate *the value of the dialectical method* whereby a proposition can be argued, *pro* and *con*, to the extent that a reasonable conclusion may be warranted after such investigation and in the light of common sense.

Finally, in this critical assessment, while it is necessary to capture something of the *essence* of scepticism, it is not necessary to *accept* or employ all its formal methods of investigation to any proposition, truth claim or belief, at least to the infinite degree, without some critical scrutiny and due caution. This is precisely the point that Williams makes when he argues against the sceptic by way of *epistemological realism*:

> He cannot allow that we create space for a distinctive epistemological project by *imposing* certain constraints on justification, for this will suggest that his investigation creates one more special kind of enquiry, structured by its own procedural norms, but on the same level, so to speak, as any other. . . . But I find it hard to believe that in bringing out the methodological constraints that inform the traditional examination of knowledge of the world [foundationalism/ epistemological realism], thus making sense of the questions that seem to lead to scepticism, we are simply falling into line with the epistemological facts. So, as I suggested earlier, when we see how we can make sense of the sceptic's questions, his negative answers no longer have the force he means them to have. Perhaps this is the way of preventing the sceptic from asking his questions in the way he wants to ask them.[46]

In other words: One does not need to *buy into* the psychological manipulation of the sceptic's methodological questions he asks in order to create scepticism regarding everything: the unreasonableness of some of scepticism's methodology, or absurd *ad infinitums*, can and should be *restrained* by *common sense*.

Despite these criticisms, scepticism is absolutely necessary for philosophical debate. One must logically accept limited epistemology (it is the degree of limitation which must be in question), for this is exemplified in the ancient sceptics distinctions between 'philosophical doubt' and 'practical doubt'. Prudence, or common sense, can and should be applied to scepticism like any other philosophical construct.[47] The value of scepticism, nevertheless, lies in its doubting and questioning spirit which insists on keeping any assertion open to review and criticism via dialectical argumentation. Of course, any

true sceptic, can and will be sceptical of this conclusion – and rightly so!

Concerning the definition of 'scepticism' adopted by this dissertation, the first criticism which might come to one's mind, is that it is so broad that one could not but help find scepticism everywhere including the Hebrew Bible. One could counter this, however, by arguing that it is not that there is anything wrong with the definition but that scepticism *is so widely pervasive* that *any* culture or period *cannot but help evidence scepticism in some of its artefacts*. The definition, both by the standards of the English dictionary and in conjunction with the synoptic overview of the philosophy of scepticism, makes clear that the essential characteristics of scepticism as being 'that disposition which attacks dogmatic assertions (of truth or absolute knowledge) with doubt and questions', are sound.

3. A SCEPTICAL TRADITION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE?

This section will look at the possibility that there is a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible. The general view that there is a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible will be examined first, followed by an examination of Dell's book *Job as Sceptical Literature*. A critical assessment of these views will then follow.

By way of the synoptic overview of scepticism, there can be little doubt that, while not in any formal sense, the basic traits of scepticism can be found in the Hebrew

Bible, or in most literature of any age or culture for that matter. As Annas and Barnes point out:

> Everyone is a sceptic on some issues, for there are numerous questions on which, temporarily at least, we cannot make up our minds and over which we suspend judgment. Sceptical philosophers extend, generalise, and systematise that ordinary attitude.[48]

Scepticism seems to be quite universal, and therefore, one should expect to find scepticism in the Hebrew Bible.

A. General Views of a Sceptical Tradition in the Hebrew Bible

Crenshaw, Davidson, Dell, Dillon, Pedersen and Priest have all argued for the existence of a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible.

In 1895, Dillon wrote a book called *The Sceptics of the Old Testament: Job, Koheleth, Agur*.[49] He argues that *Job* and *Qoheleth* are two Hebrew books which 'deal exclusively with philosophical problems';[50] and these books only got into the Jewish and Christian canons

> . . . solely on the strength of passages which the authors of these compositions never saw, and which flatly contradict the main issues of their works.[51]

These points are probably debatable in the light of modern wisdom scholarship. Dillon argues that *Job*, in its poetic style, constitutes an adequate utterance to abstract thought; but *Qoheleth* requires extensive source criticism to unclutter the author's philosophy, which was heavily influenced by Buddha, and the book's sceptically ideal metaphysics is identical with Kant and Schopenhauer. *The*

Sayings of Agur, on the other hand, 'tell their own interesting story, without need of note or commentary':[52] they are a humourous and bitter *satire* which are sceptical of the theology of his day.

Pedersen, later in 1930, argued for *Scepticisme israelite*; and indeed, *Qoheleth* was the first reference in his opening line.

> En Israel, le scepticisme a un representant caracteristique: c'est l'auteur de l'Ecclesiaste. . . . L'Ecclesiaste est un traite qui consiste en reflexions sur l'existence. Aussi est-il classe parmi les livres sapientiaux. Bien qu'appartenant ainsi a une categorie connue de la litterature israelite, il presente cependant un caractere special.[53]

('In Israel, scepticism has a representative character: it is the author of Ecclesiastes. . . . Ecclesiastes is a treatise that consists of reflections on existence. It is also classified among sapiential books. That it belongs, thus, to a well known category of Israelite literature, it presents, however, a special character [i.e., scepticism]').

Priest argues that Israel always had a sceptical tradition.

> I suspect that there was an informal kind of skepticism operative at all stages of Israel's history but it must be admitted that the formal, intellectual articulation does indeed come after the Exile.[54]

He is, however, cautious not to define the philosophy found in the Hebrew Bible as measured by the canons of Aristotle. Priest adopts Berger's[55] definition of scepticism which is:

> . . . an intellectually articulated challenge to the ultimate legitimations of society; that is, a radical questioning of the religious, philosophical or ethical presuppositions upon

> which society rests.[56]

This is certainly consistent with the previous discussion of the basic ideas of sceptical philosophy. Priest further adds that the author of *Ecclesiastes*, unlike the Book of Job which he also views as sceptical literature in the Hebrew Bible,

> . . . is not just setting forth a private view, a personal memoir, but is projecting what he intends to be a public philosophy, and one which deals both with the lack of correspondence between the principles of Israelite thought and the phenomena of life . . ..[57]

Job, according to Priest, is one man's private struggle with the inconsistencies between his theology and his life experiences which contradict his view of God; *Ecclesiastes* is meant to represent a public protest, and this may be supported by the epilogue of *Qoheleth*.

The idea of a lack of correspondence between traditional thought and reality is a theme which Crenshaw picks up on and develops even further than Priest.[58] But Crenshaw goes on to argue against three theses put forward by von Rad and Pedersen, namely:

1. Scepticism signifies a burnt-out culture.[59]
2. Scepticism is an elitist phenomenon.[60]
3. Scepticism resulted from historical crises.[61]

While Crenshaw acknowledges the above as 'half truths', he puts the following alternatives forward: One, scepticism belongs to Israel's thought from early times; two, it extends far beyond the *intelligensia*; and three, it springs from two fundamentally different sources: theological and epistemological.

Crenshaw uses, to support his thesis that scepticism belongs to Israel's thought from early times, a number of texts and characters. Of course, the dating of such material is always in question. He nevertheless cites, as some examples of the first thesis, Is. 5.19; Zeph. 1.12; Judg. 6.11-13; 13.18; Ex. 3.14 and Jer. 23.23; 44.15-19. All of these texts express scepticism concerning either YHWH's desire to *reveal* his good pleasure or his ability to *make it happen*. In the case of Gideon (Judg. 6.13), the use of the *interrogative* expresses the scepticism:

> Pray, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this befallen us? And where are all his wonderful deeds which our fathers recounted to us . . . ?

Crenshaw states that the *interrogative mood* threatened to swallow up the divine *imperative*. God is forever shrouded in mystery, as evidenced in his elusive response to Moses' request for his name, and as such emphasises his transcendent aloofness. Creaturely finitude and God's infinity make for a disparate situation of which Crenshaw says:

> Given these two extraordinary facts, a God who hides and creatures who are dependent, skepticism's appearance in Israel was no great surprise.[62]

Crenshaw then argues his second thesis, that scepticism was not the sole property of the *intelligensia* but that it enjoyed *popular* support. This is based primarily in the intrinsic nature of scepticism; though Crenshaw never defines this 'intrinsic nature'. What he appears to mean, is that scepticism was just too *pervasive* to be contained by the *intelligensia*; despite the fact that

he offers no proof of this 'wide spread' phenomenon, and nor can he do so on the basis that much of the Hebrew Bible contains the elitist ideology of the ruling classes and not the opinions of the common man;[63] though, as McKane points out, they occasionally seep in.[64] Granted, it can be argued, as Crenshaw does, that 'it can hardly be denied that many of them [the prophets] protested against bogus promises';[65] but then again, prophetic literature may represent the elitist views of the biblical authors and not necessarily the common man – and it is not at all clear how this argument supports his second thesis. Crenshaw may be on more stable ground when he cites the Psalms as evidence of popular scepticism on the basis that they represent a much larger worshipping community *vis-a-vis* the Torah or Prophets.

> . . . the very articulation of skeptical views satisfies a need for honesty on the part of the worshiping community.[66]

Again, he appeals to the use of the *interrogative* in the Psalms that questions God's justice in the light of evidence to the contrary, which in turn, indicates scepticism on their behalf. Finally, Crenshaw argues that *Ben Sirah* is evidence of a wisdom tradition seriously challenged or threatened by scepticism, and in turn, *Ben Sirah's* influence on the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* is evidenced in the book's statement that scepticism 'renders one incapable of receiving divine revelation (1:2)'.[67] In essence, according to Crenshaw, both books are *apologies* for dogmatic traditional theology *vis-a-vis* 'pop scepticism'.

Crenshaw's last thesis, scepticism flowed from two separate streams (theological and epistemological), is supported by the ideas that the former indicates a lack of faith in God on the one hand, and the latter a lack of faith in human beings on the other. According to Crenshaw, much of Israel's historical and confessional literature (mostly Yahwistic) set up an unbearable tension between God's supposed great deeds and the harsh reality of human corruption. Crenshaw says the Book of Deuteronomy was written in order to reduce Israelite grandiose national hopes to one of individual responsibility, and thus, putting the blame for any inconsistencies squarely on humanity. The wisdom literature, then, emphasised God's transcendence and sovereignty with human epistemological limitations – which may have had the purpose to bring relief to wide spread scepticism by encouraging 'surrender' to God's mercy rather than struggling with the issues. But, in fact, it had the opposite effect as evidenced in the apologies of Psalm 37 ('who never saw the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread') and the rewriting of history in Chronicles. In conclusion, Crenshaw asks:

> What, then, did these skeptics accomplish? Precisely this: they inscribed a huge question mark over that first great revolution in human thinking, and they turned the spotlight upon the cognitive act. That is, they refused to take confessional statements concerning divine control of human events at face value, and they insisted that boasts about human ingenuity also be taken *cum grano salis*.[68]

This is essentially Crenshaw's view of scepticism in the Hebrew Bible; but many of his arguments need to be

questioned and critiqued, and this will take place in the next section.

Davidson too lends support to the thesis that there is a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible, albeit in not so many words, in his book *The Courage to Doubt*.[69] Davidson links doubt with faith to form a *dialectical*, which he perceives to found be in many parts of the Hebrew Bible. Doubt is intrinsic to scepticism, and Davidson does support the idea of the cathartic effect of scepticism to much of the traditional material of the Hebrew Bible; a theme which he explores further in his 1990 book *Wisdom and Worship*.[70] Along with doubt, the *interrogative* is the most commonly used *form* for expressing doubt or scepticism. It is Davidson's pervasive study of doubt and questioning that runs throughout the two above books, and his many textual examples (too many to be explored here), that lend support to the claim that there is a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible: the main examples come from the Patriarchal Narratives, the Moses Traditions and the Prophetic Traditions. Davidson follows along Crenshaw's lines above when he argues that the literary purpose of Deuteronomistic tradition was to provide an idealistic background to Israel's history which squarely put the blame for all their woes on themselves failing to meet YHWH's ideals. Unlike Crenshaw, however, Davidson perceives that in this attempt the Deuteronomistic tradition perhaps raised, or left unanswered, many questions, e.g., why was Manasseh, the arch evil king (II Kgs. 21.1-18), allowed to die peacefully at a old age after 55 years of peaceful rule and why was

the good king Josiah cut down by the sword at 39, if the concept of divine retribution is true?[71] Davidson further argues, in *Job*, that the use of *rhetorical questions*, both on behalf of Job and God, induce intrinsic doubt from whatever side of the argument one finds oneself, i.e., even the *rhetorical questions* of God do not alleviate the problems of the mysteries of God and life: they may in fact compound them.[72] Finally, Davidson makes extensive use of the Psalms, again with the evidence of much *questioning*, to support the case for a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible.[73]

If one accepts the definition for scepticism of this thesis, 'that disposition which attacks dogmatic assertions (of truth or absolute knowledge) with doubt and questions', then quite clearly there are a number of texts in the Hebrew Bible which express scepticism, including *Qoheleth*.

B. Dell on Job as Sceptical Literature

The above general views find additional, detailed support for a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible in Dell's impressive work *Job as Sceptical Literature* (originally her Ph.D. thesis at Oxford). Dell's book is essentially a form critical analysis of *Job*. Dell's main thesis is that the overall genre of *Job* is sceptical literature; which she would also ascribe to *Qoheleth*.

There are, however, a number of subtheses which build or lead up to her main thesis. She argues, for example, that

> . . . the form of *Job* expresses the author's scepticism just as much as its overt content and that the relation of form to content and context is a crucial key for understanding the book.[74]

In addition, Dell argues that the literary structure and essentially unity of the book (whether by the author and or editors) makes the contradictions in the book a vital part for interpreting the *forms* and message of *Job* [i.e., hermeneutical *clues*].[75] As she wisely points out, however, 'the interpretation of the message of *Job* is inextricably bound up with literary-critical conclusions':[76] if one does not accept the contradictions as intrinsic to the literary structure of the book, then one will need to explain them away by declaring them editorial intrusions – either as glosses or correctives to heretical ideas; if one accepts them as an intrinsic part of the book, then one will have to deal with their literary implications – and this is what Dell does.

Dell goes so far as to suggest that the author of *Job* was part of a sceptical tradition (or group) which was outside of traditional wisdom circles in Israel – and that *Job* does not, therefore, constitute wisdom literature.[77]

Dell's treatment of the various main critical interpretations of *Job* reflects the above mentioned literary critical conclusions. The first interpretation, *Job the Innocent Sufferer*, emphasises the prologue and epilogue to the story. The second interpretation, *Job* is a book on divine retribution, emphasises the *dialogue* section of the book. The third interpretation, the nature of God and man's relationship with him, emphasises the God speeches in the book. The fourth interpretation, *Job* as

Protest, emphasises the Job speeches in the book. Each literary critical conclusion (predisposition) alters the emphasis and interpretation of the Book of Job. Thus, Dell concludes that

> . . . the quest to find a central, unifying message in *Job* in order to make sense of its various themes and different parts both in relation to each other and to the whole has proved largely fruitless. Perhaps the book is just an accidental jumble of literary forms and themes, of parts written at different times and of misinterpretation by subsequent editors.[78]

After investigating the overall genre for *Job*, Dell further concludes that in terms of form, content and context, interpreters fall into one or more of two 'pitfalls':[79]

1. The assumption that the overall genre of *Job* is the most predominant 'smaller' genre.
2. Deciding the overall genre before studying the smaller genres which make up the whole:
   a) formal considerations foremost,
   b) considerations of content and meaning foremost.

The implications of these are that while there are many identifiable smaller forms or genres in *Job*, it is difficult to ascertain an overall genre for the book.

> This may be a deliberate move on the part of the author of *Job*. Perhaps in order to demonstrate the fully radical nature of the book, it was made to defy traditional ideas in its content and to follow no one traditional genre in its form.[80]

However questionable these considerations may be, they will not dissuade Dell from her own quest to find unifying factor, genre, and interpretation of the Book of Job.

Dell argues that the overall genre of *Job* is *parody*. She compares the subgenres of *Job* with the deliberate *misuse* of forms essential to the genre of *parody*.

> Traditional forms from legal, cultic and wisdom spheres are deliberately misused by the author to convey his scepticism.[81]

The setting or context is what determines the interpretation or meaning of a genre, and in the case of *Job*, the *misuse* of the smaller traditional forms and a radical questioning of the content of wisdom circles (order of the world; ambiguity of events and the meaning of life; punishment and reward; life is the supreme good; confidence in wisdom; personification of wisdom[82]). Dell defines 'misuse of forms' as

> . . . referring to a traditional form being used with a different content and context and thus having a different function; . . ..[83]

An example of this is where the author of *Job misuses* the form of *lament* in order to *parody* it (6.8-10; cf. Ps. 55.6-8), or the *misuse* of wisdom *content* like the positive affirmation of life (3.11-26; cf. Ps. 88.4-5).[84] Dell further argues, with specific reference to the *dialogue* section of 3-31, that there is an overall pattern in the misuse of forms: whereas the friends use traditional forms, Job misuses traditional forms because he is countering the traditional propositions.[85]

Dell argues that *Qoheleth* is also sceptical literature and then uses a comparison between *Job* and *Qoheleth* in the misuse, or rather more properly 'reuse' (in *Qoheleth*), of forms to support her argument for the misuse of forms in

Job.[86] Dell defines 'reuse' of forms as a form which retains

> . . . its form and content but being placed in a different context and with a different function.[87]

She says that like *Job*, it has been an elusive task to assign an overall genre to *Qoheleth*. There are, however, the same misuse of smaller forms (subgenres) in the book which indicate scepticism on the part of the author. Unlike the author of *Job* who stands outside traditional wisdom circles and *misuses* traditional *forms*, the author of *Qoheleth* tends to *reuse* traditional *forms* which indicates that he operates from *within* traditional wisdom circles. Qoheleth, nevertheless, expressed his scepticism by, for example, *reusing* traditional wisdom *sayings* as in 7.1-7. Qoheleth also *reused* the traditional form of *instruction* by providing additional comments which modify or question the premises of traditional wisdom, e.g., the use of a *rhetorical question* in 7.13 which calls into question the premise of efficacy of wisdom to undo what God has done, followed by a commentary to accept one's lot and ignorance in life in 7.14. The third form Qoheleth *reused*, which Dell argues is largely confined to *Qoheleth* alone, is that of *reflection*. Qoheleth, however, used these *reflections* (which contain numerous other subgenres such as *sayings, rhetorical questions, quotations*) in order to contradict traditional wisdom, e.g., 8.12-13 is negated in the overall framework of 8.11-14. As Dell rightly points out:

> Much of Qoheleth's protesting nature comes therefore from the unusual features of his own style in which forms are placed in a new context, a technique perhaps best described as a reuse of

> forms since the content of the forms remains the same (both content and context have to be changed to constitute a *misuse* of forms).[88]

Dell argues that either *Job* is a *sui generis* of disparate forms which cannot be assigned an overall genre or *Job* represents a *parody* of tradition wisdom literature. Dell relates a number of definitions of 'parody' but more closely aligns to Johnson's definition:

> . . . a kind of writing in which the words of an author or his thoughts are taken and by a slight change adapted to some new purpose.[89]

In the case of *Job*, it is a *parody* of the *folk tale*

> . . . since a new content is given to a traditional tale thereby spoiling the original and 'parodying' the original form.[90]

Parody is sceptical, according to Dell, because of its *misuse* of *forms* and *protesting* nature.[91] *Job* thus represents sceptical literature towards traditional wisdom in Israel. Dell admits, however, that recognising *parody* largely depends on proximity to the context in which it is used.[92] This may prove to be problematic for Dell, as the next section will show.

Dell argues that *Job* is the product of a philosophical 'group', perhaps with an affinity to the Greek sceptics, and this is determined on the basis of the kinds of questions the author asks and his familiarity with traditional wisdom in Israel.[93] Yet, because this group attacked the dogmatism of traditional wisdom in Israel, Dell postulates that their origin may have arisen out of a crisis in wisdom which thus stepped outside of traditional wisdom in Israel.

Dell then uses the content of the Book of Job to support her main thesis in two parts: the overall genre of *Job* is *parody* (a *misuse* of the traditional *form* of the *folk tale*); and as *parody* represents the *overarching* genre of *sceptical literature* in ancient Israel.

According to Dell, the character of Job is indicative of the sceptical *content* of the book: *Job* is sceptical of many traditional, dogmatic propositions, e.g., impossibility of 'innocent suffering' (just deserts), divine retribution, theodicy, the knowability of God.[94] The scepticism of the author of the book, however, is also represented in the *literary structure* of the book. This scepticism is manifest in the way in which the author raises issues

> . . . to which he deliberately does not supply an answer and by his juxtaposition of different sections of the book and themes. . . . which appear to be inconsistent but in fact display irony and sceptical intent.[95]

Dell is aware that the *prologue/epilogue* and the *dialogues*, as well as the Elihu and YHWH speeches, *et al.*, might well come from different sources,[96] but argues that the final redactor so structured the book to form a *parody* which expressed scepticism towards traditional wisdom. The book's *prologue* and *epilogue* are fitted in the literary structure in order to *set up* a traditional *folk tale*. The traditional *folk tale*, however, is turned on its head by the many *ironies* conveyed in its juxtaposition with the *dialogues* and YHWH speech, and the *ironies* conveyed in the smaller parts such as Job's reply to the YHWH speech. Dell might have added the *ironic* twists evidenced in the

contrast of the two characters of Job in the *folk tale* (1-2) and the *dialogue* (3-31).

Dell's work in *Job as Sceptical Literature* is an impressive treatment of the use of *forms*, content and literary structure to convey *irony* and scepticism. It is, however, not without question and above criticism at certain points.

4. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE VIEW THERE IS A SCEPTICAL TRADITION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The purpose of this section is to critically assess the view that there is a sceptical tradition in the Hebrew Bible.

A. General Views of a Sceptical Tradition in the Hebrew Bible

While there are a number of scholars who postulate scepticism in the Hebrew Bible, this does not necessarily make it so. Dillon's work is the product of its age and reflects a rather *romantic* view of its biblical criticism and the wisdom literature. His assertions about *Qoheleth* being influenced by Buddhism is an example of uncritical scholarship, which modern wisdom studies would dismiss as implausible given the historical and geographical problems involved, and the subjective nature of these types of comparisons. The fact that Dillon can so easily identify the *Sayings of Agur* as sceptical is another example of uncritical scholarship.

The *Sayings of Agur* in Proverbs 30 are the source of academic debate as to their literary nature: Are they piety or scepticism? Franklyn took up this debate in 1983 and argued for piety in Prov. 30.1-9, largely on the basis of form and content of the material. The matter, however, is not as straightforward as either Dillon or Franklyn would argue.

The main problem with trying to interpret the *Sayings of Agur* as scepticism or piety is the fact that there is no evidence to indicate what their *context* or *redactional history* were. Were they a debate between a sceptic (1-4) and a believer (5-9);[97] or, as McKane suggests, not a *dialogue* at all?[98] The problematics of recovering the *context* of the *Sayings of Agur* means, that on face value, the *indicative* nature of the *sayings* and the positive response induced by the *rhetorical questions*, must be viewed as piety not scepticism (with the exception of v. 3 which has the above mentioned characteristics of scepticism[99]); though obviously one could criticise them as untrue, naive or ridiculous. Nevertheless, this brief discussion on some of the problematics of exegeting the *Sayings of Agur* demonstrates the complexities of the issues in interpreting scepticism in the Hebrew Bible.

Priest's idea that *Qoheleth* was not setting forth a private view but a public philosophy can only be based in the information found in the epilogue of the book; and that is almost universally accepted as an editorial addition (with the exception of Fox). It is questionable, moreover, whether or not Israel put forth any literature which has a

philosophy *per se*; and this is a contradiction within Priest's own argument that any philosophy found in the Hebrew Bible cannot be measured against the canons of Aristotle, i.e., a proper philosophical construct. Indeed, it must be admitted that Israel did put forth philosophical ideas, like scepticism, but certainly not in any formal sense as the Greeks did in their philosophical tradition; to say that *Qoheleth* did would then be inappropriate.

Crenshaw can be challenged on a number of points that he wants to make about scepticism in his article 'The Birth of Skepticism in Ancient Israel'. For example, he is mistaken when he talks of 'syntactical' *moods* (p. 3); for these are not 'syntactical' *moods* but 'grammatical' *moods*: syntax has to do with the order of words in a sentence, e.g., proper English syntax is subject, verb, direct object, indirect object; and *mood* has to do with, as *O.M.E.D.* correctly points out:

> *n. Gram.* **1** a form or set of forms of a verb serving to indicate whether it is to express fact, command, wish, etc. (*subjunctive mood*).[100]

Crenshaw is following Priest here; but Priest rightly uses the term 'grammatical' *moods*.[101]

Crenshaw may also be misleading when he says that in the ancient Near East, and Babylonia specifically, a lack of eschatology created 'the most pessimistic civilization in history' (p. 8). As Carroll points out, in his book *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions*, Israel's apocalyptic tradition may have been a corporate manifestation of *cognitive dissonance* whereby the failed

prophecies of her prophetic tradition were deferred to a later period in order to cope with the psychological and emotional trauma caused by the disparity between the ideal and reality.[102]

Davidson provides a substantial case for scepticism in ancient Israel. The elements of doubt and questioning are essential to scepticism — and Davidson makes a sustained case, throughout his two books *The Courage to Doubt* and *Wisdom and Worship*, for doubt and questioning being a formidable part of the Hebrew Bible tradition. Davidson is particularly brilliant on two points: one, that the rewriting of history in ancient Israel raised, or left unanswered, many more questions than it answered; and two, that in the Book of Job, the use of *rhetorical questions* of YHWH in chapters 38-41, accentuate the mystery of God rather than alleviating it. In addition, the use of *questions* (a standard idea and *form of scepticism*) in the Psalms lends weight to the argument that scepticism can be found in the Hebrew Bible.

B. Dell on Job as Sceptical Literature

While in many ways Dell's work is impressive, there are a number of questionable, if not fundamental, flaws in her treatment of *Job as Sceptical Literature*.

Dell operates from certain presuppositions, namely, certain literary critical conclusions and a single author, or perhaps more correctly *redactor*, for the book (p. 107). If her presuppositions are correct, then it follows that

her subtheses will add up, e.g., that the contradictions in the book have a vital part in interpreting the book. If they are not, then her subtheses will fall to the wayside, e.g., that the contradictions are actually intrusions to the text and are an obscuring factor in interpreting the book. She has made a strong case *within* the literary critical conclusions she has made (which is fine as long as one *accepts*, or can *live with*, her literary critical conclusions); but it is by no means clear that the book is from a single redactor. Dell only operates from this presupposition (though aware of the problems) and therefore her conclusions must be treated as tentative.

The idea that there was a 'sceptical group' in ancient Israel, in any formal sense, seems questionable. The task of reconstructing the period after the *Return* is notoriously difficult.[103] This puts Dell on a slippery slope for proving her subthesis that the author of *Job* stood outside traditional wisdom in Israel and therefore *Job* is not the overarching genre of 'wisdom literature'; and may, rather, represent a circular argument of the worst kind. Dell's use of comparative literature in the ancient Near East (p. 168) only exacerbates the problem, when quite a few of her examples much antedate the formal sceptical tradition of the Greeks and represent the existence of scepticism outside of the Greek culture.

While Dell argues that the *misuse* of *forms* (which includes a change of *content*) and a change of *context* indicate *parody*, two factors must be considered: one, *Job has the content of wisdom circles* (order of the world;

ambiguity of events and the meaning of life; punishment and reward; life is the supreme good; confidence in wisdom; personification of wisdom[104]); and two, if *Job* was *not* written to traditional wisdom circles, this raises more questions than it answers. In *genre analysis*, as Swales points out, genres are used *within specific communities* for *specific communicative purposes*, i.e., people use *recognisable forms* in order to *communicate* some message to a specific community.[105] Who was *Job* written to then, if not to traditional wisdom circles? If *Job* was not written to traditional circles (even as a corrective), whom was it written to (a sceptical philosophy tradition in ancient Israel)? Why deal with the same content of traditional wisdom circles, if there is no message for them? Dell's conclusion that *Job* is *not* wisdom literature, therefore, may be in question. Of course, the message may have been for an outside group of antagonists. For example, the deceased lead singer of the punk-rock group the *Sex Pistols*, Sid Vicious, did a cover version of the 1960s hit 'My Way' (written by Paul Anka for Frank Sinatra). The *context* of the song was changed to the anarchist subculture of the late 1970s and early 80s which is alien to the original version and culture of the song (middle-aged jazz type fans); by *changing the context* (but *not* the *content*!) Vicious *parodied* the song in order to use it as the *ironic* epitome of the anarchist punk-rock culture.

This may be analogous with *Job parodying* traditional wisdom in an antagonist camp outside of wisdom circles, perhaps as Dell suggests, a philosophical group. The

problem with this interpretation of *Job*, and it is critical for determining the genre of *parody*, is *access to this context*. Anyone old enough to remember the original hit song 'My Way' in the 60s, and the historical trends and phenomenon of the punk-anarchist movement of the late 70s and early 80s, had access to both contexts, and therefore one can determine that Sid Vicious' version of 'My Way' is indeed a *parody* (though the content remains the same). Biblical studies, however, do not have this luxury of immediate *access* to *context* and therefore Dell's thesis that *Job* is *parody* and not wisdom literature can only ever be held tentatively.

The question must also be asked: Is the literary genre of *parody* reflective of scepticism or rejection, i.e., cynicism ('contempt for ease and pleasure', 'disregarding normal standards'[106])? *Parody*, moreover, is a form of *mockery* used to *reject* what it *mocks* (sometimes humourously). In Sid Vicious' version of 'My Way', Vicious uses the *parody* to *reject* all the values of the middle-aged jazz oriented culture of the 60s (largely representative of the establishment of that day): this is more like cynicism than scepticism because it is an outright *rejection* of all these values and *not a doubting, questioning or suspension of belief* in them.

Dell is surely wrong when she argues that the *forms* used in *Job* express the author's scepticism as much as the overt content and *context*; the forms are simply the tool for *expressing* the content (message) of literature, and by Dell's own admission, it is the *context* which *determines*

the meaning or interpretation of *forms* and content, e.g., a legal form can be taken *indicatively*, but when placed in the context of an unjust situation, may indicate a *questioning* or *irony* of the indicativeness of the legal form; a *rhetorical question* can require either a positive or negative response depending on the context; a joke could have a serious message. The form is neither here nor there in interpreting the meaning of its literary content but rather it is the *context* which *determines* (if at all possible) *how the form is functioning*, how the *content* of the form *is to be interpreted* and what the literary *intent* of the form is.

Many of Dell's examples (pp. 121-136) can be questioned as to whether they are to be taken *indicatively* or as *parody* or *irony* or just plain scepticism, e.g., Is the hymn in 9.5-10 really a *parody* of creation hymns like Ps. 104 or Amos 5.6-9 (p. 127) or is *Job* simply in agreement here with traditional wisdom? Moreover, what if the *use of the forms* in *Job* which were *normative* in ancient Israel and their *counterparts anomalous*, i.e., *Job* represented the common man on the street and traditional wisdom an elitist ideology?

Despite a number of flaws in Dell's arguments, her overall conclusions are relatively sound with regard to *Job* being *parody*; but if this is the case, Dell should be, perhaps, arguing for *Job as Cynical Literature* not *Sceptical Literature*.

5. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING SCEPTICISM AND A SCEPTICAL TRADITION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The whole philosophy of scepticism, obviously including its epistemology, has not gone without criticism (as indeed every philosophical construct should).[107] Indeed, both Descartes and Kant's purpose was in many ways to discredit what they saw was the 'disease' of scepticism; however, whereas Descartes tried to completely overthrow scepticism, Kant saw the importance of scepticism to the philosophical task and was willing to employ it to his own ends ('critical dogmatism'). But one needs to keep in mind that the purpose for this chapter on scepticism is not to critique it, but rather to describe its basic precepts in order to see if there are *analogies* with texts in the Hebrew Bible and *Qoheleth* specifically (see chapter six).

A number of the formal aspects of sceptical methodology are not relevant to this study; but the working presupposition of limited epistemology and the doubting and questioning spirit are. Indeed, it would almost seem impossible, given human nature, that any culture could escape leaving artefacts which contain essential scepticism.

Certainly no book or text in the Hebrew Bible applies, with such critical rigour, the philosophical methodology of scepticism; but some texts in the Hebrew Bible definitely have the *general* principles of scepticism insofar as having a *doubting, questioning spirit* and a *rejection of dogma,*

and thus are not identical with, but analogous to, scepticism.

Dell's point, on the literary critical conclusions which one draws on *Job*, are analogous with what one does with *Qoheleth*, i.e., whether one interprets the book in the light of 1.2 and 12.8, its use of *quotations*, *poems*, and *epilogue* or whether one dissects the book and interprets in pieces. This dissertation has chosen to do as Dell does and interpret the joy statements in the context of *the book as one now has it*; but this will always make any conclusions tentative in the light of the source critical *ace* – and one should be sceptical about them. Moreover, the immediate context of *Job*, perhaps as a play, *dialogue* or *parody*, is just too far removed in time and space for any sound conclusions to be drawn on its *form* and *function*; unlike modern *parodies* such as Sid Vicious' version of 'My Way', where the immediate context and inherent *irony* or *parody* can be positively identified. Thus, *Job's* genre and interpretation must be viewed as *indeterminate*; and these conclusions may have implications for any conclusions which one may draw on *Qoheleth* and the joy statements.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE JOY STATEMENTS

This chapter provides a review of the three main interpretations of the joy statements adopted by commentators and attempts to point out their strengths and weaknesses. The interpretations of the joy statements were deliberately deferred to near the end of this dissertation in order that critical engagement with them could be done in the light of the information given in previous chapters. The three main interpretations will be given (the first two being rather simple and straightforward and the third very complicated); followed by a critical assessment of the arguments which support them. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn concerning the three main interpretations of the joy statements.

The last chapter of this dissertation deals with a fourth interpretation, namely that the joy statements are ambiguous in *form*, content and context, thus either *ironic*, *sceptical*, both or neither; followed by a critical assessment of it.

1. THE JOY STATEMENTS AS EDITORIAL GLOSSES

The joy statements may appear to be the most blatant example of editorial interference in the Book of Qoheleth; though other scholars holding to the prevalent editorial activity view, strangely enough, do not hold the joy statements to be editorial, e.g., McNeile, Barton.[1] The

joy statements may appear to be editorial glosses for the obvious reason that they are so inconsistent with the dour mood of the book as a whole and the specific negative statements found therein. Even if they are not editorial interference, a number of scholars (Barton, Gemser, Humbert, Loretz, Plumtre, Siegfried, Zimmerli, *et al.*) view them as coming (i.e., being influenced) from Egyptian, Babylonian or Greek sources.[2]

Another, more basic, reason for viewing the joy statements as editorial glosses, is the idea that *Qoheleth* is the product (sum total) of many hands (Siegfried = 9: QR^1, QR^2, QR^3, etc.): some *chasid* editors included the 'pious' elements to balance out the book's heterodoxy (Barton, McNeile) and other editors, the *chakam*, added the traditional wisdom material (Barton, Podechard). Following Galling's lead, a number of scholars (Eissfeldt, Ellermeier, Fohrer, Hertzberg) view *Qoheleth* to have a basic number of *Sentenzen*, anywhere from 23-37, to which the editorial glosses were added; but again, they tend not to view the joy statements as editorial.

It is the contradictory nature of the statements or *Sentenzen* which lead scholars to believe that *Qoheleth* is the product of multiple sources or editorial glosses, with the joy statements perhaps representing the most obvious evidence of this editorial activity (outwith the epilogue).

2. THE JOY STATEMENTS AS INDICATIVE CARPE DIEM

A number of scholars (Barton, Crenshaw, Eaton, Ginsburg, Gordis) appear to view the joy statements as *indicative carpe diem* statements, and this, on the basis that they represent *the only thing one can do* in the light of Qoheleth's negative discourses on a variety of subjects.

Barton says of 2.24, that

> Qoheleth here states the conclusions to which his various investigations had led. The best thing for man is to get the most physical pleasure he can out of life.[3]

Crenshaw further adds on 2.24 that

> Having concluded that both wisdom and an inheritance are ultimately disconcerting, Qohelet offers practical advice for living under the shadow, asserting not so much the goodness of eating and drinking as their relative advantage: not "This is good," but "There is nothing better."[4]

Despite Crenshaw's added caution, namely that of the *relative advantage* of enjoying life, the essential view is that the joy statements are to be taken, on face value, as *indicative carpe diem* statements to enjoy life. This position is that simple; the third and final interpretation of the joy statements is not.

3. THE JOY STATEMENTS AS PROVIDING AN ESSENTIAL MESSAGE OF JOY IN THE BOOK OF QOHELETH

There are a number of coalescing arguments, or dimensions of the basic argument, for the view that the joy statements provide an essential message of joy for the Book of Qoheleth. This view is by far the most complicated because

it is based in more *subtle* arguments and a *heuristic process* whereby a number of scholars have added to the case.

A. General Views of the Joy Message

Whybray, in his famous 1982 article 'Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy', seems to have established this most recent trend of interpreting the Book of Qoheleth as having an essential message of joy. He has been influential in *Qoheleth* studies and a number of scholars have followed his lead, e.g., Brown, Chia, Ogden. One should note, however, that Whybray views the joy statements as just *one leitmotif* of *Qoheleth* (the one which he most wanted to emphasise), but not the *only* one or central thesis to the book: the essential message of joy interpretation for *Qoheleth* comes from followers of Whybray, e.g., Chia and Ogden.

Of course, Whybray was not the first or only scholar to see the positive value of the joy statements in *Qoheleth*. Indeed, Whybray in many ways has picked up on the *indicative carpe diem* interpretation, held by so many scholars, and built upon that. As early as 1930, Knoph emphasised 'The Optimism of Koheleth'.[5] In this article, Knoph argues that within the multiple *strands* running throughout the book, a *practical philosophy* has been missed by interpreters of *Qoheleth*

> The point is, that too often the whole cast of the book has been determined by certain possible pessimistic elements, ignoring just as patent constructive elements. If it is to be a matter of choice, at least it is permissible to choose some strand that yields the greatest spiritual

> value and that better meets the eternal quest of the race for light. Scientific exegesis does not demand validity of the negative to the exclusion of the positive.[6]

A number of presuppositions of Knoph are in question, especially a Greek philosophical background to *Qoheleth*, and will be criticised later; but the point is well taken that because a book may contain large amounts of negative material in it, it does not follow (*non sequitur*) that this is all there is to a book. Indeed, this is the basic strength of the joy interpretation: the joy statements represent Qoheleth's *best advice*, even *commands* (cf. 9.7-9; 11.8-10), under such deterministically negative circumstances as humanity find themselves 'under the sun'. Knoph argues that *Qoheleth* is a brilliant rebuttal to Hellenistic assumptions, specifically Heraclitus, namely חלק is something fixed ('deeded') and in the context of chapter three, the deterministic context supports optimism and not pessimism because of the *steadying* influence of nature (God's providence?). 'This חֵלֶק is what is left, יִתְרוֹן, out of all the vicissitudes, הַבָלִים, of life'.[7]

In 1982, Whybray took a specific look at the seven joy statements in 'Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy':

> The purpose of this article is to re-examine these seven texts and their contexts in an attempt to understand their place in his thought.[8]

Whybray argues that these seven joy statements are not merely marginal comments or asides, but that they *punctuate* the whole book with *ever increasing emphasis*. He further argues that the contexts of the joy statements indicate the *reasons for* the advice to enjoy life. Whybray also argues

that the words 'give' or 'gift', with God as the giver (i.e., the subject of the verb), occur with great frequency in these passages. In addition,

> Three other reasons are also adduced: the necessity of accepting one's lot, which is unchangeable (2:26; 3:14; 3:22b; 5:18; 9:9); the brevity of life (5:17b; 9:9b; 11:9; 12:1b); and man's ignorance of the future (3:11; 3:22b; 8:14). These apparently depressing considerations are turned by Qoheleth into positive incentives to enjoy all the more what God gives in the present.[9]

Whybray further stresses, in addition to the enjoyment of life being a gift from God, that man must *accept* what God gives. So the seven problems to which the joy statements are the answer, according to Whybray, are:[10]

1. The vanity of toil and human effort (1:12-2:26).
2. The vanity of man's ignorance of the future (3:1-15).
3. The vanity of the presence of injustice in the world (3:16-22).
4. The vanity of the pursuit of wealth (5:9-19).
5. The vanity of unpunished wickedness (8:10-15).
6. The vanity of the fact that all men share a common fate (9:1-10).
7. The vanity of the brevity of human life (11:7-12:7).

Whybray thus summarises, what he views as Qoheleth's conclusions, as:[11]

1. What good things God has given us are intended for our enjoyment, and in the giving of them he has shown his approval of our actions. To enjoy them is actually to do his will.
2. We must accept our ignorance of God's purposes and of the reasons why he has permitted evil to exist in the world; and we must take life as we find it and enjoy what we can, <u>because</u>
   a. we cannot change the fate which God has chosen for us;

b. we cannot know what God has in store for us;
c. life is short and death inevitable.

3. The recognition that toil is a part of what God has allotted to us in this life, and that reliance on our own efforts is vain, enables us to find enjoyment even in our toil.

Whybray further supports his conclusions, on the basis that in the overall context of the Book of Qoheleth, the many negative ideas and statements are not 'a contradiction of his positive teaching but as actually providing support for it'.[12] While Whybray will be criticised on a number of points in the next section, he has made a strong case which his followers have picked up on and strengthened his deficiencies.

Chia built his thesis for his Ph.D. dissertation, that *Qoheleth* has essentially a message of joy, on the basis of the structure of Qoheleth's 'thought' pattern and not on the basis of the literary structure of the book.[13] Chia argues that the fatal flaw of Ogden's thesis is that he operates from a single thesis: joy. Qoheleth's thought pattern holds *hevel* and joy in tension throughout the book. Chia attempts to argue from a greater degree of coherence between the primary (*hevel*) and secondary themes (joy, *et al.*). The joy *imperatives* thus provide '*compensation*' for the *hebel* statements.[14]

Lohfink[15] adds another perspective to the argument when he argues that 5.17-19 actually provides a *two-stage* *reason* to *prove* that joy is the 'gift of God' quoting 5.19:

כי לא הרבה יזכר את־ימי חייו
כי האלהים מענה בשמחת לבו

Essentially Lohfink thinks that 5.19 *is* the *revelation* of God to humanity, i.e., when human beings have *joy in* their hearts. In other words: Just as God is revealed in the creation and the word, so too is God revealed when humans experience joy. The whole argument, however, is based on the translation of מענה, which Lohfink views as coming from the root ענהI meaning to 'answer', 'speak in public', 'reveal' (e.g., by an oracle). Lohfink implies that the LXX's interpretation ο θεος περισπα αυτον εν ευφροσυνη καρδιας αυτου led commentators astray because the translators interpreted מענה as being from the root ענהII: 'occupied', 'busied' (with something). Lohfink then argues there is a strong connection (play on words) between 1.13; 3.10 ענהII ('toil') and 5.19b ענהI expressing 'ease and happiness'. Ultimately Lohfink views 5.19 as the *revelation*

> . . . that human joy is a divine gift just because it means one does not have to meditate on death, that is, one does not have to exercise the "fear of God". . . . The joy of the heart must be something like divine revelation.[16]

While this is a fascinating interpretation, it nevertheless, is very problematic for a number of reasons, which will be given in the critical assessment.

Brown has been the most recent scholar to endorse the essential message of joy in *Qoheleth* position, i.e., 'Ecclesiastes . . . is a treatise on joyful perseverance'.[17] He argues, following and adding to Crenshaw,[18] that Qoheleth's scepticism stems from a 'heightened degree of self-consciousness' whereby Qoheleth 'stepped out' of the character of traditional wisdom and found a new form of wisdom which *accepts* the absurdities of

life and enjoys the few fleeting moments of joy it has. Qoheleth's 'reconstructed character' lies in his acceptance of life's absurdities which provide an 'inner freedom that is unassailable' based in an 'interior act of self-consciousness'.[19] This makes all ambition vain and joy is found in *persevering* (continuing to toil), even though the joy statements are '*anticlimactic*'.[20]

B. Ogden on Qoheleth's Essential Message of Joy

Ogden has written a number of articles and a commentary which share the positive assessment of the joy message of *Qoheleth*. Ogden makes a specific case for a *carpe diem* interpretation of the joy statement in 11.7-12.8.[21] The reality of death, argues Ogden, is the basic *impetus* for one to *reflect* on life and thus Qoheleth's summons to the reader to *enjoy life now while one may*. The advice to 'remember the Creator' in 12.1, Ogden argues (on the basis of the *waw* reversive וזכר?), makes

> . . . clear that it cannot denote the recollection of some past event or situation; on the contrary, a present state of mind with regard to the future is advocated.[22]

That point is debatable; but Ogden nevertheless concludes, on the basis of the *rhetorical device* of the last three pericopes of *Qoheleth* (9.17-10.20; 11.1-6; 11.7-12.8),[23] namely the twin themes of *reflection and enjoyment*, that

> . . . this rhetorical device enables us to grasp the fact that the call to enjoyment and concurrent reflection on the inevitable future of humanity in death, is indeed the central theme of the book. Qoheleth, on this estimate, is not a simple hedonist, but one, who from a standpoint of faith wishes to confront directly

> the reality of human existence and to offer the most consistent and sagacious advice on how to cope with the problems of life.[24]

Ogden finds support for this essential thesis for 11.7-12.8 in Fredericks, who binds 11.1-6 with 11.7-12.8, to conclude that Qoheleth essentially says in 11.1-12.8: 'enjoy life now while you can, and such enjoyment should not avoid wise labor'.[25]

Ogden further argues the essential message of joy in *Qoheleth* in his 1987 *J.S.O.T.* commentary. Here Ogden fills in some of the gaps of his previous argument, e.g., how death does not obliterate any meaning to life or enjoyment. Ogden makes a two-pronged attack on this issue. One, he argues that the term *hevel* does not carry the heavy negative connotations which many scholars ascribe to it:

> . . . it identifies the enigmatic, the ironic dimension of human experience; it suggests that life is not fully comprehensible. It in no sense carries the meaning 'vanity' or 'meaningless'.[26]

The former meaning may be debatable; but by denying the latter, Ogden may be on a dangerous footing. Ogden, nevertheless, further argues that the *hevel* statements may represent Qoheleth's concluding statements on life's experiences *but* they are *not* his *advice; the joy statements are his advice in the light of the hevel conclusions.* The thesis of *Qoheleth*, argues Ogden, is: 'life under God must be taken and enjoyed in all its mystery'.[27]

Secondly, Ogden argues that the programmatic question of *Qoheleth* is 1.3 (also 3.9; 5.15): 'What is man's advantage?' (מה־יתרון), and this was the question Qoheleth was seeking to answer; which Ogden concedes the required response is: 'there is no *yitron*—and leading into the

advice that life as a gift from God must be enjoyed'.[28] Ogden argues that there are only seven occurrences of יתרון which provide a sensible context from which to determine its meaning (2.11, 13; 3.9, 19; 5.15; 6.8, 11). As Ogden correctly points out, יתרון is not always related to 'material success', or what one gains from work, and according to him, the first formal response to the programmatic question comes in 2.11: '*yitron* is not dependent upon material success'. He further adds that

> Even if one were to opine that *yitron* refers to some deep inner satisfaction, which the wise might expect, one would have to take into account the additional fact that the *yitron* Qoheleth longs to know is not to be found 'under the sun'. If it is not equated with some worldly, measurable benefit, then it probably belongs to a somewhat different order. While undoubtedly not 'other worldly' in the full sense, Qoheleth is at least pointing in the direction of a *yitron* which transcends this present earthly experience. . . . He has assigned it a metaphorical sense to speak of that which is non-material.[29]

So Ogden postulates, rather uniquely, that יתרון belongs to the other world (afterlife). Ogden attempts to support his definition of יתרון with Qoheleth's use of עלם, usually rendered 'eternity' (3.11: 'He [God] put עלם in the hearts of men'); but he could have also cited *Rabbah Midrash Ecclesiastes* where עלם is rendered as 'world' with the implication of 'love of this world' (so too Gordis); but the use of עלם in the Hebrew Bible and *Qoheleth* are fraught with difficulties and this is not a sound basis to build speculation upon speculation (see chapter 2 for detailed exegesis of עלם). Ogden further argues that

> By opting for the question-form (1.3 etc.), Qoheleth is indicating that he cannot prove that *yitron* will be granted beyond the grave, but he

> insists that it is at least a possibility, . . . The function of the word *yitron* which Qoheleth coined was to gather up all his hopes that there might be some just resolution of these many human enigmas.[30]

Ogden argues, on the basis of Deuteronomic belief in divine retribution and the lack of evidence for it in this world, that this discrepancy inevitably led to the question: Where? Ogden also attempts to support his particular view of יתרון in *Qoheleth* by arguing, that because the author was limited to the empirical epistemology of traditional wisdom, he could only 'intimate his belief'. In other words: Qoheleth could not *prove* this idea so he framed it in such a way as to indicate his *tentativeness* by using oblique terms or nuances of connotations. Ogden further claims that if his view of Qoheleth's use of יתרון is correct, then it may represent one of the earliest stages of the theory of afterlife which was later accepted in the New Testament. This may be a circular argument of the worst kind (cf. chapter four for a positive endorsement of circular arguments when properly used).

The problematics of Ogden's view of יתרון in Qoheleth should now be apparent to the reader. A critical assessment of Ogden's view can be found in the next section.

4. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE JOY STATEMENTS

The purpose of this section is to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the three main interpretations of the joy statements.

A. The Editorial Gloss Interpretation

The main strength of the editorial gloss argument is the blatant internal contradictions which the Book of Qoheleth presents in the overall dour mood of the book. How can the same author say, on the one hand, 'So I hated life, because the *evil toil* under the sun was *upon me*' (2.17a), and on the other hand, 'There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and show himself his work is beneficial' (2.24)? Or what about the internal contradictions of some of the joy statements themselves: 'Enjoy life with a woman you love – all the days of your *hevel* life which God gave you under the sun – all your *hevel* days' (9.9)? Or statements which follow the joy statements (5.17-19): 'God gives a man wealth, possessions and honour, so he lacks nothing his soul desires; but God does not enable him to enjoy them, because a stranger enjoys them instead. This too is *hevel*, a sick evil' (6.2)? These obvious contradictions are strong support for the editorial gloss view of the joy statements.

Added to this strength is the commonly accepted view that the Book of Qoheleth is the product of many, or at

least some, hands. There is a strong case to be made for the view that *chasid* and or *chakam* editors attempted to cover over or *embellish* the heterodox statements in *Qoheleth*. The view of Galling and his follows also add weight to this sort of idea, that of a progressive redactional development of the book: the apparent unity of some of the material (usually considered negative or pessimistic) was 'corrected' by pious glossators, and this therefore explains the book's contradictions (usually considered 'traditional').

Despite the strengths of the editorial gloss view, there are a number of weaknesses in it. First of all, there is no textual critical evidence which exposes tampering with the text (with the exception of individual words); though it must be admitted that the textual critical apparatus of *B.H.S.* can only evidence, and even then in a very qualified way, the *transmission of the text* and not the *redaction* of the text. The fact that there is very little evidence of the history of redaction of the Bible and *Qoheleth* means that no one can really know for sure who is responsible for what with regard to the individual parts or statements in *Qoheleth*. Added to this, the growing consensus of the book's literary unity *based in vocabulary, syntax, catch phrases, themes*, etc., which would then argue against excessive editorial activity; though those holding the essential unity of the book do not necessarily deny editorial activity (with the exception of Fox).

Secondly, as some scholars point out (Eaton, Gordis): If these *chasid* and *chakam* editors attempted to cover over or embellish the heterodox statements in *Qoheleth*, then their attempt must be considered a failure, for all they succeeded in doing was to set up, in *acute relief*, the contradictions of the book side by side, which in turn led to the many opinions regarding *Qoheleth's* sources, compositions and or unity.

> It is very odd to imagine an 'editor' issuing a work with which he disagrees but adding extensive notes and an epilogue to compensate. Why should an orthodox writer reproduce a sceptical book at all, let alone add orthodox glosses to produce a noticeably mixed bag? It is quite conceivable that an editor sent out Ecclesiastes with a commendatory note, but it is scarcely likely that anyone would do this if he were unhappy with the content of the work. . . . It is possible to imagine an orthodox writer re-writing a dangerous work in order to counteract it; but if this were the case, he was singularly unsuccessful, for, *ex hypothesi*, he left the 'dangerous' views side by side with the orthodox ones. If we are capable of noticing this, surely he was.[31]

In the case of *Ben Sira* and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, they represent an *overt attack*, if not on *Qoheleth* specifically, at least on some of the unorthodox ideas found in *Qoheleth*: there is no need to rewrite any heterodox work when one could criticise the ideas from scratch in a new book. Thus, these orthodox writers would not have to leave the 'dangerous' views alongside the orthodox, and would be less ambiguous and clearer to readers.

Gordis further adds weight to these ideas expressed by Eaton when he says that the so-called *Chasid* interpolations need to be understood in terms of Qoheleth's literary style, the spiritual background of his writing (which is

probably impossible to recover) and his use of quotations, i.e., Qoheleth quotes traditional wisdom in order to discuss, reject or refute it.[32] Also in support of Eaton (though it is likely that Eaton drew from Gordis' work which proceeded his own), Gordis argues that there is no reason for the canonisers to accept Qoheleth into the canon when, like so many other *Apocryphal* and *Pseudepigraphal* writings, with high claims to Patriarchal authorship and with much more orthodox views, were suppressed and kept out of the canon; and were only discovered by accident in the *genizah*.[33]

Perhaps Whybray sums up the unity or integrity of *Qoheleth* view best, *vis-a-vis* the editorial gloss view, when he says that 'the most probable explanation of the tensions within the book is that these tensions existed within Qoheleth's own mind'.[34]

While these arguments on the integrity or literary unity of the Book of Qoheleth do not bear directly on the editorial gloss view of the joy statements, they do argue against, or offer a possible explanation for, the joy statements not being editorial glosses but integral to the book as a whole. Of course, interpreting the meaning of those statements in the overall context of *Qoheleth* still remains problematic.

B. The Indicative Carpe Diem Interpretation

The simple but powerful case for the interpretation of the joy statements as *indicative carpe diem* must be taken

seriously. This view represents the attempt to interpret the joy statements' meaning in the overall context of *Qoheleth*. The main strength of the argument is that the joy statements, in the context of negative *discourses* on life's circumstances, *provide an answer*, or at least *some advice*, on what one should do in the light of the harsh realities of life.

What creates scepticism concerning the *carpe diem* interpretation of the joy statements is the *hevel* statements, the literary structure of *Qoheleth*, the joy statements' immediate and overall contexts and such contradictory statements as 6.2 and 9.7-10.

The strongest arguments against the *indicative carpe diem* interpretation come in the next subsection dealing with the interpretation of an essential message of joy in *Qoheleth* (which in some respects is a more extended *carpe diem* argument) and in chapter six which deals with *ironic* and sceptical correlations.

C. The Essential Message of Joy Interpretation

There are a number of strengths of the essential message of joy interpretation. The first lies in the fact that it takes seriously the joy statements in *Qoheleth* and attempts *to make sense of them* and the book as a whole, i.e., their literary *function* in the book. Secondly, the fact that the joy statements follow such negative discourses on life, makes for a strong case that this was indeed *Qoheleth's advice* in the light of them. The fact that the last joy

statement comes in the final context of aging and death, couched in *imperative forms*, indicates that this context provides the *impetus* for *carpe diem* as the book 'wraps up', and *thus represents the final and ultimate advice and interpretation for Qoheleth*.

a) General Views of the Joy Message

Despite the strengths of the essential joy interpretation, Knoph, along with the other joy interpreters, demonstrates *subjective* and *arbitrary* choices which raise many more questions than they answer: Why should the often ignored or neglected *leitmotif* of *carpe diem* joy (part of the 'optimism' of *Qoheleth* according to Knoph) be *arbitrarily* chosen and emphasised to the exclusion of others? How does this wrong right the other wrong? Why an essential or central thesis/message of joy over *one* of the other negative messages? Though it must be admitted that this choice of the essential message of joy does not necessarily negate these other negative *leitmotifs* in *Qoheleth* (as many scholars readily admit); and it is acknowledged that these negative *leitmotifs* are considered the *basis* for the essential message of joy interpretation of *Qoheleth via* the joy statements.

But Knoph alerts readers to the first, and potentially most fatal flaw, in the methodology of those who hold to the interpretation that the joy statements provide an essential message of joy to the Book of Qoheleth, namely that of the *alignment of all the positive things* which

Qoheleth had to say and *then building one's case around that alignment*. This is, in fact, what Whybray does in his trend setting article 'Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy'. For example, when Whybray deals with the joy statement of 5.17-19 (his 5.9-19), he aligns it with his previous treatment of the joy statement in 2.24-26 and effectively *sidesteps* the immediate context of the joy statement in 5.9-19 and the following contradictory statement of 6.1-2. The immediate context of the joy statement in 5.17-19 may, in fact, *indicate scepticism*, perhaps in the *form* of *irony* or a joke: for how can one enjoy food and drink in such an unpredictable and, in any case, unsatisfactory context? Added to this, is the fact that the ability to enjoy what one has, albeit as the gift of God (as Whybray acknowledges), comes from an arbitrary and capricious God who may also *deny* such enjoyment even when one has all the 'trimmings' of the enjoyable life (6.1-2). The argument that, the ability to enjoy one's lot *demonstrates* God's already approval of one and one's life, is refuted in a number of different ways by the Book of Qoheleth itself: one, by the above demonstrated capriciousness of God (6.2); two, general injustice in the world; three, Qoheleth's refutation of retributive justice; and four, the *hevel* of material things and pleasure in the world. The evidence of internal contradictions within the joy statements themselves, e.g., 9.7-10, also argue against a straightforward adoption of the *indicative carpe diem* nature of the joy statements on the basis that the immediate context of the joy statement, in 9.9

specifically, may indicate sceptical *irony* or even the joke of enjoying life in such *hevel* circumstances rather than *carpe diem*. Simply sidestepping the internal contradictions and problems, made all the more acute if one accepts, as Whybray does, the essential literary integrity and unity of the Book of Qoheleth, will not resolve the interpretive problems that the immediate and overall contexts of the book present to the joy statements taken in isolation or together as an aligned position of *Qoheleth*.

A number of other propositions of Whybray must be questioned and challenged. The idea espoused by Whybray with regard to 3.13,[35] that somehow in the light of ignorance (if one can call that 'light'), one should enjoy oneself, may on the contrary, represent an *ironic rejection* of such an idea on the basis of the internal contradiction of enjoying life under such circumstances. The idea that it is the man who, in Whybray's words, *accepts* what God gives, is also questionable. On the one hand, Whybray would want to espouse the determinism of *Qoheleth*, and on the other the freewill of humanity to make such choices.[36] It is precisely because of the determinism of God that, in ignorance, one should accept and enjoy what one has; but this falls down on two counts: one, it disregards the fact that God determines who gets what and under what circumstances (freewill has nothing to do with one's *lot*); and two, that choice and acceptance also remain within the capricious determinism of God who may not allow one to enjoy what one has, even when it is the best life has to offer (cf. 6.2). De Jong has recently reinforced these

ideas in his article dealing with 'God in the Book of Qohelet'.

> It can be concluded that Qohelet's main theme "human limitation in relation to God" is an important Old Testament theme. . . . In this way he [Qoheleth] defends a well-known biblical theme and a genuine characteristic of the God of the Old Testament: the Creator, in relation to whom human hybris is not appropriate, is substantially different from man and acts according to his own free sovereignty.[37]

And with regard to God's determinism and the joy statements, de Jong says that

> There are some other texts which do not explicitly argue that God acts in a deterministic way, but which leave the impression that he does so. Most of these texts are closely related to ii 26, and their central theme is enjoyment. According to vi 2, God endows wealth but not the ability to enjoy. The texts of ii 24-5, iii 12-13, v 18-19 stress that enjoyment is God's sovereign gift, as well as the days in which to enjoy (v 17, viii 15, ix 9). The contents and context of vii 14 also leaves the impression that God as the Giver of the good and the bad days acts without respect of persons.[38]

This leads to another criticism, against Ogden, which lends strength to this last point: Ogden argues that in the light of the programmatic question of 1.3, that Qoheleth's success at enjoying life, vindicates the joy interpretation;[39] but this is untrue as evidenced in Qoheleth's evaluation of his life's pursuits (1.18; 2.11, 15, 17-23). Qoheleth admitted that he had intellectual, material and hedonistic success (1.12-2.23), but his evaluations of them were *hevel*: Qoheleth had all the best God had to offer him but he found them wanting (cf. 2.1-11; especially 2.3, 11).

Another idea of Whybray which needs to be critically assessed is the idea that the joy interpretation is

warranted in the overall context of the book.[40] For example, Whybray says 2.17 ('So I hated life') represents an expression of Solomon (in the context of the royal fiction of 1.12-2.26) and not Qoheleth himself. This may be true; but Whybray cannot know that this was in the mind of Solomon, Qoheleth, or that it was original to the text. This view, moreover, disregards the inclusio of 1.2-12.8, which may or may not be editorial, but requires that it be dealt with: Whybray simply ignores it in his article and in his book simply dismisses 1.2 and 12.8 as editorial glosses.[41] This is interesting since, for Whybray's joy interpretation to stand up, this is what he must do with 1.2 and 12.8.

Chia's thesis, that Qoheleth has a dual thesis of *hevel*/joy, provides an opportunity to demonstrate how the literary structure of *Qoheleth* raises *scepticism* against such a view. The macro literary structure of *Qoheleth* will not support such a thesis. The main literary structure which undermines such a thesis is the superlative *hevel* inclusio of 1.2-12.8. Moreover, 1.2 and 12.8 state that הכל הבל. הכל qualifies הבל and thus means 'absolutely everything is *hevel*'. 'Everything' is without qualification. The other micro literary structures of the book also undermine any value to the joy statements and may indicate *scepticism* in the joy statements. In addition, the book's *leitmotifs*, at least as it now stands, are *governed* by the thesis of 1.2 which is validated in 12.8. The joy statement of 2.24 comes immediately following Qoheleth's ultimate pleasure campaign in 2.1-10, which he

criticises in 2.11 and in 2.17-23. The final conclusion, moreover, is a *hevel* statement in 2.26. The joy statements of 3.12-13 come in a highly deterministic context which juxtaposes God and his eternal work with the transitory nature of human life in the world in 3.14. The joy statement of 3.22a is brought into question by a statement of the transitory nature of human life in the world and man's ignorance of the future in 3.22b.

The joy statement of 5.17-19 is preceded by a very pessimistic statement regarding the 'grievous evil' in life in 5.12-15; and is followed by a statement of God's capricious determinism of joy in 6.1-2. The fact that the joy statement is *enveloped* by statements of the evil in the world (5.12-15) and God's capricious determinism of joy (6.1-2) suggests that a straightforward *indicative* interpretation of 5.17-19 is dubious.

The joy statement of 8.15 is immediately followed by an ignorance statement in 8.16-17 and a death statement of God's capricious determinism in 9.1-6. The joy statement of 9.7-9a is embellished by a double *hevel* statement in 9.9b and a death statement in 9.10. The joy statement of 11.8-9 comes in the context of a statement foreshadowing death, and is ultimately made redundant by the superlative *hevel* statement in 12.8.

The joy statements are never given in an open-ended context whereby they stand alone and without qualification or negation by the following statements or pericopes; though it may be argued that these following statements or pericopes could be reinforcing the idea of *carpe diem*. The

book, however, has an overall dour ethos despite these joy statements. The joy statements, moreover, are ultimately invalidated by the superlative *hevel* statement of 12.8; and this represents a contradiction in Ogden's position which on the one hand wants to hold to the literary integrity and unity of Qoheleth but on the other disregards or sidesteps the implications of such a position. What 12.8 validates is Qoheleth's thesis that הכל הבל. Perhaps the literary structure, as Dell suggest for the Book of Job, indicates *scepticism* in *Qoheleth* (inclusive of the joy statements); but even if there is no contrived sceptical *effect* intended by the author and or editors, the literary structure of *Qoheleth* raises doubts and a number of questions.

Lohfink's interpretation of 5.17-19 is fascinating; but seriously flawed. It is probably safe to say that ענהIV, 'sing', is not a possibility for *Qoheleth*. ענהI, II, III are all possible but only II and III really seem viable in the context in which the root is used in *Qoheleth*. How is ענהI 'answer', 'respond' appropriate for 5.19: 'for he does not remember much the days of life because God *answers* with joy in his heart' (מענה בשמחת לבו כי לא הרבה יזכר את־ימי חייו כי האלהים)?. First of all, root ענהI does not provide a natural linguistic and grammatical sense in the context of 5.19: 'Answers', '*reveals*' what? The lot of enjoyment already given in 5.17-18? Secondly, arriving at the English sense of 'revelation' from ענהI is a long and difficult task which Lohfink never makes; probably because if he looked at ענהI's occurrences in the Hebrew Bible and *B.D.B.* the

problematics are obvious. Thirdly, even if Lohfink is right and there is a play on words going on between 1.13, 3.10 and 5.19, it is more likely to be between ענהII ('occupied', 'busy with') in 5.19 and ענהIII ('afflicted') in 1.13 and 3.10 than ענהI and II because the play on words is more natural and makes more sense in those contexts. Fourthly, the difficulties of articulating a doctrine of *revelation* are well known to be legion in Bible and theology studies and cannot just be assumed but require extensive and rigourous arguments for which Lohfink is not prepared to make for his case. And finally, the sense of 'busy' or 'occupy' convey the same overall literary *intent* or message of 5.19: joy is a *distraction* from God for the bad in life. For these and many other reasons, Lohfink's position on 5.17-19 must be rejected.

Brown admits, that after Qoheleth has deconstructed traditional wisdom in ancient Israel *from within*, he only provides a 'faint sketch' of the 'new character' he wants to build. Brown's interpretation, however, seems largely driven by modern, if not postmodern, concerns and not necessarily the concerns of Qoheleth; and this for the purpose of making practical applications to the postmodern predicament (cf. the *Preface* for ecclesiastical concerns; pp. 148-50). While this is admirable, one may question, in the light of Brown's own emphasis on the negative in *Qoheleth*, that this 'deconstruction' and 'reconstruction' might not be the product of twentieth century hermeneutics and an attempt to *squeeze out* an interpretation of the book which *lends itself to this purpose*. Also, Brown's

methodology may be in question in the light of the source critical complexities of the book: Is one able to discern what is Qoheleth's or not? One may also ask whether or not an ancient Israelite would be *willing and able to do such an exercise of deconstruction* or is this an anachronism? One might also question if *enjoying* 'the few fleeting moments of joy one receives from the hand of God' (which Brown admits is 'anticlimactic') is a *solid* enough basis for interpreting *Qoheleth* as a book on 'joyful perseverance'? If just a *few fleeting moments of joy* are allotted a man in life, how does this *provide a basis* to enjoy everyday work and life as Brown suggests? It sounds more like the 'Calvinstic work ethic' and a modern interpretation than an ancient book; and again one is left wondering if the interpretation raises more questions than it answers?

b) Ogden on Qoheleth's Essential Message of Joy

First of all, Ogden provides quite an arbitrary, though necessary for his essential joy interpretation, definition of *hevel* in *Qoheleth*. He acknowledges the correctness and importance of the *hevel* inclusio of 1.2-12.8. He argues that for the Book of Qoheleth to be interpreted negatively as a whole would require a translation of הבל as 'vanity', 'meaningless'; but argues against the commonly held views of *hevel* ('vanity', 'nothingness', 'vapour') on the basis of how Qoheleth specifically used *hevel* and arrives at the definition 'enigmatic', 'ironic', (*without negative*

connotations). While it is true that defining הבל is a difficult task, and Ogden accepts Barr's advice that a context specific approach is necessary for defining how individual books/authors used terms, it is doubtful that הבל means 'enigmatic', 'mysterious' (cf. chapter one); though it may have some of those connotations. The point with regard to Ogden's definition of הבל is: He must *circumvent* any outright *negative definition* of *hevel* if he is to sustain his essential joy interpretation. One may also wonder why, when Ogden defines הבל as 'enigmatic', 'ironic', that he does not conclude that the joy statements are 'enigmatic' or *ironic* – especially in the 'light' of 12.8? Ogden's views 12.8 as a *concluding device of the book* and uses it to support his positive interpretation of 11.7-12.8; but the final evaluation of the book in 12.8 is *hevel*: the *last word on Qoheleth is hevel not joy*![42] Again, one is left with more questions than answers.

Ogden also redefines יתרון in *Qoheleth*. יתרון, Ogden argues, is not to be understood in any material sense (which is indicated by the Qoheleth's use of the term חלק) but as a *neologism* which Qoheleth *coined* to indicate something beyond the material, beyond this world, namely life after death. Ogden locates the semantic field of יתרון outside of this world precisely because, as Qoheleth points out, none can be found here. This redefinition programme of Ogden is how he *circumvents* a number of problems: death, theodicy, hedonism and jurisprudence. Thus Qoheleth's purpose is to point to something beyond the grave and the call to enjoy life is therefore not thwarted

by any *hevel*, lack of יתרון in this world or death. This seems a rather convenient arrangement which needs to be rigourously and critically assessed.

For Ogden to redefine יתר and call it a neologism *which Qoheleth coined* is a circular argument of the worst kind, because יתר is used some 266 times in the Hebrew Bible and its semantic field is well known and does not include 'otherworldly'; though Ogden could have used Bauernfeind and Balz's understanding of *hevel* (ματαιος 'retains its comprehensive metaphysical undertone'[43]) as 'otherworldly' in a Greek context to support his case, as well as the midrashic interpretation of עלם as the 'next world'; but these views must also be rejected on linguistic/grammatical and contextual grounds (cf. chapters one and two). Moreover, Ogden could have dealt with *hevel* having the accounting connotation of 'zero', 'nothing', which would be appropriate for both the book and in relationship with the negative connotations of יתר in the Hebrew Bible (95 occurrences); but Ogden does not deal with that either, probably because it would argue against his position. When Ogden argues that Qoheleth used יתרון in an *obscure* way (so Ogden can support his 'obscure' interpretation), he defies the 266 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible in which the term's semantic field is well known; and this, again, may represent a circular argument of the worst kind.

With regard to Ogden's position that the programmatic question of Qoheleth (1.3), 'what is man's יתרון ('advantage')?', and its relationship to the inclusio and

essential joy interpretation: the answer which is demanded from that *rhetorical question* is an unqualified 'no one!' or 'nothing!' (cf. chapter two). It may even, in relationship with an accounting connotation of *hevel* as 'zero', 'nil', mean a 'negative surplus', i.e., a 'loss' (cf. chapter one). For Ogden to use יתר and the programmatic question to build his joy case is *ironic* because the programmatic question actually works against his case. One would expect, then, that such an unqualified negative response to that question would bring into question the interpretation of the joy statements: this is consistent with *scepticism* and not a positive endorsement of an *indicative* interpretation of the joy statements (another *irony*?).

In addition to this, Ogden's attempt to argue that the semantic field of יתרון has moved outside of this world and into the next, must be called into question both on grammatical/linguistic and contextual grounds; the above point taken that the *rhetorical question* demands a negative response. To shift the context from this world to the next is an example of a scholar attempting to sidestep the problematics that the programmatic question appears to be designed to evoke: there is no advantage to living in this world and thus Qoheleth evaluated it as *hevel*, and he did not speculate or suggest that one should look elsewhere, even if that were possible. Moreover, the *semantic field* of יתר, in 266 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, are in *this world*. In addition to this, Ogden is simply wrong when he suggests in his commentary (p. 23) that הלך refers to

material success in this world in general and that in 2.11 יתרון to some unspecified thing else: for in 2.11 the term is יתרון and it does refer to a failure of material success to satisfy and follows a *hevel* and 'vexation of spirit' evaluation (והנה הכל הבל ורעות רוח ואין יתרון תחת השמש). Ogden's attempt to sidestep the problematics of the programmatic question, its emphatic negative response and death, must be rejected.

Finally, with regard to Ogden's idea that Qoheleth was a man of faith, there are a number of arguments which go against this. Ogden says in conclusion, to his argument that reflection and enjoyment in the light of inevitable death, is that Qoheleth,

> . . . who from a standpoint of faith wishes to confront directly the reality of human existence and to offer the most consistent and sagacious advice on how to cope with the problems of life.[44]

First of all, Qoheleth nowhere used any Hebrew term for 'faith' in his book, e.g., אמן, אמת, בטח.[45] Secondly, if Ogden is correct and the book is framed by a *hevel* inclusio, then this would seem to indicate a lack of faith on the part of either the author or at least the final redactor. And finally, it would seem difficult to employ *carpe diem* under such negative circumstances outlined in the book as humanity finds themselves; and one could just as easily have argued Qoheleth was a man downtrodden and defeated by life in every way: he had no faith.

Despite the interesting and valuable contributions which the joy interpreters have provided, the larger philosophical questions remain: Is there any יתרון if all

is consumed by death and eternity? Or does this just make life *hevel*? Perhaps this is the editor's point (if there was one) in 12.8.

5. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE JOY STATEMENTS

After a critical assessment of the three main interpretations of the joy statements in *Qoheleth*, the following conclusions, however tentative, can be drawn.

The real strength of the editorial gloss or intrusion interpretation of the joy statements is the fact that they seem so *alien* to the rest of the mood and content (ethos) of the Book of Qoheleth. Since there is no evidence whatsoever of how the Book of Qoheleth was written or redacted, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions on what is original to *Qoheleth* or not. Therefore, one must be sceptical of any view, one way or another, of any particular text in the book. In other words: The joy statements may be editorial intrusions to the text, as indicated by their alien nature to the rest of the book; but then again, they may not. The point cannot be proven one way or another. So the editorial gloss position cannot be lightly dismissed; though the textual evidence seems to indicate that the text of *Qoheleth*, as found in the *Massoretic Text*, is reasonably sound. But then again, textual criticism does not necessarily provide a history of a text's redaction: it only indicates the reliability of a text's transmission, and even then this may be ambiguous.[46]

The essential message of joy interpretation seems to represent a *counter reading* of the Book of Qoheleth from the historically sceptical or pessimistic reading; a counter reading which nevertheless needs to be taken seriously but not without critical assessment and due caution in adopting it. Methodologically, both Whybray and Ogden aligned the bits and pieces of the book to make their case and effectively either sidestep the problems of such an interpretation or ignore them. The ploy of redefinition or emptying words of their inherent negativity, cannot, and should not be allowed.

It seems *ironic*, when scholars are so prone to hold that there is scepticism throughout the Book of Qoheleth, that they are *not sceptical of the joy statements themselves*. This seems to represent a contradiction, perhaps even an *irony* within that view, i.e., why does scepticism in the book lead to a *carpe diem* interpretation of the joy statements instead of an *ironic* or *sceptical interpretation* of them?

Nevertheless, the *carpe diem* interpretation is by far the strongest interpretation of the joy statements. This is based in the power of its simplicity, its *one* message *amongst many* in *Qoheleth* (mostly negative), the negative context in which the joy statements come and the positive advice to make the most of life in such a negative context. If, however, the joy statements are *ironic*, then of course this would invalidate the *carpe diem* interpretation. The main problem with the wholesale essential message of joy interpretation is that it is committed to the joy message

(one amongst *many*) being the *central*, if not the *only*, thesis or message of *Qoheleth*; and this is where Whybray, Ogden and Chia fall down because they must manipulate the data to fit the theory: they are over committed, or over emphasise (Whybray), one interpretation or message of the book to the exclusion of others; whereas the interpreters who endorse the simple *carpe diem* interpretation do not. Notwithstanding, chapter six may provide more information which challenges even the *carpe diem* interpretation.

CHAPTER SIX

IRONIC CORRELATIONS AND SCEPTICISM IN THE JOY STATEMENTS?

This chapter begins where scepticism and the main interpretations left off. It looks at irony as a literary *form* and examines whether or not irony is analogous with, or compatible to, scepticism, i.e., is irony a *Gattung* or literary device of scepticism and, if so, what literary *effect* does it have? The joy statements of *Qoheleth* are then examined in the light of this study to see whether or not they are ironic, sceptical, both or neither.

1. IRONIC CORRELATIONS TO GATTUNGEN AND SCEPTICISM

This section attempts to answer the questions: What is irony? How can one determine irony in a given text and what is its literary *effect*? It also explores the correlations between irony, the various literary devices or *Gattungen* which exhibit irony and their literary effects, e.g., sarcasm, joke, litotes, double meaning (complex irony), satire and parody. This section then attempts to answer the questions: Is irony a *Gattung* or literary device of scepticism? Are irony and scepticism compatible? The

O.M.E.D. defines 'correlation' as:

> **1** a mutual relation between two or more things.
> **2 a** interdependence of variable quantities.
> **b** a quantity measuring the extent of this.
> **3** the act of correlating.[1]

For the most part this definition suffices for the purposes of this thesis; but one needs to add, surely, in

conjunction with *quantity*, 'quality' ('a distinctive attribute or faculty; a characteristic trait')[2] as a part of correlation: for quantity on its own is not adequate for the purposes of correlations because quantity only relates to the *size* of something and not its *characteristics* or *nature*, which are also necessary for making correlations, i.e., one cannot talk about size without characteristics. 'Literary device' is defined as 'a conceptual and grammatical mechanism whereby a certain literary effect is achieved'.[3] The definition of 'literary effect', as noted in the introduction, is 'the result or consequence of the use of conceptual, grammatical and literary devices to produce a desired effect on the reader, understanding or meaning a particular text'.

A. Irony in Historical and Philosophical Context

The subsection examines irony in its historical and philosophical context.

Vlastos, in his article, 'Socratic Irony', discusses the etymological, historical and philosophical development of irony in its ancient Greek setting, through the Roman period, and lasting effects into the twentieth century West.[4] He points out the lasting influence of Quintilian's definition of irony, as that 'figure of speech or trope "in which something contrary to what is said is to be understood" (*contrarium ei quod dicitur intelligendum est*)'; adding Johnson's definition as 'mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words', and Webster's:

'Irony is the use of words to express something other than, and especially the opposite of, [their] literal meaning'.[5]

Vlastos considers a straightforward example of this opposite meaning: the British visitor who arrives in Los Angeles in a downpour and says 'what fine weather'; the meaning of 'fine' of course being the opposite of what is meant. The irony of this so-called straightforward example is that a British visitor, who is so used to rainy weather, might indeed think the weather 'fine' relative to what he is used to; but this added twist to Vlastos' example only represents the complexity and *interplay* of irony between the author, characters, situations, dialogue and readers (more will be said on this *interplay* in a moment).

In discussing the *purpose* for irony, Vlastos suggests that *humour* is one purpose; but it can also have the purpose to *mock*, or *both* to mock and be humourous. Vlastos gives an example of *both* when he quotes Mae West's reply to Gerald Ford's invitation to a state dinner at the White House: 'It's an awful long way to go for just one meal'. Vlastos further adds that the 'joke is *on* someone, a put-down made socially acceptable by being wreathed in a cerebral smile'.[6] Vlastos argues that there is one other possible purpose of irony: to *riddle*; but this may be part and parcel of the above mentioned complex *interplay*. The Mae West quotation is an example of this complex *interplay*, whereby she is implying that: 'If you are not an utter fool you'll know this isn't my real reason. Try guessing what it might be?'[7] Vlastos insists that this form of riddling irony is more common than one normally expects and adds

that 'When irony riddles it risks being misunderstood';[8] though he also argues that irony, by the modern definition, cannot *deceive* for it to be irony. But why would anyone want to be misunderstood or leave the potential to be misunderstood? A rather extended example may elucidate the purpose, according to Vlastos, for *riddling irony*.

> A crook comes by a ring whose stone he knows to be a fake, and he goes round saying to people he trying to dupe, 'Can I interest you in a diamond ring?' To call this 'irony' would be to show one is all at sea about the meaning of the word. Our definition tells us why: to serve his fraud the literal sense of 'diamond' has to be the one he intends to convey. To see him using the word ironically we would have to conjure up circumstances in which he would have no such intention — say, telling his ten-year-old daughter with a tell-tale glint in his eye, 'Luv, can I interest you in a diamond ring?' Now suppose he had said this to her without that signal. Might we still call it 'irony'? We might, provided we were convinced he was not trying to fool her: she is ten, not five, old enough to know that if that trinket were a diamond ring it would be worth thousands and her father would not let it out of his sight. If we thought this is what he was about — testing her intelligence and good sense — we could still count it irony: a pure specimen of the riddling variety. It would not be disqualified as such if the little girl were to fail the test, for the remark had not been made with the intention to deceive.[9]

Vlastos argues that this riddling irony had its roots in classical Greek philosophy and cites a rather long and complicated set of examples, often with reference to, or correlation with, Socrates, from the *Attic Texts* to Plato's *Laws*, *Republic*, *Sophist* and *Dialogues*; and it was only with the appearance of Cicero's first century C.E. *de Oratore* in Latin that 'irony' again loses this deceptive sense of riddling and becomes entrenched as the predecessor of the

classic sense of irony which has followed into the twentieth century West.[10]

In the *Attic Texts*, particularly *Clouds* 415, the Greek term ειρων is 'sandwiched in between two words for "slippery", μασθλης, γλοιος, figures "in a catalogue of abusive terms against a man who is a tricky opponent in a lawsuit"'.[11] In the *Sophist*, Plato portrays ordinary sophist as 'impostors' (ειρωνες) *vis-a-vis* the arch-dialecticist Socrates. Vlastos is careful to point out, that because ειρωνεια is often used with negative connotations in classical Greek literature, does not mean that it is *always* used in that period as such. Rather, each context must be examined; and indeed, many uses of ειρωνεια in the sense of 'mockery' *without deceit* can also be found in the mouths of Aristophanes, Plato and Socrates.

With regard to the complex interplay of irony between the author, characters, situations, dialogue and reader, Vlastos uses two examples, one from the *speaker's* point of view and one from the *hearer's* point of view. From the *speaker's* point of view, irony, in the sense of 'mockery', can be found in a text of uncertain authorship, *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* [b]:

> Ειρωνεια is [a] saying something while pretending (προσποιουμενον) not to say it or [b] calling things by contrary names (21).[12]

The *hearer's* point of view can be found in Quintilian's definition or irony as that figure of speech or trope: 'in which something contrary to what is said is to be understood (*contrarium ei quod dicitur intelligendum est*)'. In the first example, [a] in *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*,

'pretending' need not be 'deceiving', according to Vlastos, as pointed out by the crook with his daughter example (it is only deception if trying to pass the diamond off to a prospective purchaser).

> That the latter [b] should be the most common and, in point of logic, the primary use of 'pretending' does nothing to block a secondary use of the word, tangential to the first – a subsidiary use of 'pretending' which is altogether innocent of intentional deceit, predicated on that 'willing suspension of belief' by which we enter the world of imaginative fiction in art or play. This is the sense of 'pretending' we could invoke to elucidate ironical diction, as in Mae West's remark: we could say she is 'pretending' that the length of the journey is her reason for declining, which would be patently absurd if 'pretending' were being used in its primary sense; there is no false allegation because there is no allegation: she is pulling our leg.[13]

This understanding of irony may have bearing on the interpretation of the joy statements of *Qoheleth*.

It might be beneficial, at this time, to deal with the complex interplay between the author, characters, situations, dialogue and readers in irony, i.e., the *context* in which this interplay occurs and provides the *hermeneutical* guidelines and *clues* for *interpreting irony*.

B. The Role of Context in Interpreting Irony

Context provides the hermeneutical guidelines in which the *clues* for interpreting irony come. In some senses, irony requires a type of stage or theatre (as the *context* in which irony occurs), so to speak, in order to understand the above mentioned complex interplay. Good, in his famous

book, *Irony in the Old Testament*, provides added insight from Greek comedy for understanding the mechanics of irony.

> The comedy presented the conflict (*agon*) between two characters, the one called the *alazon*, the other, the *eiron*. The *alazon*, we are told, may be called the "impostor", the *eiron*, the "ironical man." The *alazon* is the pompous fool, the pretender who affects to be more than he actually is. The *eiron*, his antagonist, is the sly, shrewd dissimulator, who poses as less than he is. The conflict ends, of course, in the pricking of the *alazon's* bubble, the triumph of *eiron*. Therein lies its comedy, for the spectator knows without doubt which character is the impostor, which the ironical man, and he knows what the end will be. . . . Irony, then, begins in conflict, a conflict marked by the perception of the distance between pretense and reality.[14]

Rudman, in his article, 'A Contextual Reading of Ecclesiastes 4.13-16', views 4.13-16 as ironic;[15] and perhaps it correlates with the above in the sense of *tragic irony* (see also below).

Weisgerber also portrays irony and satire, in his article 'Satire and Irony as Means of Communication', as part of a theatrical production.[16] He says the satirist is like

> . . . a remote enemy, a sphinxlike counselor, a spectator both involved in and detached from the human comedy. . . . He ultimately relies upon the reader's wisdom and judgement, upon his ability to discover hidden meanings, accept criticism, and reform accordingly, . . . The satirist is a kind of playwright hiding behind his mouthpiece—the persona—and looking at the show while staging it; the persona addresses the victim and directs the attention of the audience to the norms the satirist thus alludes to. The persona and the victim are the actors of the play. The author and the reader are watching from outside, although deeply involved in the process. . . . Instead of exercising a direct influence, the satirist uses an intermediary; he produces a play in which his representative attacks a "social" evil impersonated by the victim (e.g., Pope's squire) and from which the reader is supposed to deduce the opposite good.[17]

Both irony and satire, while distinct, have much in common; and in many ways are, in their interpretation, analogous with *reader-response* theory insofar as 'The reader, like a child listening to a story or a person captivated by a novel, *is the servant of the text*'.[18]

> Reader response criticism moves beyond these observations to more sophisticated methodology. For instance, it draws a distinction between the real reader and the implied reader. The real reader is the flesh-and-blood person who actually reads a text; the implied reader is the reader the author images when writing the text. Similarly, there is a real author (the actual writer) and the implied author (the writer the reader images when reading the text. In the process of reading, the real reader is manipulated by the implied author to react as, and become, the implied (or ideal) reader. Other participants are envisaged, such as the omniscient narrator, that is, the teller of the story who, in the imagination of the reader, knows everything.[19]

In other words: Reading a text becomes a complex *interactive* exercise and not a static recital of words and grammar *imposing* a *determinate* meaning upon the reader by the author or text. More succinctly put: 'Irony is in the eye of the beholder'.[20] Irony, however, is

> . . . liable to be missed by an unsophisticated audience. Indeed, it requires readers whose sense of irony is at least equal to the ironist's; that is, people who are able to grasp at the same time the pretended and the intended meaning.[21]

Sometimes irony is intentionally elusive (deceptive?) in order to *test* the audience. This may be analogous to the *dialectical* or dialogical method of philosophy (perhaps even playing 'devil's advocate'), whereby dialogue is used to 'bounce' ideas of one another. The *function* of irony is to *attack*,[22] and according to Good, is to act as a criticism which exposes falsehood, stupidity and pretense:

'It mocks those who think they are something when they are actually nothing';[23] though one should note that this is only *one* aspect of irony.

Irony, as Good also points out, can act as a bridge between the tragic and the comic; perhaps this is what is happening with the joy statements in *Qoheleth* (square brackets [] indicate possible analogous questions not found in the original quotation):

> The tragedian assumed that his audiences possessed a framework of knowledge and understanding, knowledge of the story [Solomon and his lifestyle?] and understanding of the way the world spins [traditional wisdom?]. All had that in common—the author, the characters [Qoheleth?], and the audience [traditional wisdom circles?]. The audience was required to listen, to fit each piece of insight into the existent structure [wisdom literature?] as the play went along. The play finished, the structure was complete [1.2-12.8?], and the audience understood [*hevel*?].[24]

Perhaps this is what the literary effect of the *hevel* inclusio of *Qoheleth* is about – with the literary *intent*: 'Here is my [Solomon's] story and any insights given therein are *hevel* [including the joy statements]'. This idea may be supported by both Dell's important insight into the *function* of the literary structure of *Job* and Hoffmann's article 'Irony in the Book of Job': Just as the Book of *Job* is *framed* in such a way as to make the smaller forms or parts work against one another in an ironic way, so too Qoheleth buttresses his *topoi* in such a way as to bring, into *acute ironic relief*, his advice to enjoy life. Thus, the mocking and joke are on all parties: the author, Qoheleth, traditional wisdom and the audience (traditional wisdom circles); and this is Hoffmann's view of what is

happening in *Job*, albeit not in the sense of joking, i.e., author, players and readers are all being ironically mocked.[25]

There are a number of other factors which aid in interpreting irony, but lie outwith literature and belong to the stage. They, nevertheless, stress the importance of *context*, *subtlety* and the difficulty in interpreting irony: these are namely *tonal inflexion*, *facial expressions* and *body language*. A modern example of these hermeneutical guides or clues to interpreting irony may be the stand-up comedian, who can communicate irony in the statement, 'I love you', by screaming it at the top of her lungs, squinting her eyes, clenching her fists and jumping up and down; but one would have to have *direct access to the context* in which the comedian expresses this irony not to interpret the statement 'I love you' *indicatively*; either that or explicit instructions, say in a programme or script, which explain that the *indicative Gattung* 'I love you' is ironic. Nevertheless, the context (a stand-up comedy gig) is a part of the hermeneutical guidelines *where* the *clues* come (tonal inflexion, facial expression and body language), and *where* these *are to be interpreted as clues*, with the ultimate *function* of conveying irony. Without an adequate understanding of the context and the hermeneutical guidelines it provides for interpreting the clues to irony, one could think, on the straightforward *indicative* statement (*form*), that the woman was simply saying: 'I love you'. Form or *Gattung* tells one nothing about the *content* or *intent* of the message the woman was truly trying to

convey. As Hoffmann points out: 'Irony is determined more by context than phrasing [or *Gattungen*]; therefore, the same statement could be ironic in one context and totally unironic in another'.[26]

Another example may be Neil Young's song 'Ohio', which is about the Kent State University massacre under Richard Nixon. Even many moderns, unless privy to the late 1960s and this event, could not detect the irony, i.e., sarcasm, in the line from the song which says: 'soldiers are cutting us down, should have been done long ago'. Neil Young further added that: 'It's ironic that I capitalized on the death of these American students. Probably the biggest lesson ever learned at an American place of learning'.[27] Perhaps this last example demonstrates just how common irony is as a form of communication: for Young is not referring at all specifically to that ironic line but to the song as a whole, which he characterises as 'ironic'; moreover, the Kent State University demonstration was a *peace* demonstration against the incursion into Cambodia during the Vietnam War (more irony to the story and statements). Nevertheless, the distance between the historical contexts and cultural influences of the 1960s and the 1990s only illustrates the *acute disparity* of detecting irony in the Book of Qoheleth which is *far removed in antiquity*.

There can, nevertheless, be a *tone* or *ethos* to a literary work; and *tone* can and does have a significant role to play in interpreting irony. As Hoffmann wisely points out, concerning the context of the Lover's metaphors

for his mate in Song of Songs 1.9; 7.3, 5; etc.: 'Only the anti-ironical tone of the work as a whole make such an interpretation unreasonable';[28] whereas Swift's *Modest Proposal* and its 'tone of utter rationality', represents the opposite tone of the Song: it is clearly ironic.[29] One should note the need to interpret the *subtle* use of *tone* in the *overall context* of a work: while it can be done, tone is of such a *subtle* quality that it is dubious one can ever be sure of its exact nature; and this is consistent with scepticism.

C. Correlations Between Irony and Gattungen

If defining irony proves difficult, any attempt to correlate it to a specific *Gattungen* also proves elusive: Can one honestly say that irony is a *Gattung*, or should one say that the *concept* of irony uses *Gattungen* (which require hermeneutical clues for detection) to express itself? A 'concept' is 'an abstract idea', and an 'abstract idea' has 'to do with or existing in thought rather than matter';[30] or in this case, in grammar and literature *vis-a-vis* matter. A similar conflict arises when one considers the natures of, say for example, *indicative* or *subjunctive forms*: are they truly *Gattungen* or simply grammatical concepts? Indicative forms, in English, make straightforward use of dictionary words in the basic grammatical structure: subject, verb, direct object, indirect object; subjunctive forms are identified by their use of auxiliary verbs such as 'should', 'may' in

grammatical relationship with ordinary verbs such as 'do', 'go' ('should' + 'go' = subjunctive mood → 'should go'); though in other languages, like Greek, the inflexion of the verbal stem indicates their indicative or subjunctive forms. Indeed, even the *Gattungen* used by irony may be questionable as to whether or not they are in fact *Gattungen* or concepts; but suffice it, for discussion's sake, that the concept of irony is expressed in *Gattungen*. Irony, can and does, take many different sub-*Gattungen*.

Irony can be expressed in the *Gattung* of a *joke*. A 'joke' is 'a thing said or done to excite laughter' or 'a ridiculous thing, person, or circumstance'.[31] The previous discussion, on the development of the concept of irony in classical Greece up into the twentieth century, made it clear that while irony can be found in a joke, or expressed in a joke, it does not follow that irony is always humourous. Moreover, a joke may take many other different forms from irony: irony and joke are not equivalent terms (synonyms). The *Gattung* of joke is only one of many in which irony can and is expressed; yet Good warns that for irony 'to be comic it cannot hurt too much':[32]

> But if it does not sting, it is not ironic but merely funny. Jack Benny is funny, but seldom ironic; Mort Sahl is ironic, but seldom merely funny.[33]

So while irony can be found to be painful and unhumourous, it is clear that it is often both painful and humourous at the same time; whereas irony expressed in a joke must be painful and humourous at the same time.

Irony's use of *sarcasm* is a *Gattung* which expresses both a painful jibe and humour. 'Sarcasm' is 'a bitter or

wounding remark; a taunt, especially ironically worded'.[34]

Jonah is probably being sarcastic to YHWH in 4.2 when he says:

> I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity'.

One can detect irony and sarcasm in the statement because of the overall *tone* of the book, Jonah's xenophobic attitude, and because the Ninevites are the arch-enemies of Israel which Jonah tries to run away from.[35] Likewise, satire and parody can be hilarious and yet contain a vital sting and serious message – *the opposite to what is being said*.

Irony's use of *mockery* is an example of a *Gattung* in which there may be no humour involved; but, then again, mockery can be funny, at least to the inflicting party but not often for the victim; though, depending on the *personality* (another important aspect of detecting irony) of the victim, they too might find the mocking funny. The *O.M.E.D.* defines 'mock' and 'mockery', respectively, as:

> **1 a** ridicule; scoff at. **b** . . . act with scorn or contempt for. **2** mimic contemptuously. **3** jeer, defy, or delude contemptuously. . . . **1 a** derision, ridicule. . . . **3** a ludicrously or insultingly futile action etc.[36]

Hoffmann argues that a number of ironic statements in *Job* actually mock either the author, the characters, situations and the audience, or all of the above; though he does not use the specific term 'mock' *but conveys that idea of irony*,[37] e.g., the author mocks himself and the audience by pretending he has all the answers in the God speech and epilogue when clearly, what is on the page, does not add

up. Mockery, nevertheless, conveys irony by saying, in words, actions, tonal inflexion or body language, the opposite of what is meant: it is *simple irony*; it may or may not be humourous, but it usually contains a sting. The child mimicking the adult singer at the bottom of the stage facing the audience by clenching his breast, opening wide his mouth and rolling his head, is mocking the singer and their pretense to be better than they are. The audience may or may not find this funny: some may interpret this mocking as the behaviour of an obnoxious child, however, some may find it funny; the singer may or may not appreciate the mockery: if they accept that this is the normal behaviour of children, they might find it funny; if they do not, they might be highly stung (offended).

Litotes is the use of understatement in order to convey irony. Aristotle defines ειρονεια in the *Nichomachean Ethics* as a 'pretense tending toward the underside [of truth]'.[38] Litotes 'uses the suspicion that a thing means more that it says'.[39] On the one hand, Ezra Pound's statement, 'Mutton cooked the week before last is, for the most part, unpalatable', is an understatement insofar as mutton cooked the week before last would be disgustingly rancid and uneatable; but on the other hand he leaves one with the impression that he wants to say so much more than that – and the 'what?' is left up to the reader. With litotes there is always a victim, the fool who is both ignorant and self-confident: they do not 'get' the irony or *even* that they are the victim of the jibe and a fool. Irony, however, is not always or necessarily, humourous;

though it is difficult to get away from the concept of humour in irony.

In 'simple irony', where what is said is the opposite of what is meant,[40] no humour may be conveyed at all for it to be irony. There is nothing funny about the *indicative statement*: 'He died trying to save her'; though someone with a perverse sense of humour, might interpret it as such, i.e., someone with a *sardonic* sense of humour; or in a particular context, say, the context of a black comedy, it might be viewed as humourous. These examples, however, only highlight the difficulty in interpreting the *nuances* of irony, and of the *interplay* between the author, audience, personalities and irony.

'Complex irony', is where 'what is said is and is not meant'.[41] A classic example of complex irony is Socrates' statements that *he has no knowledge and ability as a teacher*.

> Each of these is intelligible only as a complex irony. When he professes to have no knowledge he both does and does not mean what he says. In one sense of 'knowledge', the traditional one, in which it implies certainty, Socrates means just what he says: he wants it to be understood that in the moral domain there is not a single proposition he claims to know with certainty. But in another sense of 'knowledge', where the word refers to justified true belief, justified through the peculiarly Socratic method of elenctic argument, there are many propositions he does claim to know. . . . In the conventional sense, where to 'teach' is simply to transfer knowledge from the teacher's to the learner's mind, Socrates means what he says: that sort of 'teaching' he does not want to do and cannot do. But in the sense which *he* would give to 'teaching' – engaging would-be learners in elenctic argument to make them aware of their own ignorance and give them opportunity to discover for themselves the truth the teacher had held back – in that sense of 'teaching' Socrates would want to say he is a teacher, . .[42]

The identification and interpreting of complex irony seems to be an analytic one, i.e., one where the intended meaning is dependent upon the definition one gives to the key concepts to be interpreted ironically, as in the above example of Socrates having 'knowledge' or being a 'teacher'.

The above discussion on the *Gattung* of irony, makes clear that irony has correlations with a number of sub-*Gattungen* which are used to express irony, or are the 'vehicle' of irony; but are irony and scepticism compatible?

D. Are Irony and Scepticism Compatible?

Hoffmann and Weisgerber explicitly link irony with scepticism; whereas Good and Vlastos talk of the *suspicion* irony raises; all discuss the *doubts* and *questions* irony raises, sometimes intrinsic to its nature and sometimes because of the nature of interpreting irony.[43]

> In theory, irony seems to be able to appeal to more people [*vis-a-vis* satire] precisely because it is content with asking questions and does not give ready-made solutions. But it could be argued that question marks are still more baffling and disquieting than incitements to hate: questions leave people free to make their own choices—an unbearable burden to most of us. . . . the ironist poses as a sceptic rather than a judge [satirist].[44]

Perhaps this is what is going on with the joy statements of *Qoheleth*.

One of the reasons irony induces scepticism is because of its moral dimension or concerns: *morality* is the *motive* for expressing irony and the reason why authors use it as a

Gattung; but because morality is complicated, and the right course not always obvious, irony inevitably leads to a *search for truth* and not a prescribed action. Along with the moral motive for irony, Weisgerber discusses the three other motives for writers using satire and irony: the psychological motive, the aesthetic motive and the social motive. The psychological motive for irony is *aggressiveness*: irony is used to *attack* some moral deficit.

> Aggression is sublimated by the *aesthetic motive* or, to put it otherwise, literature transforms a socially unacceptable impulse into socially acceptable and even delightful forms.[45]

This rhetorical feature is used to convey the satirist or ironist's social motive which is to call attention to some truth or ideal and to correct abuses.

> Satire censures what *is* wrong; irony only intimates that it *may* be wrong and, as we already know, discloses vices as well as virtues in an oblique way.
>
> The consequence is that the ironist poses as a sceptic rather than a judge. That is the reason the two so often work together: the judicial function of satire rests upon ironic doubt, for you cannot condemn abuses unless you first question the validity of the established order.[46]

The moral dimension is obviously why irony leads to questioning and doubts: because moral issues are not always straightforward; and whereas the satirist views the issues in black and white, the ironist is sceptical of the 'quick-fix' solutions that satire suggests.[47]

> Irony communicates something *positive* insofar as it prompts the reader to *search after* wisdom and especially to adopt a *mental attitude* conducive to that kind of investigation. The unknown truth which the reader is expected to look for is *different* from a *real but allegedly unsatisfactory state of affairs*. . . . Irony is a way of writing that bridges the gap between a positive but still elusive ideal and a

questionable reality.[48]

This sounds surprisingly close to Qoheleth and his struggle to find יתרון in life, and is perhaps related to the joy statements and their *function* in the book. Hoffmann says of wisdom literature, and its moral concern, that

> A writer of this type of literature – who is intelligent enough to see the difficulty – will have no choice but to adopt a skeptical attitude toward the various phenomena . . . When this attempt to push worldly phenomena into the straitjacket of fixed order . . . by advice to man on what mode of behavior he ought to choose for his own benefit – contradictions begin to spring up between what is worthwhile and compatible with that order, and what is proper.[49]

Again, this sounds surprisingly like the joy statements in *Qoheleth*. With reference to Prov. 6.30-31, 'Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving; yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold', Hoffmann says that

> The author is clearly being ironic about just and moral laws which under certain circumstances become an instrument of injustice, yet are still necessary (and thus just?).[50]

Prov. 6.30-31 is probably an example of complex irony, whereby 'what is said is and is not meant'. Irony, therefore, does not presume to have all the answers but has the literary *function* to *induce doubt* and *raise questions*: this is perfectly analogous with, and compatible to, scepticism. So there is, without doubt, a correlation between scepticism and irony.

E. The Essential Elements and Definition of Irony

It might be helpful, at this juncture, to outline what scholars of irony consider to be essential to irony.

The first element required for irony is a stage, so to speak, a *context* in which complex interplay can occur between author, characters, situations, dialogue and audience.

The second element required for irony are the hermeneutical cues or clues that irony is taking place within this context, e.g., tonal inflexion, or a statement completely out of sync with the context in which it is given.

Since these complex hermeneutical clues are often subtle, the third element required for irony is that the audience have a sense of irony equal to the ironist; for as Weisgerber says of irony:

> The communication is *indirect* because it takes the shape of a *veiled attack*. The ironist pretends to subscribe to an opinion *other* than the one he actually holds.[51]

Therefore, the audience must be equal to the task of discerning that, in the context in which it is given, the communication is irony; but 'to use the ironic method is to risk the failure of this recognition'.[52] It does not follow, therefore, that the reader will necessarily 'get' the irony; and indeed, moreover, it may be that irony can be found where none was originally intended by the author.

The fourth element of irony is that it is a criticism which points out some *incongruity* by *using the opposite of*

what is meant to demonstrate what should be (though *what should be* may be elusive or unattainable).

The fifth element of irony is scepticism: a doubting and questioning spirit which admits epistemological limitations and proceeds with due caution in searching for the truth and right courses of action.

A reasonable definition of 'irony', on the basis of the above discussion, would then be: 'Irony is that *Gattung* which uses the literary device of stating the opposite of what is meant in order to have the literary *effect* of criticising the incongruity between the two: irony can only be determined by the context in which it is given'.

2. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF IRONIC CORRELATIONS AND SCEPTICISM

As Good points out: 'Irony, like love, is more readily recognized than defined'.[53] He provides added caution to the above views on irony and for interpreting the Hebrew Bible.

> It is to ask, *How* do Old Testament writers say what they say? . . . Irony is a hallmark of sophisticated subtlety. If, in fact, Old Testament writers sometimes expressed their ideas by irony, the possibility opens that they have said something different from, or more complex than, what we had supposed.[54]

In the light of the previous discussion, and in an attempt to define 'irony', the sophistication, complexities and difficulties of recognising and interpreting irony, especially *contextually*, must be admitted; and in fact only adds to the potential for misunderstanding irony:

conceptually, grammatically, formally, in function and intent. While there is a consensus on an essential definition of irony as being 'a *Gattung* which expresses the opposite of what is meant', there is no consensus on what the exact nature and hermeneutical guidelines are for interpreting irony. Thus, the very nature of irony and interpreting it will probably always remain elusive because, to a certain extent, finding it is dependent upon *intuition*; but perhaps to capture it, would be to spoil the *fun* of it all.

Vlastos may have a contradiction in his overall argument that for irony to be irony, it cannot *deceive*; for though he accepts Quintilian's classic definition based in Cicero, as 'simply expressing what we mean by saying something contrary to it',[55] he insists that irony cannot deceive. Vlastos, however, may redeem himself and his argument: for he wants to argue, on the basis of complex *interplay*, that deception was a part of the original etymology of irony as it developed in classical Greek philosophy and with specific reference to Socrates, but

> . . . in the course of this inquiry I stumbled upon something I had not reckoned on at the start: that in the persona of Socrates depicted by Plato there is something which helps explain what Kierkegaard's genius and Friedlander's learning have read into Socrates. In that small segment of the evidence I have scrutinized one can see how Socrates could have deceived without intending to deceive. . . . If you go wrong and he sees you have gone wrong, he may not lift a finger to dispel your error, ...[56]

When Vlastos questions the implications of Socrates allowing error, especially with regard to the serious

matters of life, he argues that one should not assume that Socrates

> . . . does not care that you should know the truth, but that he cares more for something else: that if you come to it at all, it must be by yourself for yourself.[57]

While this developmental aspect of Vlastos' argument (Socrates care for developing character in the pursuit of truth) demonstrates his openness to new ideas and objective learning (admirable in and of itself), he still has a contradiction in his argument. To fix that contradiction he needed to add, as Weisgerber does, the concept of possible *deception with a purpose* in irony as a part of the subtle and complex interplay between the author, players, situations and audience (despite the fact that Vlastos *evidences* this in his thief example). Maybe this is what is going on in the joy statements of *Qoheleth*: there is the *intent* to make the audience search for 'what is good under the sun', of which, the joy statements may or may not be *true*, may or may not be a *good course of action* (that is left up to the audience to *decide for themselves*).

With regard to the stage in which irony is played out, Good may be criticised, when he contends that Charlie Chaplin represents a modern *eiron*, for the shrewdness of Charlie Chaplin's *character* in his movies comes only as an accident and not because of serious intelligence. There may be an analogy, however, with the complex *interplay* of irony and the Charlie Chaplin example: here the complex interaction can be seen between author, characters, situations and audience; but a distinction would need to be made between Charlie Chaplin the *screenwriter, director and*

actor, and Charlie Chaplin the *character* who truly is a bumbling fool who only wins out of pure accident and not because of superior intelligence or wit (though he often displays a type of 'street-sense').

There is clearly a contradiction, or scholars are at odds concerning the perspicuity of irony or not (cf. Vlastos and Weisgerber). Even within Weisgerber's article, there are number of contradictions as to whether or not irony is to be understood.

> The main thing from a social point of view, however, is that irony wants to make itself understood: it is a means of communication.[58]

But he also says that irony is oblique in both form and message.[59] Of course, one could argue that it is *irony* as *Gattung* that wants to be recognised and understood as such and not the *content* thereof; but why all this effort if the message can be lost? Since much of irony is missed, one must admit that with irony there is the potential to miss it and misunderstand it; but Weisgerber needs to be supported on the point that not all victims 'get it', and this is not necessary for irony to be present, e.g., Job's friends do not *get* the irony of the situation because they are not *privy* to the 'omniscient' narrator's point of view; but the reader/audience can.

The hermeneutical guidelines and clues for interpreting irony, such as tonal inflexion, facial expression and body language, will always remain elusive and with the potential to be missed or misunderstood. This may be found in people who have Aspergers, a condition akin to autism but with much higher functioning, whereby they

often take things said very literally and can only operate in black and white.[60] Though this is an extreme example, it does underline the factor of *personality* and the complex *interplay* in interpreting irony. It is precisely the subtlety and complexity of contextual interplay that will always make interpreting irony elusive; and as was just mentioned: perhaps to capture it would spoil the *fun* of it all. The essential elements of a *stage* and hermeneutical *clues*, nevertheless, are valid and necessary for irony to take place in a *context*.

Along the lines of irony and humour, it is difficult to find any *form* of irony as not having a humourous dimension to; for even in the most biting satire there is still something funny about it, e.g., Swift's *Modest Proposal*: there is something funny about eating babies to avoid starving precisely because the situation is so ridiculous and incongruent with reality that *no one could possibly take it seriously*.

Along the lines of morality, the idea that irony always has a moral concern for truth cannot be sustained: sometimes sarcasm, a *form* of irony, has no moral concerns (though it is clear that it points out incongruity between what is said and what is meant). *So irony definitely points out incongruity*, and this on the basis of the *effect* of using the opposite of what is meant to *demonstrate* the *incongruity of what should be*. It could be argued, however, that irony can be used to moral ends, and very often is, but moral concerns are not intrinsic to irony.

Irony is a *Gattung* only in an informal sense, i.e., a conceptual sense; but is akin to scepticism in its doubting and questioning spirit, which uses numerous *Gattungen* to express itself. So while it may be said that scepticism occasionally *uses* the *form* of *irony*, it is not true to say that irony is a *Gattung* of scepticism or intrinsic to scepticism. Rather, irony is a tool or weapon *employed* by scepticism at certain times and under certain circumstances. Nevertheless, as Hoffmann points out:

> Irony is determined more by context than phrasing [or *Gattungen*]; therefore, the same statement could be ironic in one context and totally unironic in another.[61]

Irony uses many different *Gattungen* to express itself including, jokes, sarcasm, mockery, litotes, etc. While some forms of irony have closer affinities to scepticism, e.g., simple and complex irony, others like satire and parody may be more akin to pessimism and cynicism, i.e., they represent a *rejection* of the values and not only a doubt or questioning of them; though it is clear that there are inter-connected relations between these various concepts, e.g., before one can be a pessimist or cynic, one must be a sceptic; before irony becomes satire, one must take *a dogmatic stance* on the values rejected and the opposite values endorsed.

Irony is consistent with, but not identical to, scepticism. Irony must be considered a *Gattung* of scepticism as a *stock-in-trade* tool of scepticism; even though Johl argues that irony is sceptical in its own right.[62] Irony may or may not have the opposite meaning (may have a double meaning as in complex irony), may or may

not have the intention to deceive (for didactic purposes), but must always have the *interplay or literary function to raise doubts to the veracity of what is being said* and *to question* its (moral?) value – and this *function* is definitely *compatible* with essential scepticism.

3. POSSIBLE IRONIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE JOY STATEMENTS

This section will attempt to make correlations between the common elements in the joy statements of *Qoheleth* and irony. It then asks a number of questions with regard to irony, *Qoheleth* and the joy statements: What is going on with the joy statements of *Qoheleth*? Do they, in context, correlate to irony and scepticism? A specific examination of Good and Spangenberg's ironic commentaries on *Qoheleth* will also be brought in to aid answering such questions; followed by a critical assessment of their arguments. Finally, the essential joy statements will be run through a number of ironic *Gattungen* which may provide correlations between them and irony, and thus provide a possible interpretation of them. A critical assessment of this section will then follow.

A. Common Elements of the Joy Statements

What do all, or most, of the joy statements have in common? All come in a highly negative context: the overall negative ethos or context of the book; the negative and

deterministic contexts of the preceding and following pericopes enveloping the joy statements; conflating joy and negative statements in the same statement (e.g., 9.9); the negative context of death as the great leveler of all humanity; the negative context of aging and dying (e.g., 11.8-9); and possibly the *hevel* conclusion of the book (12.8). The most problematic verse in *Qoheleth* for all the joy statements, 6.2, which articulates God as a mean and capricious determinist who can make the man with everything necessary for joy not to enjoy them (*contra* the other joy statements which say God determines others' *lot* to enjoy), also raises questions as to the literary *intent* of the joy statements. Perhaps 6.2 is an example of a profound irony in which there is no humour whatsoever in the irony. 6.2 might be the *arch-ironical* statement in *Qoheleth*. None of the joy statements comes in a purely positive context unencumbered with enveloping negative statements on either side of them.

B. Questions on Some Possible Correlations Between Irony, Qoheleth and the Joy Statements

There is additional commentary by scholars of irony which has not be brought to light as of yet, but may prove helpful in illuminating possible correlations between irony, *Qoheleth* and the joy statements. Before one moves onto that, there are a number of questions that one should ask in the light of the previous discussions of this dissertation.

The highly negative context, in which the positive joy statements come, should *raise questions* as to their literary nature, *effect* and *intent*: Are they to be taken as simple *indicative carpe diem* statements or is there something more complicated going on here? *Is not the setting up of opposites in a context a hermeneutical clue to irony?* Are not the *moral* concerns of irony consistent with *Qoheleth*? Given the highly negative context in which the joy statements are given, could it not be that they are analogous to the ironist who 'pretends to subscribe to an opinion [or advice in this case] other than the one he actually holds'? Or could it be that the joy statements 'point out the *incongruity* between *what is* and *what should be*'? Nevertheless, this incongruity can lead to *doubts* and *questioning* (a *suspension of judgment*) as to the possibility of attaining the *should be* (joy in life), *and this is consistent with essential scepticism.*

Perhaps the author of *Qoheleth* risked being misunderstood in the joy statements. As Vlastos points out, concerning Plato's Socratic dialogues:

> What he is building on is the fact that in almost everything we say we put a burden of interpretation on the hearer. When we speak a sentence we do not add a gloss on how it should be read. We could not thus relieve the hearer of that burden, for that would be an endless business: each gloss would raise the same problem and there would have to be gloss upon gloss *ad infinitum*.[63]

In other words: One would need to explain each sentence one utters or writes *ad infinitum*, which is totally impractical and an absurd exercise. Vlastos further adds:

> Socratic irony is not unique in acknowledging the burden of freedom which is inherent in all

> significant communication. . . . He just says he has no knowledge, though without it he is damned, and lets us puzzle out for ourselves what that could mean.[64]

Or as Weisgerber says:

> The ironist is a moralist only insofar as he draws attention to something wrong, or to a half truth; unlike the satirist, he does not suggest any definite line of action; he rather recommends a way of thinking, a more complex attitude to life, and a more comprehensive view of things by making fun of a lack of worldly wisdom, the so called single vision; his is "a view of life which recognizes that experience is open to multiple interpretations, of which no *one* is simply right, and that the co-existence of incongruities is a part of the structure of existence."[65]

Weisgerber's comments are completely unrelated to *Qoheleth*, and yet the parallels are remarkable with relation to irony and *Qoheleth*. Could this not be what the author of *Qoheleth* intended to do with his book, and the with the joy statements specifically, and in their interpretation? As Hoffmann points out:

> The power of irony lies in its subtlety. The more hidden it is, the greater the intellectual satisfaction of both discerner and ironist. The subtlety of irony is also a function of its object.[66]

Kierkegaard adds that

> Irony is in the process of isolating itself, for it does not generally wish to be understood . . . the more the ironist succeeds in deceiving and the better his falsification progresses, so much the greater is his satisfaction.[67]

While some of the points, e.g., that irony tries to hide itself, may be questionable (see previous critical assessment of this confusion), there is some truth to what is being said and may have a direct application to the joy statements in *Qoheleth*, especially if this is the literary

function of the escalating nature in *imperatival forms* (9.7-9 and 11.8-9), i.e., *they are given in such highly confusing contexts and with ever-increasing force so as to lead the interpreter into confusion or alert the intelligent ironic reader that irony is being indicated.* Sometimes, as Vlastos points out, one *misses* the irony, or one cannot *figure it out*, e.g., What profit is there? is a rhetorical question related to the joy statements, which in their contexts, equals none. But this raises the question: Why are the joy statements exempt from the *rhetorical force* of these rhetorical questions? Perhaps, as Vlastos points out concerning *riddling irony*, the purpose of the joy statements are to *test* the intelligence of the audience to see whether or not they perceive the incongruity between the negative ethos and context of his book and the joy statements: joy is an impossible thing to achieve in such a ridiculous context; or if the joy statements are *complex irony*, may indicate *some* truth but only at a very *superficial* level as indicated by the bigger *life questions* of the book.

C. Some Ironic Commentaries on Qoheleth

Two commentators have written specifically concerning Qoheleth and his use of irony: Good and Spangenberg; though, as Spangenberg points out, a number of other commentators identify irony in *Qoheleth*, e.g., Braun, Crenshaw, Gordis, Fox, Hertzberg, Lauha, Loader, Lohfink, *et al.*[68]

Good says there are three axioms in *Qoheleth*: Man must find meaning to life within that life, not beyond; one must draw distinctions in this life between what is good and bad, righteous and wicked, wisdom and folly; and the circumstances of life come from God. Good defines *hevel* as 'ironic' on the basis that it is used to point out the incongruities of life: when it is used, it is used to describe ironic situations. Good views Qoheleth's main message as a

> . . . musing upon a society dominated by commerce, an acquisitive society that sees the meaning of man's life in his assertative achievement. . . . Qoheleth's irony is directed first of all at that extension of commercial values to cosmic validity which seems to characterize the acquisitive society.[69]

A number of Good's presuppositions about *Qoheleth* are questionable; and as Spangenberg points out, Qoheleth is not only attacking a commercial society but also the 'whole value system of traditional wisdom'.[70] Good, nevertheless, points out a number of ironies in *Qoheleth*: the irony that death evens out the balance sheet and there is no 'profit' or ultimate 'gain' in life or any of its activities ('Death writes "Canceled" over the entire transaction'[71]); the irony that wisdom is of limited value because the same fate overtakes the wise man and fool alike and wisdom cannot insure success over fate; the irony that man often misses the meaning of life in drawing the good distinctions which are in accordance with God's nature by trying to 'dodge' them, i.e., instead of man trying to accept God's omnipotent, determined lot for them, they try to take control of their own affairs (cf. 7.25-29).

Good ultimately views the joy statements of *Qoheleth* as *carpe diem*. There are two reasons for this: one, the natural boundaries of life; and two, that God gives gifts to be enjoyed by humans. While Good grants that there are some ironies within the joy statements, e.g., that one must live with sorrow and death in mind (cf. 11.7-12.1), he, nevertheless, fails to see the irony of his view on the joy statements: *they are the only statements in the book which are taken on face value and not ironically*.

Spangenberg also looks at irony in *Qoheleth*. As has already been pointed out, he is critical of Good limiting Qoheleth's irony to a commercial society and emphasises Qoheleth's irony toward traditional wisdom circles. Spangenberg is critical of Good on a number of other points, e.g., that *hevel* means 'ironic'. Following Polk's[72] critique of Good, Spangenberg argues that *hevel* does have the negative connotations of 'vanity', 'worthlessness' and that it is Qoheleth's *use* of *hevel* and not the term itself which is ironic, i.e., Qoheleth used the negative term for a positive purpose. But Spangenberg is also critical of Polk's assessment of *hevel* because

> . . . his conclusion that the author of Qohelet, through his use of irony, attempts to move the reader to fear God reveals that he has not really grasped the irony in Qohelet but has become a victim of it, like Franz Delitzsch who characterized the book as 'The Song of the Fear of God'.[73]

Spangenberg's point here is that Polk is equating 'fear of God' in *Qoheleth* with its use in Proverbs, and Qoheleth is reacting against the traditional wisdom to which Proverbs ascribes. Spangenberg argues that to grasp accurately the

irony in *Qoheleth* one needs to be aware of the 'sceptical stance which the author takes on account of *the claims and hopes of the traditional wisdom teachers*'; and '*statements about death* play a crucial role in this sceptical world view'.[74]

> Then, one must realize that closely related to Qohelet's sceptical stance is *his own way of reasoning*. Ilse von Loewenclau points out that it corresponds to that of Socrates. Qohelet (like Socrates) often plays the role of the *eiron* (the one who pretends and mocks; the one who exposes the pretentious *alazon*) while the *alazon* (the boaster, the man who thinks he knows more than he does know) is reflected in the allusions to, and quotations of, traditional wisdom material. To my mind one can indeed classify some of the irony in the book as typically Socratic. The number of rhetorical questions in the book can also serve as an indication of Socratic irony.[75]

Spangenberg also reminds one, although questionably, that

> It is important to remember that the ironist wants to mislead and those blind and deaf to irony often become its victims: 'The punch of irony depends in part upon some failing to see it'. . . . When context is not taken into account one can easily be misled by some of Qohelet's statements and advice. Thus, the counsel 'Fear God!'.[76]

Of course, Spangenberg is responding in part to Polk; but could not this whole quotation be applied to the joy statements of *Qoheleth*? Spangenberg cites a number of ironies in *Qoheleth*, from the *eiron* in 4.13-16, the irony in the 'better-than' sayings in 7.1-4, and finally the *cosmic irony* of 9.1-10.

Spangenberg's treatment of 9.1-10 is especially relevant to this discussion since it has a joy statement in a highly negative context. Like Good, Spangenberg interprets the joy statement *indicatively* as *carpe diem*. 'Cosmic irony' usually deals with the relationship between

God and humans, whereby humans are the victims of God's capricious determinism. Spangenberg employs the following syllogism to explain his *carpe diem* interpretation of the joy statement in the pericope 9.1-10:

> On account of this capriciousness (v. 1) and since just retribution does not exist (vv. 2-3) and also because the place of the dead is also so horrible (vv. 5b-6), Qoheleth recommends enjoyment of life (vv. 7-10).[77]

Again, one might ask: Why is this the only statement in the pericope taken at face value and not ironically? Is not this joy statement *a prime candidate to be interpreted as irony in such a context*?

A critical assessment of these ironic commentaries on *Qoheleth* will now take place before an examination of the possible ironic interpretations of the joy statements is carried out.

D. Critical Assessment of the Ironic Commentaries

There are a number of ironies to Good's analysis of *Qoheleth*. First of all, his axiom that the meaning of life is to be found in this life, is cancelled by his insistence that there is no meaning within this life (his point regarding the literary *intent* of the rhetorical question 'What profit is there?' and the power of death). Also, the questions may be asked: If death levels the playing field of life, what meaning can there be *in* this life? How is enjoyment to be considered 'meaning' in life? Is this not a rather superficial and highly materialistically based presumption? What about Qoheleth's assertions that

pleasure and enjoyment of material things are *hevel* in and of themselves (cf. 2.1-11, 17-23, 26c; 4.4-8; 5.7-16; 6.1-12; 9.1-12)? Why should the joy statements be exempt from the 'everything' (הכל) of the *hevel* statements (cf. 1.14; 2.11, 17, 23; 4.4; 9.9; 11.8)? One may also ask: How can one possibly enjoy anything or find meaning in life with all of the negatives around and attached to them? Was Qoheleth really *so superficial* as to be advising the simple enjoyment of food, drink, work and women as the meaning of life with so many other problems, issues and questions unanswered? Was he really that shallow?

Good can also be criticised with regard to what he sees as the second axiom in *Qoheleth*, namely drawing distinctions between what is good/bad, righteous/wicked, wisdom/folly. Qoheleth does indeed draw distinctions in life; but it is not at all clear that he saw any value, or at least only, limited or lasting value to them (cf. Loader). This can again be demonstrated by the problematic of death for Qoheleth.

The third and final axiom which Good sees in *Qoheleth*, that all the circumstances of life come from God, can also be criticised. There is nothing wrong with the axiom *per se*, it is axiomatic (at least insofar as Qoheleth saw it); but one must question the *implications* of the axiom for the joy statements. It is fine for Good to argue that God gives enjoyment of the simple things in life; but he fails to deal with that very problematic text 6.2, the enveloping negative contexts and conflated joy statements with *hevel* statements (9.9). As has already been shown: *Contrasting*

or contradictory contexts are hermeneutical clues of irony; and Good fails to deal with *this possibility* for the joy statements.

Spangenberg also needs to be criticised on a number of counts; though he is correct by endorsing Blenkinsopp and Good's statements: 'Death undermines the structures of meaning by which the wisdom tradition makes sense of life'.[78] The most profound irony of Spangenberg's treatment of irony in *Qoheleth* is his comment: 'When context is not taken into account one can easily be misled by some of Qohelet's statements and advice'. He applies this to Polk's view that Qoheleth relates *hevel* to the 'fear of God'; but fails to reckon or apply this concept to Qoheleth's use of the joy statements: Could not Qoheleth be playing the *eiron* here? Could not Spangenberg be one of the 'deaf and blind to irony' he mentions above?

The most important part of Spangenberg's article, which needs to be dealt with here, is his treatment of 9.1-10. He views this pericope as dealing with the 'problem of retribution'. Spangenberg says, according to Qoheleth, that God does not care how humans behave; and to this he adds Kroeber's view that 'Keine Vergeltung nach der Tat—und der Tod fur Alle' ('No retribution according to deeds—and death to all').[79] There is another irony here when Spangenberg further adds, with regard to what he views as the wrong interpretation of 9.4 ('But for anyone who is counted among the living there is still hope: remember, *a live dog is better than a dead lion*'[80]), that

> Some scholars refer to this verse to substantiate the view that Qohelet valued life and that this

> proverb rectifies his negative outlook on life encountered in 4.2 and 7.1. However, this is not the case since Qohelet again *pretends to adhere* to a viewpoint *other than* the one he actually holds.[81]

This is ironic on three counts: one, Spangenberg cannot possibly know what views Qoheleth ascribed to because of the source critical problems of the book, distance of time, space, culture (i.e., contextual reconstruction), lack of access to Qoheleth himself (who may have lied or withheld information anyway); two, because of these aforementioned problems, and the subtleties and complexities of interpreting irony, Spangenberg cannot possibly be certain which interpretation is right (his or others); and three, Spangenberg fails to apply this concept of *eiron* to the joy statement at the end of the pericope in 9.7-10. Moreover, Spangenberg's *use* of syllogism is dubious and begs the question: Could not the opposite conclusion of his syllogism be the right conclusion to premises one and two (one, because God is capricious there is no retribution; two, because the place of death is so horrible); three, Qoheleth therefore plays the *eiron* in 9.7-10 and, 'since Qohelet again *pretends to adhere* to a viewpoint *other* than the one he actually holds', he says it is impossible to enjoy anything in life in such ridiculous circumstances by using the *ironic Gattung* of the joy statements? Indeed, Spangenberg is correct that 9.1-10 is *cosmic irony*; but in *that context* should not the joy statement be held in the same *ironic contempt* as any other human desire or activity? Again, this interpretation begs the question: Why is the

joy statement exempt from irony as opposed to everything else which is ironically mocked in *Qoheleth*?

Of course, as Carroll has pointed out, one may ask the question: What if it is the *hevel* statements that are ironic and everything else in *Qoheleth* indicative?[82] The main factor which argues against such a notion, is, unlike the joy statements, which are positive statements given in a highly negative context, the negative *hevel* statements are given in negative contexts which do not indicate that *opposites* are being set up. In other words: The *hevel* statements do not provide any hermeneutical *clues* that irony is indicated *by* their *context*.

E. Possible Ironic Interpretations (Gattungen) of the Joy Statements

Since this dissertation thus far has generated more questions than answers, this subsection runs the joy statements of *Qoheleth* through a number of ironic *Gattungen* in order to see if there are any correlations between them and irony. Before one begins, however, one should note that some *Gattungen* of irony are clearly not possibilities for the joy statements: satire and parody. This is because they are more a genre assigned to complete works and not a sub-*Gattungen per se* or isolated statements.

Simple irony is where 'what is said is the opposite of what is meant'. Could not the joy statements be simple irony? The negative context in which they are given (a

hermeneutical clue to irony) makes that interpretation a distinct, though not absolutely positive, possibility.

Sarcasm is 'a bitter or wounding remark; a taunt, especially ironically worded'. The overall ethos or tone of *Qoheleth* appears very dour indeed, and there are a number of places where passionate negative emotion is demonstrated (e.g., 1.18; 2.17, 18, 20, 22, 23; 4.1-8; 5.12, 15, 16; 6.1-2; 7.3, 26; 9.1, 3, 6): Could not the joy statements be a *bitter taunt* ironically worded, as in: 'Go ahead and have a good time – if you possibly could in the ridiculous circumstances of life'?

Could the joy statements be a *joke*? This is perhaps the least likely ironic interpretation of the joy statements in *Qoheleth*. There does not appear to be enough hermeneutical evidence to support the notion the joy statements are jokes; though it is possible that the audience, or individual reader, might well interpret them as such because of the very negative context in which they are found. So, while there may not be enough hermeneutical clues to interpret the joy statements as a joke (*sardonic humour*, a *sick joke*), the audience might well interpret them as such; though the concept of 'exciting laughter' does not seem obvious, and is perhaps, remote. This does not, however, displace the above mentioned *interplay* between the book, the joy statements, their context and the reader. But then, again, they might well be *sardonic humour* – a *sick joke* because of the profound problematics of life which make enjoying it impossible unless at a very

superficial level (eat, drink, women):[83] life, including the joy statements, is a cosmic sick joke.

Perhaps the joy statements are *mockery*, to 'jeer', 'defy' or 'delude contemptuously'; and this might fit in with some *form* of *sarcasm* as outlined above. Thus the joy statements act as a *taunt*, as in, again: 'Go ahead and have a good time – if you possibly could in the ridiculous circumstances of life'. This would be a mocking, saying the opposite of what is actually possible, by quoting the reverse. Perhaps the joy statements in *Qoheleth function* as *mockery* on many different levels, as Hoffmann concludes for the ironies in *Job*: the self-mockery of the author himself, the character of Qoheleth (Solomon?) and the audience, again, with the notion of: 'Go ahead and have a good time – if you possibly could in the ridiculous circumstances of life'. Thus the joy statements would fit in with the *O.M.E.D.*'s definition of: 'a ludicrously or insultingly futile action' in the context of *Qoheleth*.

Finally, is it not possible that the joy statements function as *complex irony*, where 'what is said is meant and not meant'? Thus the joy statements would be interpreted something like this: 'Enjoy if you can, but *recognise the irony and superficiality* of this enjoyment on the basis of the ridiculous circumstances I have outlined in my book'.

4. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF IRONIC CORRELATIONS AND SCEPTICISM IN THE JOY STATEMENTS

While it is clear that the joy statements come in highly negative contexts, it may be argued that this does not have the literary *function* or *intent* to indicate *irony*, but rather to bring the joy advice *into relief* and thus have the literary *effect* of *intensifying the advise*; this may also be the literary *function* and *intent* of the ever-increasing intensity of the joy statements by way of the use of *imperatival forms*.

A number of things argue against such a position, however: one, the fact that not one joy statement stands alone in a purely positive context; two, Qoheleth's view of God as a capricious determinist best exemplified in 6.2; and three, the many ironies demonstrated in *Qoheleth* and the fact that the joy statements come in a context which are consistent with the hermeneutical clues that irony is indicated.

The moral concerns expressed by Qoheleth are consistent with some forms of irony; though MacDonald has argued that Qoheleth advocated amorality on the basis of divine amorality.[84] Usually the moral concerns of irony, however, do not advocate any one specific solution to the problems indicated in the context of ironic statements; rather, the ironist simply points out the incongruities of life, perhaps suggests some possible ways forward, but does not *dictate* because the incongruities and ironies of life demonstrate the folly in such *singularity*. This confusing

and riddling context then becomes a test for the intelligent ironic reader to see whether or not they can perceive these incongruities. This seems quite consistent with what is seen in *Qoheleth*. Since, however, it is impossible through source criticism to discern what were or were not Qoheleth's own views, e.g., his use of quotations and of traditional wisdom, one can never be sure that Qoheleth was testing his audience.

There are two main problems with interpreting the joy statements as ironic. The first main problem is the lack of specific contextual information, either as *explicit* statements of *ironic intent* or direct access to the historical, cultural context or to the author himself, makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain irony in the joy statements. The distance of culture in time and space can be illustrated in the *relatively recent* (by antiquities' standards) Neil Young's song 'Ohio' discussed in chapter five. The distance of these recent references to historical contexts and cultural influences, as well as the hermeneutical guides of tonal inflexion, facial expressions and body language, only illustrates *the acute disparity of detecting irony* in the Book of Qoheleth. The second main problem to interpreting the joy statements as ironic, is that, even if the joy statements are ironic, there is not enough contextual information (hermeneutical clues) to indicate what exact *Gattungen* they take.

5. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING IRONIC CORRELATIONS AND SCEPTICISM IN THE JOY STATEMENTS

The determinate factor for interpreting irony is the all-important context in which it comes: the *context* provides the hermeneutical *clues* that *irony* is *indicated*. Without a proper knowledge and understanding of the context of irony, one can miss, misinterpret or under-interpret irony in a given text. Even if one has a 'sophisticated audience', the potential to miss or misunderstand irony, is great; and thus, many readings of irony are *indeterminate* or must be held with due caution.

Irony, by its very nature, requires *interplay* between the author, characters, situations, dialogue and audience to be detected. The complexity of interpreting irony is only heightened by an examination of Good and Spangenberg's ironic commentary on *Qoheleth*, whereby a possible irony is raised because of their literal *carpe diem* interpretation of the joy statements amidst a whole number of other *ironic* statements in *Qoheleth*: the irony being that the joy statements are the only ones not taken ironically.

The intrinsic doubt in interpreting *irony*, and the many questions it raises, are certainly compatible with, though not identical to, the essence of scepticism as outlined in this dissertation. So there is, without doubt, a correlation between scepticism and *irony*: Just as it is clear that scepticism *employs irony* to make its points along the way, so too irony is sceptical in and of itself. Irony is not, nevertheless, exclusive to scepticism, which

can also be part and parcel of pessimism and cynicism and can be manifest in the *Gattungen* of *satire* and *parody*, which may in turn, represent rejection and not the doubt and questioning intrinsic to scepticism. The possible ironic correlations in the joy statements may not be identical to, but analogous with, Socratic irony, i.e., complex irony where what is said is meant and not meant.

The *Gattungen* of irony, which uses many sub-Gattungen to *cloak* itself, e.g., *indicative* statements, *sarcasm*, *jokes*, is an intrinsically *evasive form* whereby the speaker/author has the intention to advocate the opposite of what is literally being said, and may include the *function* of being *evasive* in order to make the hearer/reader *investigate* the real meaning of what is being said and to discover truth or knowledge (or joke) for oneself. Irony can occur *at any one place* in the *interpretive context* or in all places: situations which are the context of the irony (e.g., Job 1-2 → 3-31 → 42) from the author himself, the characters (e.g., Job's friends being unaware of the 'cosmic context' of Job's suffering), with the audience, or in self-irony; with or without the knowledge of irony, with or without deceit.

If this chapter has raised many unanswered questions with regard to the literary nature of the joy statements, ironic correlations and scepticism, there is no question that any ironic interpretation of them is also dubious. One must admit, notwithstanding, that the joy statements come in a *suspicious context*; and suspicion is closely akin to scepticism, and suspicion can only *induce* scepticism

(doubt and questioning) towards their interpretation. If there is not enough evidence to support an ironic interpretation of the joy statements, then there is surely enough *doubt* about them to endorse any one interpretation of them, and thus one must be sceptical *about* them.

CONCLUSION

Scepticism is sound in principle, insofar as its doubting and questioning spirit – which leads to dialectical engagement of subject matter under consideration; but can become absurd and abused if infinite regression is applied within it. Scepticism is, nevertheless, absolutely essential for academics.

All biblical texts raise questions which inevitably lead to doubt; and questions and doubt are intrinsic to scepticism. The joy statements of *Qoheleth* bring the problematics of biblical interpretation and indeterminacy into acute relief; though the conclusion to this dissertation was not made on the *basis* of the literary theory of indeterminacy (which can only lend support to this conclusion) but rather on the basis of scepticism and possible ironic correlations in the joy statements of *Qoheleth*.

This thesis has attempted to take all interpretations of the joy statements in *Qoheleth* seriously; and indeed, each of the main interpretations have much to commend to themselves.

Having carried out detailed exegesis and a form critical analysis of the joy statements, they appear, by all accounts, relatively straightforward as *indicative* statements or *imperatives* with occasional *rhetorical questions*: it is the interpretation of them which remains in question. To interpret the joy statements requires a detailed examination of their immediate and overall

contexts, which in turn generated the need for many additional exegetical notes. Unfortunately, the editorial intrusion card will always be an ace up the source critic's sleeve by which they can trump any other interpretations at will.

Notwithstanding, the overall literary structure of *Qoheleth* (which raises many redactional and source critical questions), the literary *forms* which the joy statements take (*indicative, imperative, rhetorical question*), immediate and overall contexts, as well as the content and ethos of the book, shed considerable doubt on the straightforward *indicative* interpretation of the joy statements as *carpe diem*, or *Qoheleth* having an essential message of joy – a position which raises many more questions than it answers. If Qoheleth did not intend the joy statements to be *ironic*, the interference of the redactor of 1.2-12.8 certainly created that literary *effect*. The remaining doubts and questions by necessity, nevertheless, induce scepticism regarding their literary nature and interpretation. Indeed, *Qoheleth* raises many more questions than it answers – and this is essential to scepticism.

The subtleties of irony as a communicative form makes detecting irony, or interpreting it, a difficult task. This is even more acute with literature far from the modern West in time, distance and culture. Unlike verbal irony, where there is an immediacy of context, tonal inflexion, facial expressions and body language as hermeneutical clues for interpreting irony, ancient literature does not have

these luxuries (unless within the text of plays). Thus, without direct access to the existential and social context of *Qoheleth, one must remain sceptical as to the exact interpretation of the book as a whole, and the joy statements specifically.*

Due to the complexities involved in interpreting literature and irony, this Ph.D. dissertation was unable to prove, one way or another, whether there is irony and scepticism in the joy statements of *Qoheleth* (though it is clear that *Qoheleth* has sceptical and ironic statements in it) or what *Gattung* that they take for that matter, outside of those ascertainable by linguistic, grammatical and contextual analysis as *indicative* statements (which can only ever be *speculative* because of the crude Hebrew verbal system of inflexion lacking *mood*), *rhetorical questions* and *imperatives*; though the highly negative context suggests that an ironic interpretation, of one *Gattungen* or another, is likely, if not, probable.

Whether or not the joy statements were originally intended to be *ironic* statements, if taken *indicatively*, they *ironically mock* the very negative context in which they are given and the contents of the Book of Qoheleth as a whole. If, however, they are interpreted *ironically*, the joy statements *are liberated from the ridiculous contexts* in which they are given and make way for an *indicative carpe diem* interpretation of them (another irony?). So while it is not at all clear that the joy statements are ironic, it is clear that they may be interpreted as such;

and this, as one interpretation amongst many, might be the best.

It is clear that one of the *functions* of *irony* is to induce doubt and raise questions – and is compatible with scepticism. Whether or not the joy statements are infused with, or intrinsically sceptical, is in question; but the spirit of scepticism – its questioning spirit and doubt – is always *open* to the possibilities, and in this case whether *Qoheleth* has an essential message of joy or not. Nevertheless, one cannot simply endorse the positive interpretation of the joy statements: one must remain cautious and sceptical of such an interpretation. Therefore, even if there is no scepticism or irony intrinsic to the joy statements, *these considerations inevitably lead to scepticism regarding them* – and thus any interpretation of *Qoheleth* as essentially having a message of joy. *On the basis of exegesis, literary structure, form criticism and analogies with philosophical scepticism and irony, any reading of the joy statements must be considered indeterminate.*

No one has *cracked* the mystery, meaning or interpretation of *Qoheleth*; and one should be sceptical of anyone who says that they have. So whether or not there is scepticism *in* the joy statements, one must be sceptical *about* their interpretation; just as one must remain sceptical about this conclusion. The ultimate irony to the *slippery* conclusion of this Ph.D. thesis is that scepticism as a philosophy *supports* it.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

[1]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 1136.
[2]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 880.
[3]*O.M.E.D.*, pp. 247 and 58 respectively.

CHAPTER ONE

[1]N.B. Accents in foreign languages are not provided in this dissertation. Any quotations of foreign words or scholars using foreign words, which have accents present in the original text, are thus reproduced *sic*. Hebrew vowel pointing is only used where necessary. References with only the author's name represent their principle work relative to *Qoheleth* and this study, e.g., commentaries or linguistic studies.

*The bulk of this section is published by permission from my work, *Qoheleth and Its Pessimistic Theology: Hermeneutical Struggles in Wisdom Literature*, published by The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997, pp. 8-28.

[2]This statistical analysis was ascertained by computer search in the Hebrew version of *MacBible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Electronic Publishing, 1990). N.B. statistics of הבל in this study may differ from other sources.

[3]See Gen. 4.2 (2x), 4 (2x), 8 (2x), 9, 25; II Kgs. 17.15; Is. 30.7; 49.4; 57.13; Jer. 2.5; 10.3, 15; 16.19; 51.18; Zech. 10.2; Ps. 39.6, 7, 12; 62.10 (2x); 78.33; 94.11; 144.4; Job 7.16; 9.29; 21.34; 27.12; 35.16; Prov. 13.11; 21.6; 31.30; Qoh. 1.2 (3x), 14; 2.1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3.19; 4.4, 7, 8, 16; 5.9; 6.2, 4, 9, 11, 12; 7.6, 15; 8.10, 14 (2x); 9.9 (2x); 11.8, 10; 12.8 (2x); Lam. 4.17.

[4]See Dt. 32.21; I Kgs. 16.13, 26; Jer. 8.19; 14.22; Jon. 2.9; Ps. 31.7.

[5]See Jer. 10.8; Qoh. 1.2 (2x); 5.6; 12.8.

[6]See II Kgs. 17.15 (ויהבלו [*qal*, *waw* consecutive, 3., m., p.]); Jer. 2.5 (ויהבלו [*qal*, *waw* consecutive, 3., m., p.]); 23.16 (מהבלים [*hiphil*, participle, m., p.]); Job 27.12 (תהבלו [*qal*, imperfect, 2., m., p.]) and Ps. 68.11 (תהבלו [*qal*, imperfect, 2., m., p.]).

[7]*O.M.E.D.*, pp. 987 and 532 respectively. Cf. James Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 1ff.

[8]See *B.D.B.*, pp. 210-11 and Davidson, p. 163.

[9]*Ibid.*

[10]K. Seybold, 'הבל', *T.W.A.T.* 2, p. 335. Cf. H. Bradley, 'הבל', *T.W.O.T.*, pp. 204-05.

[11]Seybold, pp. 336-37. More will be said on the LXX's use of ματαιοτης in *Qoheleth* later. N.B. Seybold is in error when he says that Ecclesiastes uses ατμος (p. 336).

[12]F. C. Burkitt, 'Is Ecclesiastes a Translation', *J.T.S.* 23 (1922), pp. 27-28.

[13]Whitley, p. 7.

[14]Seybold, pp. 335, 338.

[15]Georg Bertram, 'Hebraischer und Griechischer Qohelet', *Z.A.W.* 64 (1952), p. 30.

[16]Seybold, p. 335.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 337.

[18]*Ibid.*

[19]*Ibid.*, pp. 335-36.

[20]Cf. Is. 57.13; Jer. 10.14-15; Qoh. 1.14.

[21]Cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 408-09.

[22]Seybold, pp. 337-40.

[23]Cf. Young, pp. 408-09. Cf. also Jer. 10.14-15.

[24]Cf. *D.C.H.* 2 , p. 485. Cf. also Is. 30.7; 49.4.

[25]Cf. Job 9.29; 21.34; Lam. 4.17.

[26]Cf. Ps. 39.6-7; Prov. 21.6.

[27]See Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1993), p. 27 and Ellen van Wolde, 'The Story of Cain and Abel: A Narrative Study', *J.S.O.T.* 52 (1991), pp. 25-41. Both of these scholars look at the use of הבל in Gen. 4 and the semantic implications of that context. Hess translates הבל in Gen. 4 as 'Short-lived' (Abel = 'fleeting' [life]). Van Wolde thinks that הבל in Gen. 4 has the semantic implication of 'worthless' (pp. 29, 39). N.B. there is some speculation that הבל in Gen. 4 relates to the Akkadian *ablu* which means 'son'. See A. Guillaume, 'Paronomasia in the Old Testament', *J.S.S.* 9 (1964), p. 282. Cf. G. R. Driver, 'Problems in "Proverbs"', *Z.A.W.* 50 (1932), p. 144.

[28]See Ps. 39.5-7 (especially v. 6), 12; 62.10; 144.4.

[29]See Zech. 10.2. Cf. Seybold, p. 336.

[30]Seybold, p. 337.

[31]Cf. Dt. 32.21; II Kgs. 17.15; Jer. 2.5; Jon. 2.9.

[32]Cf. II Kgs. 17.15; Jer. 2.5. N.B. the use of the verbal form of הבל (ויהבלו [*qal*, *Waw* Consecutive, 3., m., p.]).

[33]See Is. 30.7; Lam. 4.17.

[34]Cf. Seybold, pp. 336-40.

[35]*Ibid.*, pp. 338-40.

[36]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 336, 342.

[37]Cf. Barr, *Semantics*, pp. 1-5; D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 26-32.

[38]W. E. Staples, 'The 'Vanity' of Ecclesiastes', *J.N.E.S.* 2 (1943), pp. 95-104.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 96.

[40]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 96-104.

[41]Whitley, pp. 6-7, 172-73.

[42]*Ibid.*, p. 173.

[43]Seybold, p. 341.

[44]Cf. Seybold, pp. 341, 339-40.

[45]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 340-42.

[46]O. Bauernfeind, 'ματαιος', *T.D.N.T.* 4, p. 519. Cf. H. Balz, 'ματαιος', *E.D.N.T.* 2, p. 396.

[47]Bauernfeind, p. 519.

[48]*Ibid.*, p. 520.

[49]*Ibid.*

[50]*Ibid.*, p. 521.

[51]*Ibid.*, p. 522.

[52]Balz, p. 396.

[53]Cf. Bauernfeind, pp. 521, 523; Balz, p. 396.

[54]See Michael V. Fox, 'The Meaning of Hebel for Qohelet', *J.B.L.* 105 (1986), pp. 409-27.

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 409. N.B. Fox is not suggesting that Qoheleth understood life in such a formal, existential way but that the modern existential ideas may be represented in *Qoheleth* or enlightened by such an analogy.

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 410.

[57]*Ibid.*, p. 413.

[58]*Ibid.*, p. 409 and n. 3.

[59]See 1.14; 2.11, 17, 26; 4.4; 6.9 and רעות רוח by itself 4.6.

[60]See Fox, p. 48.

[61]The nuances of the phrase are discussed in Fox, p. 48-50. Cf. *B.D.B.*, p. 946; Davidson, p. 687.

[62]Fox, p. 48.

[63]E.g., see Qoh. 2.17-21. In this case, the man works hard all of his life to put together a nice estate but must leave it to another who did not work for it—and who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool? Now this is a comprehensible situation—one can know and understand the predicament: the goal is achieved. But what comes after the achievement is psychologically vexing. Thus, 2.17 proleptically introduces a 'vexation of spirit' and not a 'chasing after the wind', i.e., why past and present accomplishments present an existential vexation of spirit based in an uncertain future.

[64]Fox, p. 49.

[65]*Ibid.*, p. 51.

[66]Seybold, pp. 336-39.

[67]Cf. *ibid.*, p. 338; Ps. 39.6-7, 12; 62.10; 144.4. N.B. Seybold has other examples of laments but the genre assignment and definition of הבל are questionable.

[68]See *B.D.B.*, pp. 494-95; Davidson, p. 389. See also N. Lohfink, 'כעס', *T.W.A.T.* 4, pp. 297-302.

[69]See *B.D.B.*, p. 456; Davidson, p. 366. See also R. Mosis, 'כאב', *T.W.A.T.* 4, pp. 8-13. N.B. Psychology is obviously a modern concept but that does not mean that the ancients did not have some kind of *intuitive* understanding of it as reflected in the 'mental pain' of כאב. This dissertation prefers to render כאב as 'psychological pain'.

[70]See Davidson, p. 729. See also E. Lipinski, 'שָׂנֵא', *T.W.A.T.* 7, pp. 828-39. N.B. some Hebrew terms in the *T.W.A.T.* have vowel pointing and others just deal with the root.

[71]Whitley, p. 7 and n. 17.

[72]Cf. Fox, 'The Meaning of Hebel', p. 413.

[73]Cf. Barr, *Semantics*, pp. 206-38.

[74]Cf. Ogden in chapter five of this dissertation.

[75]Cf. Robert Basil Salters, *The Book of Ecclesiastes: Studies in the Versions and History of Exegesis* (St. Andrews: Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, 1973), pp. 12-30.

[76]Fox, p. 48.

[77]Cf. *B.D.B.*, pp. 949-50; Davidson, pp. 688-89.

[78]*B.D.B.*, pp. 772-73, 775-77. Cf. exegesis on pp. 43-44.

[79]Cf. *B.D.B.*, pp. 944-46; Davidson, pp. 686-87.

[80]*B.D.B.*, p. 922.

[81]*Ibid.*, pp. 948-49.

[82]Cf. T. Kronholm, 'יתר', *T.D.O.T.* 6, pp. 482-91; *B.D.B.*, pp. 451-53.

[83]Kronholm, p. 482.

[84]*B.D.B.*, pp. 451-52.

[85]Cf. *ibid.*

[86]Kronholm, pp. 482-83. Cf. *B.D.B.*, pp. 451-52.

[87]Kronholm, pp. 482-84.

[88]*B.D.B.*, p. 451.

[89]This statistical analysis was ascertained by computer search in the Hebrew version of *MacBible*. N.B. statistics of יחד in this study may differ from other sources.

[90]Fredericks, p. 227.

[91]Scott, p. 210.

[92]F. Hauck, 'περισσευω', *T.D.N.T.* 6, p. 58.

[93]*Ibid.*, p. 59.

[94]Ogden, p. 13.

[95]Kronholm, p. 486. *Sic* refers to an obvious typo error of Kronholm replacing *B.D.B.*'s 'quality' with 'quantity'.

[96]Cf. Mitchell J. Dahood, 'Qoheleth and Recent Discoveries', *Bib.* 39 (1958), pp. 314-16; Stephen de Jong, 'Qohelet and the Ambitious Spirit of the Ptolemaic Period', *J.S.O.T.* 61 (1994), pp. 85-96; James L. Kugel, 'Qohelet and Money', *C.B.Q.* 51 (1989), pp. 32-49; C. L. Seow, 'Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of Qohelet', *J.B.L.* 115 (1996), pp. 643-66; Whybray, pp. 13-14.

[97]Cf. Garrett, p. 283.

[98]Cf. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds., 'Prolepsis', *The Oxford English Dictionary* 12 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 604-05 and Patrick Hanks, ed., 'Prolepsis', *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1986), p. 1224.

CHAPTER TWO

[1]Cf. Graham S. Ogden, 'Qoheleth's Use of the "Nothing is Better"-Form', *J.B.L.* 98 (1979), pp. 339-50.

[2]Salters, p. 78.

[3]Friedrich Ellermeier, 'Das Verbum *Hws* in Koh 2,25. Eine exegetische, auslegungsgeschichtliche und semasiologische Untersuchung', *Z.A.W.* 75 (1963), pp. 197-217.

[4]Cf. Fredericks, p. 225.

[5]Ginsburg, p. 301.

[6]N.B. Salters views this translation of Rashi by Ginsburg as 'misleading'.

[7]Schoors, pp. 50-51.

[8]Z. Zeit, 'The Linguistic and Contextual Arguments in Support of a 3 m. s. Suffix' *-y*', *U.F.* 9 (1977), pp. 315-28.

[9]Cf. Whitley, p. 33 and n. 33.

[10]G. R. Driver, 'Once Again Abbreviations', *Textus* 4 (1964), p. 80.

[11]Cf. Schoors, p. 88 and Fredericks, p. 39.

[12]Cf. *O.M.E.D.*, p. 1035.

[13]Mitchell J. Dahood, 'Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth', *Bib.* 33 (1952), pp. 191-92.

[14]Cf. Schoors, pp. 193-94.

[15]E. Podechard, *L'Ecclesiaste* (Paris, 1912), *ad loc.*

[16]Cf. Schoors, pp. 172-77.
[17]*B.D.B.*, p. 82.
[18]Cf. *O.M.E.D.*, p. 327.
[19]Whybray, pp. 102-03.
[20]Crenshaw, p. 125.
[21]Geier, p. 323; Aalders, p. 193. Cf. Schoors, pp. 205-06.
[22]H. L. Ginsberg, *Studies in Kohelet* (New York, 1950), p. 4.
[23]Whitley, pp. 76-77.
[24]Crenshaw, p. 162.
[25]Ginsburg, p. 415.
[26]Crenshaw, p. 162.
[27]Dahood, 'Canaanite-Phoenician Influence', p. 211.
[28]Ginsburg, p. 416.
[29]Cf. D. A. Garrett, 'Ecclesiastes 7:25-29 and the Feminist Hermeneutic', *C.T.R.* 2 (1988), pp. 309-21.
[30]Gordis, p. 335.
[31]Whybray, p. 161.
[32]See *B.H.S.*, p. 1353.
[33]Robert B. Salters, 'Qoheleth and the Canon', *E.T.* 86 (1975), p. 340.
[34]Ginsburg, p. 455.

CHAPTER THREE

[1]Cf. John Barton, 'Form Criticism', *A.B.D.* 2, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 838-41; Richard N. Soulen, 'Form Criticism', *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), pp. 71-74.
[2]Dell, pp. 138-39.
[3]*A.N.E.T.*, pp. 414-18 and 418-19 respectively.
[4]Dell, p. 147.
[5]F. Ellermeier, *Qohelet* (Herzberg: E. Jungfer), 1967, p. 49.
[6]Rainer Braun, *Kohelet und die Fruhhellenistische Popularphilosophie* (*B.Z.A.W.* 130; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), pp. 161-66.
[7]Loader, pp. 18-28.
[8]Cf. Crenshaw, p, 28; Loader, p. 25.
[9]Loader, p. 35.
[10]N.B. Loader contradicts himself at this point by including 2.12-16 with 1.12-2.26. Cf. pp. 19 and 35.
[11]Cf. Graham S. Ogden, 'The "Better"-Proverb (Tob-Spruch), Rhetorical Criticism, and Qoheleth', *J.B.L.* 96 (1977), pp. 489-505; '"Nothing is Better" Form', pp. 339-50.
[12]So *O.M.E.D.*, p. 541.
[13]Whybray, p. 64.
[14]Loader, p. 29.
[15]*Ibid.*
[16]Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Ecclesiastes 3.1-15: Another Interpretation', *J.S.O.T.* 66 (1995), pp. 55-64.
[17]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
[18]Crenshaw, p. 93.
[19]Fredericks, p. 224.

[20]Garrett, p. 297.

[21]Crenshaw, p. 92.

[22]Cf. Robert B. Salters, 'Notes on the Exegesis of 315b', *Z.A.W.* 88 (1976), pp. 419-22.

[23]N.B. Most of these references would be dubiously translated 'eternity' and may be best translated as 'long time', e.g., 1.10; 2.16; 9.6; 12.5.

[24]James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 118.

[25]Gordis, p. 407.

[26]Fredericks, p. 190.

[27]Fox, pp. 196-97.

[28]Whitley, p. 37.

[29]Whybray, p. 102.

[30]Robert B. Salters, 'Notes on the Interpretation of Qoh 6 2', *Z.A.W.* 91 (1979), p. 282. Emphasis added.

[31]See also 4.7-8; 5.12-16.

[32]Salters, '6 2', p. 285.

[33]Cf. Whybray, 'Preacher of Joy', pp. 87-98.

[34]See Walther Zimmerli, 'The Place and Limit of the Wisdom in the Framework of Old Testament Theology', *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1976), pp. 318-26. See especially pp. 317-20.

[35]See Loader, pp. 121-23.

[36]See Prov. 1.22-33; 2.7-22; 3.1-2; 9.10-18; 11.5-8; 16.3-4; 28.1.

[37]See 2.13; 7.7, 11-12, 19; 8.12-13; 9.16-10.20; 11.1-6.

[38]Cf. William H. Halverson, *A Concise Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 240-44.

[39]Cf. Duane A. Garrett, 'Qoheleth on the Use and Abuse of Political Power', *Trin.J.* 8 (1987), p. 172.

[40]So Dell, p. 139.

[41]Whybray, p. 139.

[42]Cf. Fox, pp. 129, 137-46.

[43]Cf. 9.1 and 3b. Cf. also Lauha, p. 167. Lauha interprets 9.3b as an editorial gloss saying '. . . mit der er versucht, der blasphemischen Anklage Kohelets die Spitze zu nehmen und die Fugungen Gottes zu rechtfertigen' ('with it he [editor] tries to take the accusation of blasphemy out of *Qoheleth* and to justify God').

[44]Cf. Robert B. Salters, 'Text and Exegesis in Koh 10 19', *Z.A.W.* 89 (1977), p. 423; Whybray, p. 150; Crenshaw, p. 168-69; Ogden, pp. 163-81.

[45]Ginsburg, p. 407.

[46]Dell, p. 146.

[47]*B.H.S.*, p. 1349.

[48]Gordis, p. 301.

[49]*Ibid.*, p. 305.

[50]Whybray, p. 143.

[51]Fox, p. 260.

[52]*Ibid.*

[53]Loader, p. 103; cf. 104-05.

[54]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 66-69, 107.

[55]Daniel C. Fredericks, 'Life's Storms and Structural Unity in Qoheleth 11.1-12.8', *J.S.O.T.* 52 (1991), pp. 95-114. Cf. Graham S. Ogden, 'Qoheleth XI 7-XII 8: Qoheleth's Summons to Enjoyment and Reflection', *V.T.* 34 (1984), pp. 27-38.

[56]Barton, pp. 194-95.
[57]Crenshaw, p. 185.
[58]Michael V. Fox, 'Aging and Death in Qohelet 12', *J.S.O.T.* 42 (1988), pp. 55-77.
[59]*Ibid.*, p. 59.
[60]*Ibid.*, p. 62.

CHAPTER FOUR

[1]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 34.
[2]Cf. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 4.
[3]Anthony Quinton, 'Scepticism', *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, eds. J. O. Urmson and Jonathan Ree (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 288.
[4]Cf. Annas and Barnes, p. 6.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 7.
[6]*Ibid.*
[7]*Ibid.*, p. 5.
[8]Translation found in Annas and Barnes, p. 1.
[9]*Ibid.*, p. 1.
[10]*Ibid.*, p. 5.
[11]*Ibid.*, p. 6.
[12]Quinton, p. 289.
[13]Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman K. Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), pp. 43-44.
[14]Quinton, p. 289. Emphasis added.
[15]*Ibid.*
[16]Cf. the conclusion to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1898), pp. 544-53. Cf. J. Houston, *Reported Miracles: A Critique of Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 55-56.
[17]Quinton, p. 289.
[18]Cf. Annas and Barnes, pp. 1-2, 8-9. Cf. Dell, p. 169.
[19]Cf. Hume, pp. 317-19.
[20]Annas and Barnes, p. 8
[21]Translation found in Dell, p. 170.
[22]Cf. Annas and Barnes, pp. 21-22.
[23]*Ibid.*, p. 21.
[24]Sextus, *Pyrrhoneioi Hypotyposeis* 35.
[25]Cf. Quinton, p. 290.
[26]Cf. D. Z. Phillips, *Introducing Philosophy: The Challenge of Scepticism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), pp. 15-18.
[27]Peter Unger, *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 13-14.
[28]Jonathan Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 36-57. See especially pp. 56-57.
[29]*Ibid.*, p. 39.
[30]*Ibid.*, pp. 1-35.
[31]*Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.
[32]*Ibid.*, p. 60.
[33]*Ibid.*, p. 61.

[34]*Ibid.*, p. 59.

[35]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 968.

[36]I. G. Kidd, 'Sceptics', *C.E.W.P.P.*, p. 291.

[37]See the arguments for analytic and synthetic truths in Halverson, pp. 28-30.

[38]Annas and Barnes, p. 8.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 9.

[40]*Ibid.*, p. 171.

[41]*Ibid.*

[42]Barnes, p. 56.

[43]Cf. Barr, *Does Biblical Study Still Belong to Theology?*, p. 15.

[44]See 'passive-aggressive' behaviour in Richard R. Bootzin, *et al.* eds., *Abnormal Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), p. 280.

[45]*Ibid.*

[46]Michael Williams, 'Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism', *Scepticism*, ed. Michael Williams (Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1993), p. 461.

[47]Cf. the chapter 'Common Sense and Legitimation' in Christopher Hookway, *Scepticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 108-29.

[48]Annas and Barnes, p. 1.

[49]E. J. Dillon, *The Sceptics of the Old Testament: Job, Koheleth, Agur* (London: Isbister and Company Limited, 1895).

[50]*Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[51]*Ibid.*, p. 4, n. 1.

[52]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[53]Johannes Pedersen, 'Scepticisme israélite', *R.H.Ph.R.* 10 (1930), p. 317.

[54]John F. Priest, 'Humanism, Skepticism, and Pessimism in Israel', *J.A.A.R.* 36 (1968), p. 319.

[55]Berger's definition of 'scepticism' was given to Priest in, as he puts it, 'a private communication'. See *ibid.*, p. 319 and n. 23.

[56]*Ibid.*

[57]*Ibid.*, p. 323.

[58]James L. Crenshaw, 'The Birth of Skepticism in Ancient Israel', *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events*, eds. James L. Crenshaw and Samuel Sandmel (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1980), pp. 1-19.

[59]Pedersen, p. 331.

[60]Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 237-39.

[61]Pedersen, p. 347.

[62]Crenshaw, 'The Birth of Skepticism', p. 7.

[63]Cf. Robert P. Carroll, 'On Representation in the Bible: An *Ideologiekritik* Approach', *J.N.S.L.* 20 (1994), pp. 1-15; *Wolf in the Sheepfold: The Bible as a Problem for Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 2-3, 16-17, 21-33, 118-19.

[64]William McKane, *Proverbs* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970), p. 3.

[65]Crenshaw, 'The Birth of Skepticism', p. 8.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. 9.

[67]*Ibid.*

[68]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

[69]Robert Davidson, *The Courage to Doubt* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983).

[70]Robert Davidson, *Wisdom and Worship* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).

[71]Davidson, *The Courage to Doubt*, pp. 169-72.

[72]*Ibid.*, pp. 182-83.

[73]*Ibid.*, pp. 1-17.

[74]Dell, p. 3.

[75]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 5.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 3.

[78]*Ibid.*, p. 55.

[79]*Ibid.*, pp. 89-100.

[80]*Ibid.*, p. 107.

[81]*Ibid.*, p. 110.

[82]*Ibid.*, pp. 73-83.

[83]*Ibid.*, p. 110.

[84]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 125-26

[85]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 136-38.

[86]*Ibid.*, pp. 138-47.

[87]*Ibid.*, p. 110.

[88]*Ibid.*, p. 140.

[89]*Ibid.*, p. 149. Cf. pp. 147-53.

[90]*Ibid.*, p. 153.

[91]*Ibid.*, p. 148.

[92]Cf. *ibid.*, p. 152.

[93]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 159-68.

[94]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 172-83.

[95]*Ibid.*, p. 183, 212.

[96]Cf. ibid., pp. 195-203.

[97]R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971), p. 166.

[98]McKane, pp. 643-46.

[99]Paul Franklyn, 'The Sayings of Agur in Proverbs 30: Piety or Scepticism?', *Z.A.W.* 95 (1983), p. 251.

[100]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 691.

[101]Priest, p. 326.

[102]Cf. Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions* (London: SCM Press, 1979), pp. 204-13.

[103]Cf. Iain W. Provan, 'Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel', *J.B.L.* 114 (1995), pp. 585-606 and Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 1ff.

[104]Dell, pp. 73-83.

[105]John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 45-57.

[106]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 259.

[107]Cf. A. C. Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1985), pp. 1ff.

CHAPTER FIVE

[1]On the integrity of *Qoheleth*, cf. Barton, pp. 43-46; Gordis, pp. 69-74, 377-78 and n. 8.

[2]Cf. Whitley, pp. 152-76.

[3]Barton, p. 84.

[4]Crenshaw, p. 89.

[5]Carl S. Knoph, 'The Optimism of Koheleth', *J.B.L.* 49 (1930), pp. 195-99.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 195.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 198.

[8]Whybray, 'Preacher of Joy', p. 87.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 88.

[10]*Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 92.

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]Philip P.-Y. Chia, *The Thought of Qoheleth: Its Structure, Its Sequential Unfolding, and Its Position in Israel's Theology* (Sheffield University: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1988), p. 47.

[14]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 59-69, 78.

[15]Norbert Lohfink, 'Qoheleth 5:17-19—Revelation by Joy', *C.B.Q.* 52 (1990), pp. 625-35.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 634.

[17]William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), p. 150. Cf. pp. 120-50.

[18]James L. Crenshaw, 'Ecclesiastes: Odd Book In', *B.R.* 31 (1990), pp. 28-33.

[19]Cf. Brown, pp. 148-50.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 150.

[21]Graham S. Ogden, 'Qoheleth XI 7-XII 8: Qoheleth's Summons to Enjoyment and Reflection', *V.T.* 34 (1984), pp. 27-38.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 33.

[23]Cf. Graham S. Ogden, 'The "Better"-Proverb (Tob-Spruch), Rhetorical Criticism, and Qoheleth', *J.B.L.* 96 (1977), pp. 489-505; '"Nothing is Better"-Form', pp. 339-50.

[24]Ogden, 'Qoheleth XI 7-XII 8', p. 38.

[25]Daniel C. Fredericks, 'Life's Storms and Structural Unity in Qoheleth 11.1-12.8', *J.S.O.T.* 52 (1991), p. 114.

[26]Ogden, p. 14.

[27]*Ibid.*

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 13.

[29]*Ibid.*, pp. 23, 25.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 25.

[31]Eaton, pp. 40-41.

[32]Cf. Gordis, pp. 69-74.

[33]*Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

[34]Whybray, p. 18.

[35]Whybray, 'Preacher of Joy', p. 90.

[36]Cf. *ibid.*, 92.

[37]Stephan de Jong, 'God in the Book of Qohelet: A Reappraisal of Qohelet's Place in Old Testament Theology', *V.T.* 47 (1997), pp. 166-67.

[38]*Ibid.*, p. 158.

[39]Ogden, 'Qoheleth XI 7-XII 8', p. 37.

[40]Whybray, 'Preacher of Joy', pp. 92-94.
[41]Whybray, pp. 19, 22.
[42]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 27-28, 38.
[43]Bauernfeind, p. 520.
[44]Ogden, 'Qoheleth XI 7-XII 8', p. 38.
[45]Cf. *I.D.B.* 2, pp. 222-23 and *A.B.D.* 2, pp. 744-45.
[46]Cf. Salters, Text *and Versions*, pp. 1ff.

CHAPTER SIX

[1]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 232.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 877.
[3]Cf. *ibid.*, p. 286 where 'device' is defined as 'a thing made or adapted for a particular purpose'.
[4]Gregory Vlastos, 'Socratic Irony', *C.Q.* 37 (1987), pp. 79-96.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 79.
[6]*Ibid.*
[7]*Ibid.*
[8]*Ibid.*
[9]*Ibid.*, p. 80.
[10]*Ibid.*, p. 84.
[11]*Ibid.*, p. 80, with reference to Dover's edition of *Clouds* (Oxford, 1968), *ad loc.*
[12]Vlastos, p. 83.
[13]*Ibid.*
[14]Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1981), p. 14.
[15]Dominic Rudman, 'A Contextual Reading of Ecclesiastes 4:13-16', *J.B.L.* 116 (1997), pp. 57-73. See especially pp. 66, 72-73.
[16]Jean Weisgerber, 'Satire and Irony as Means of Communication', *C.L.S.* 10 (1970), pp. 157-72.
[17]*Ibid.*, pp. 162-63.
[18]William Baird, 'Reader Response Criticism', *A.B.D.* 1, p. 735. Emphasis added.
[19]*Ibid.* These ideas are also analogous with, or have implications for, Fox and his concept of the 'Frame-Narrator' of *Qoheleth.*
[20]D. C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 100.
[21]Weisgerber, p. 166.
[22]*Ibid.*, p. 165.
[23]Good, p. 17.
[24]*Ibid.*, 20.
[25]Yair Hoffmann, 'Irony in the Book of Job', *Immanuel* 17 (1983-84), pp. 12-21.
[26]*Ibid.*, p. 8.
[27]Neil Young, in the booklet to *Decade* (Warner Bros. Records Inc., 1977), p. 14.
[28]Hoffmann, p. 9.
[29]Cf. Good, p. 23.
[30]Cf. *O.M.E.D.*, p. 212, p. 5.
[31]*Ibid.*, p. 574.

[32]Good, p. 26.
[33]*Ibid.*
[34]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 960.
[35]Cf. R. B. Salters, *Jonah and Lamentations* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), pp. 59-60.
[36]*O.M.E.D.*, p. 685.
[37]Cf. Hoffmann, pp. 12-21.
[38]Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, II. vii. 12.
[39]Good, p. 22.
[40]Cf. Vlastos, pp. 79, 86.
[41]*Ibid.*, p. 86.
[42]*Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.
[43]Cf. Hoffmann, p. 7-10, 12; Weisgerber, pp. 158, 162-63, 165-66, 169-70; Good, pp. 22, 26, 31-32; Vlastos, pp. 79-81, 86, 93-95.
[44]Weisgerber, p. 166 and 165 respectively.
[45]*Ibid.*, p. 159. N.B. Weisgerber's arguments for the psychological, aesthetic and social motives have been conflated here for convenience; but there are some inconsistencies in the way in which he isolates and makes distinctions between satire and irony.
[46]Weisgerber, p. 165.
[47]Cf. Hoffmann, pp. 10-12; Weisgerber, pp. 165-71.
[48]Weisgerber, pp. 167-68.
[49]Hoffmann, p. 10.
[50]*Ibid.*, p. 11.
[51]Weisgerber, p. 168.
[52]Good, p. 31.
[53]*Ibid.*, p. 13.
[54]*Ibid.*, p. 10.
[55]Vlastos, p. 94.
[56]*Ibid.*, p. 94.
[57]*Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.
[58]Weisgerber, p. 165.
[59]Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 164-67.
[60]See Uta Frath, ed., *Autism and Aspergers Syndrome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 1ff.
[61]Hoffmann, p. 8.
[62]J. Johl, *Ironie* (Pretoria: HALIM, 1988), p. 32.
[63]Vlastos, p. 95.
[64]*Ibid.*
[65]Weisgerber, p. 167.
[66]Hoffmann, p. 12.
[67]S. A. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, trans. Lee M. Capel (London: Collins, 1966), p. 266.
[68]Izak J. J. Spangenberg, 'Irony in the Book of Qohelet', *J.S.O.T.* 72 (1996), pp. 57-69. Cf. Braun, p. 122; Crenshaw, pp. 130, 141, 142; Fox, pp. 227, 238, 241, 243; B. Gemser, *Spreuken II, Prediker en Hooglied van Salomo* (Groningen: Wolters, 1931, p. 124; Gordis, p. 295; R. Gordis, 'Quotations in Wisdom Literature', *J.Q.R.* 30 (1939-40), p. 133; Hertzberg, pp. 139, 158-59, 172, 178; Lauha, pp. 76, 132-36, 139-41, 165, 168, 176-77, 181, 189, 203; Loader, p. 100; J. A. Loader, *Prediker* (Kampen: Kok, 1984), pp. 75, 88, 122; Lohfink, pp. 44, 51, 54; Murphy, p. 92; A. Strobel, *Das Buch Prediger (Kohelet)* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1967), p. 138; Zimmerli, pp. 211, 216.
[69]Good, pp. 183-84.
[70]Spangenberg, p. 58.
[71]Good, pp. 185-86.

[72]T. Polk, 'The Wisdom of Irony: A Study of *Hebel* and its Relation to Joy and Fear of God in Ecclesiastes', *S.B.Th.* 6 (1976), pp. 3-17.

[73]Spangenberg, p. 59.

[74]*Ibid.*, p. 60.

[75]*Ibid.*, pp. 60-61. Cf. Ilse von Loewenclau, 'Kohelet und Sokrates—Versuch eines Vergleiches', *Z.A.W.* 98 (1986), pp. 327-38.

[76]Spangenberg, pp. 61-62.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 68.

[78]Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and the Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 72-73.

[79]R. Kroeber, *Der Prediger* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1963), p. 151. Cf. Spangenberg, p. 67.

[80]Spangenberg quoting the R.E.B. with his own italics added, p. 66.

[81]Spangenberg, pp. 67-68.

[82]Supervisions.

[83]Cf. Good, p. 186; 6.7.

[84]D. B. MacDonald, *The Hebrew Philosophical Genius: A Vindication* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), chapter 5. MacDonald also argues that Qoheleth, in 3.1-8, is arguing that God is amoral and thus inculcating amorality in man.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. BIBLICAL CRITICISM, TEXTUAL AND LINGUISTICS

Baird, William. 'Biblical Criticism', *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1. Ed. David Noel Freedman. London: Doubleday & Co., 1992, pp. 725-36.

Balz, H. 'ματαιος', *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Eds. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, pp. 396-97.

Barr, James. *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Bauernfeind, O. 'ματαιος', *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Ed. Gerhard Kittel. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, pp. 519-24.

Bertram, Georg. 'Hebraischer und Griechischer Qohelet', *Z.A.W.* 64 (1952), pp. 26-48.

Botterweck, G. Johannes and Ringgren, Helmer, eds. *Theologisches Worterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1993.

Brown, Francis, *et al.* eds. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

Burkitt, F. C., 'Is Ecclesiastes a Translation?', *J.T.S.* 23 (1922), pp. 22-28.

Carroll, Robert P. 'The Discombobulations of Time and the Diversities of Text: Notes on the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the Bible', *Text as Pretext*. Ed. Robert P. Carroll. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992, pp. 61-85.

Carroll, Robert P. 'On Representation in the Bible: An *Ideologiekritik* Approach', *J.N.S.L.* 20 (1994), pp. 1-15.

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984.

Clines, David, ed. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Dahood, Mitchell J. 'Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth', *Bib.* 33 (1952), pp. 30-52 and 191-221.

Dahood, Mitchell J. 'Qoheleth and Recent Discoveries', *Bib*. 39 (1958), pp. 302-18.

Davidson, Benjamin. *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.

Driver, G. R. 'Once Again Abbreviations', *Textus* 4 (1964), pp. 76-94.

Driver, G. R. 'Problems in "Proverbs"', *Z.A.W.* 50 (1932), pp. 141-48.

Ellermeier, Friedrich, 'Das Verbum *Hws* in Koh 2,25. Eine exegetische, auslegungsgeschichtliche und semasiologische Untersuchung', *Z.A.W.* 75 (1963), pp. 197-217.

Elliger, Kurt and Rudolph, Wilhelm, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelsellschaft, 1987.

Fox, Michael V. 'The Meaning of Hebel for Qoheleth', *J.B.L.* 105 (1986), pp. 409-27.

Fredericks, Daniel C. *Qoheleth's Language: Re-Evaluating Its Nature and Date*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988.

Fredericks, Daniel C. 'Chiasm and Parallel Structure in Qoheleth 5:9-6:9', *J.B.L.* 108 (1989), pp. 17-35.

Fredericks, Daniel C. 'Life's Storms and Structural Unity in Qoheleth 11.1-12.8', *J.S.O.T.* 52 (1991), pp. 95-114.

Gordis, Robert. 'Was Koheleth a Phoenician?', *J.B.L.* 74 (1955), pp. 103-14.

Gordis, Robert. 'Qohelet and Qumran—A Study in Style', *Bib*. 41 (1960), pp. 395-410.

Gordis, Robert. *The Word and the Book: Studies in Biblical Language and Literature*. New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1976.

Guillaume, A. 'Paronomasia in the Old Testament', *J.S.S.* 9 (1964), pp. 282-90.

Harris, R. Laird, *et al*. eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

Hayes, John H., ed. *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974.

Hess, Richard S. *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11*. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1993.

Hurvitz, A. 'Qoheleth's Language: Re-Evaluating its Nature and Date', *Hebrew Studies* 31 (1990), pp. 144-54.

Klein, Christian. *Kohelet und die Weisheit Israels: Eine Formgeschichtliche Studie*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1994.

Murphy, Roland E. 'Form Criticism and Wisdom Literature', *C.B.Q.* 31 (1969), pp. 475-83.

Murphy, Roland E. 'On Translating Ecclesiastes', *C.B.Q.* 53 (1991), pp. 571-79.

Ogden, Graham S. 'The "Better"-Proverb (Tob-Spruch), Rhetorical Criticism, and Qoheleth', *J.B.L.* 96 (1977), pp. 489-505.

Ogden, Graham S. 'Qoheleth's Use of the "Nothing is Better" Form', *J.B.L.* 98 (1979), pp. 339-50.

Salters, R. B. 'A Note on the Exegesis of Ecclesiastes 3 15b', *Z.A.W.* 88 (1976), pp. 419-22.

Salters, Robert B. 'Text and Exegesis in Koh 10 19', *Z.A.W.* 89 (1977), pp. 423-26.

Salters, R. B. 'Notes on the History of the Interpretation of Koh 5 5', *Z.A.W.* 90 (1978), pp. 95-101.

Salters, Robert B. 'Notes on the Interpretation of Qoh 6 2', *Z.A.W.* 91 (1979), pp. 282-89.

Schoors, Antoon. 'Qoheleth's Language: Re-Evaluating its Nature and Date', *J.B.L.* 108 (1989), pp. 698-700.

Schoors, Antoon. *The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Qoheleth*. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1991.

K. Seybold, 'הבל', *T.W.A.T.* 2, pp. 333-43.

Staples, W. E. 'The "Vanity" of Ecclesiastes', *J.N.E.S.* 2 (1943), pp. 95-104.

Swales, John M. *Genre Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Whitley, Charles F. *Koheleth: His Language and Thought* *B.Z.A.W.* 148. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979.

Zeit, Z. 'The Linguistic and Contextual Arguments in Support of a 3 m. s. Suffix' *-y*', *U.F.* 9 (1977), pp. 315-28.

2. WISDOM AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Crenshaw, J. L. 'Popular Questioning of the Justice of God in Ancient Israel', *Z.A.W.* 82 (1970), pp. 380-95.

Crenshaw, James L., ed. *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom.* New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1976.

Crenshaw, James L. 'The Birth of Skepticism in Ancient Israel', *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events.* Eds. James L. Crenshaw and Samuel Sandmel. New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1980.

Crenshaw, James L. *A Whirlpool of Torment: Israelite Traditions of God as an Oppressive Presence.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Davidson, Robert. *The Courage to Doubt.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983.

Davidson, Robert. *Wisdom & Worship.* Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990.

Dell, Katharine J. *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature B.Z.A.W.* 197. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991.

Franklyn, Paul. 'The Sayings of Agur in Proverbs 30: Piety or Scepticism?', *Z.A.W.* 95 (1983), pp. 238-52.

Gammie, John G., *et al.* eds. *Israelite Wisdom.* New York: Scholars Press, 1978.

Gammie, John G., *et al.* eds. *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East.* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.

Gordis, Robert. *Poets, Prophets and Sages.* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1971.

Kidner, Derek. *An Introduction to Wisdom Literature: The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job & Ecclesiastes.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985.

Lambert, W. G. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.

McKane, William. *Prophets and Wise Men.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1965.

McKane, William. *Proverbs.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970.

Metzger, Bruce M., ed. *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Scott, R. B. Y. 'The Study of the Wisdom Literature', *Interpretation* 24 (1970), pp. 20-45.

Scott, R. B. Y. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971.

Whybray, R. N. *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament B.Z.A.W.* 135. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974.

3. QOHELETH STUDIES

Anderson, William H. U. *Qoheleth and Its Pessimistic Theology: Hermeneutical Struggles in Wisdom Literature*. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press Limited, 1997.

Anderson, William H. U. 'The Curse of Work in Qoheleth: An Expose of Genesis 3:17-19 in Ecclesiastes', *E.Q.* __ (1997), pp. ___-___.

Anderson, William H. U. 'Philosophical Considerations in a Genre Analysis of Qoheleth', *V.T.* __ (1997), pp. __-_.

Armstrong, James F. 'Ecclesiastes in Old Testament Theology', *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 94 (1983), pp. 16-25.

Blank, S. H. 'Ecclesiastes', *I.D.B.* 2. Ed. George Arthur Butterwick *et al*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962, pp. 7-13.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. 'Ecclesiastes 3.1-15: Another Interpretation', *J.S.O.T.* 66 (1995), pp. 55-64.

Braun, Rainer. *Kohelet und die Fruhhellenistische Popularphilosophie B.Z.A.W.* 130. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973.

Brown, Steven G. 'The Structure of Ecclesiastes', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 14 (1990), pp. 195-208.

Castelling, George R. 'Qoheleth and His Wisdom', *C.B.Q.* 30 (1968), pp. 15-28.

Chia, Philip O.-Y. *The Thought of Qoheleth: Its Structure, Its Sequential Unfolding, and Its Position in Israel's Theology*. Sheffield University: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1988.

Crenshaw, James L. 'Ecclesiastes: Odd Book In'. *B.R.* 6 (1990), pp. 28-33.

Davis, Barry C. 'Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 – Death, an Impetus for Life'. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148 (1991), pp. 298-318.

Dillon, E. J. *The Sceptics of the Old Testament: Job, Koheleth, Agur*. London: Isbister and Company Limited, 1895.

Forman, Charles C. 'The Pessimism of Ecclesiastes', *J.S.S.* 3 (1958), pp. 336-33.

Forman, Charles C. 'Koheleth's Use of Genesis', *J.S.S.* 5 (1960), pp. 256-63.

Fox, Michael V. 'Frame-Narrative and Composition in the Book of Qoheleth', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 48 (1968), pp. 83-106.

Fox, Michael V. 'Qohelet's Epistemology', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 58 (1987), pp. 137-55.

Fox, Michael V. 'Aging and Death in Qohelet 12', *J.S.O.T.* 42 (1988), pp. 55-77.

Garrett, Duane A. 'Qoheleth on the Use and Abuse of Political Power', *Trin.J.* 8 (1987), pp. 159-77.

Gese, Hartmut. 'The Crisis of Wisdom in Koheleth', *Theodicy in the Old Testament*. Ed. James L. Crenshaw. London: SPCK, 1983.

Ginsberg, Harold L. 'Ecclesiastes', *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 6. Ed. Cecil Roth. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1972, pp. 349-55.

Glasson, T. Francis. 'You Never Know: The Message of Ecclesiastes 11:1-6', *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983), pp. 43-48.

Horton, Ernest. 'Koheleth's Concept of Opposites', *Numen* 19 (1972), pp. 1-21.

Johnston, Robert K. 'Confessions of a Workaholic: A Reappraisal of Qoheleth', *C.B.Q.* 38 (1976), pp. 14-28.

Jong, Stephan de. 'A Book on Labour: The Structuring Principles and the Main Theme of the Book of Qohelet', *J.S.O.T.* 54 (1992), pp. 107-16.

Jong, Stephan de. 'Qohelet and the Ambitious Spirit of the Ptolemaic Period', *J.S.O.T.* 61 (1994), pp. 85-96.

Kidner, Derek. *The Message of Ecclesiastes*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976.

Knopf, Carl S. 'The Optimism of Koheleth', *J.B.L.* 49 (1930), pp. 195-99.

Kugel, James L. 'Qohelet and Money', *C.B.Q.* 51 (1989), pp. 32-49.

Loader, J. A. *Polar Structures in the Book of Qoheleth B.Z.A.W.* 152. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979.

Lohfink, Norbert S. J. 'Qoheleth 5:17-19—Revelation by Joy', *C.B.Q.* 52 (1990), pp. 625-35.

Longman III, Tremper. 'Comparative Methods in Old Testament Studies: Ecclesiastes Reconsidered', *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* 7 (1984), pp. 5-9.

McNeile, A. H. 'Ecclesiastes', *The Dictionary of the Bible*. Ed. James Hastings. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963, p. 228.

Michel, Diethelm. *Untersuchungen zur Eigenart des Buches Qohelet B.Z.A.W.* 183. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989.

Mitchell, Hinckley G. '"Work" in Ecclesiastes', *J.B.L.* 32 (1913), pp. 123-38.

Murphy, Roland E. 'The Faith of Qoheleth', *Word World* 7 (1987), pp. 253-60.

Murphy, Roland E. 'Qoheleth and Theology?', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 21 (1991), pp. 30-33.

Ogden, Graham S. 'Qoheleth XI 7-XII 8: Qoheleth's Summons to Enjoyment and Reflection', *V.T.* 34 (1984), pp. 27-38.

Pfeiffer, Robert H. 'The Peculiar Skepticism of Ecclesiastes', *J.B.L.* 53 (1934), pp. 100-09.

Priest, John F. 'Humanism, Skepticism, and Pessimism in Israel', *J.A.A.R.* 36 (1968), pp. 311-26.

Rudman, Dominic 'A Contextual Reading of Ecclesiastes 4:13-16', *J.B.L.* 116 (1997), pp. 57-73.

Salters, Robert Basil. *The Book of Ecclesiastes: Studies in the Versions and History of Exegesis*. St. Andrews University: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1973.

Salters, Robert Basil. 'Qoheleth and the Canon', *E.T.* 86 (1975), pp. 339-42.

Schoors, Antoon. 'Koheleth: A Perspective of Life After Death?', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 61 (1985), pp. 295-303.

Schwartz, Matthew. 'Koheleth and Camus: Two Views of Achievement', *Judaism* 35 (1986), pp. 29-34.

Sheppard, Gerald T. 'The Epilogue to Qoheleth as Theological Commentary', *C.B.Q.* 39 (1977), pp. 182-89.

Whybray, R. N. *Two Jewish Theologies: Job and Ecclesiastes.* Hull: University of Hull, 1980.

Whybray, R. N. 'Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy', *J.S.O.T.* 23 (1982), pp. 87-98.

Whybray, R. N. *Ecclesiastes.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989.

Wilson, Gerald H. '"The Words of the Wise": The Intent and Significance for Qohelet 12:9-14', *J.B.L.* 103 (1984), pp. 175-92.

Wright, Addison G. 'The Riddle of the Sphinx: The Structure of the Book of Qoheleth', *C.B.Q.* 30 (1968), pp. 313-34.

4. COMMENTARIES ON QOHELETH

Barton, George A. *The Book of Ecclesiastes.* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1959.

Cox, Samuel. *The Book of Ecclesiastes.* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890.

Crenshaw, James L. *Ecclesiastes.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1988.

Davidson, Robert. *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.* Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1986.

Eaton, Michael A. *Ecclesiastes.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983.

Farmer, Kathleen A. *Proverbs & Ecclesiastes—Who Knows What is Good?* Edinburgh: The Handsel Press Ltd., 1991.

Fox, Michael V. *Qohelet and His Contradictions.* Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989.

Freedman, H., ed. *Midrash Rabbah Ecclesiastes.* Trans. A. Cohen. London: Soncino Press, 1939.

Garrett, Duane A. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.* Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993.

Ginsburg, Christian D. *Coheleth: The Book of Ecclesiastes.* London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861.

Gordis, Robert. *Koheleth—The Man and His World.* New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Hertzberg, Hans W. *Der Prediger*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972.

Jones, Edgar. *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961.

Laura, Aarre. *Kohelet*. Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978.

Lohfink, Norbert. *Kohelet*. Stuttgart: Echter Verlag, 1980.

Luther, Martin. 'Annotationes in Ecclesiasten', *D. Martin Luthers Werke* 20. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1898.

McKane, William. *Tracts for the Times: Ruth, Esther, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1965.

Ogden, Graham. *Qoheleth*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987.

Powers, A. D. *Ecclesiastes, or, The Preacher*. London: Longmans Green, 1952.

Scott, David Russell. *Pessimism and Love in Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs*. London: James Clarke & Co., 1915.

Scott, R. B. Y. *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965.

Whybray, R. N. *Ecclesiastes*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publ. Ltd., 1989.

Zimmerli, Walther. *Das Buch des Predigers Salomo*. Gottingen: Bandenhoed & Ruprecht, 1962.

5. SCEPTICISM, IRONY AND MISCELLANEOUS

Annas, Julia and Barnes, Jonathan. *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Barnes, Jonathan. *The Toils of Scepticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Barr, James. *Does Biblical Study Still Belong to Theology?* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

Bootzin, Richard R. *et al*. eds., *Abnormal Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993.

Burnyeat, Myles, ed. *The Skeptical Tradition*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.

Carroll, Robert P. *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions*. London: SCM Press, 1979.

Carroll, Robert P. *Wolf in the Sheepfold: The Bible as a Problem for Christianity*. London: SPCK, 1991.

Good, Edwin M. *Irony in the Old Testament*. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1981.

Grayling, A. C. *The Refutation of Scepticism*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1985.

Halverson, William H. *A Concise Introduction to Philosophy*. New York: Random House, 1981.

Hoffmann, Yair 'Irony in the Book of Job', *Immanuel* 17 (1983-84), pp. 12-21.

Houston, J. *Reported Miracles: A Critique of Hume*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1898.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Lewis White Beck. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1956.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman K. Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.

Kierkegaard, S. A. *The Concept of Irony*, trans. Lee M. Capel. London: Collins, 1966.

Loewenclau, Ilse von 'Kohelet und Sokrates—Versuch eines Vergleiches', *Z.A.W.* 98 (1986), pp. 327-38.

Muecke, D. C. *The Compass of Irony*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969.

Phillips, D. Z. *Introducing Philosophy: The Challenge of Scepticism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996.

Quinton Anthony, 'Scepticism', *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, eds. J. O. Urmson and Jonathan Ree. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, pp. 289-90.

Radday, Yehuda T. and Brenner, Athalya, eds. *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990.

Salters, R. B. 'Scepticism in the Old Testament', *O.T.E.* 2 (1989), pp. 96-105.

Unger, Peter. *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Vlastos, Gregory 'Socratic Irony', *C.Q.* 37 (1987), pp. 79-96.

Weisgerber, Jean 'Satire and Irony as Means of Communication', *C.L.S.* 10 (1970), pp. 157-72.

Wolde, Ellen van. 'The Story of Cain and Abel: A Narrative Study', *J.S.O.T.* 52 (1991), pp. 25-41.

Young, Edward J. *The Book of Isaiah.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972.