The concept of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible – A comparative-philosophical analysis

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This article provides a brief comparative philosophical clarification of the concept of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible. Utilising the format of a presentation presented by Ryan (2008), four philosophical definitions of wisdom were compared with similar sentiments in ancient Israelite religion: (1) wisdom as epistemic humility, (2) wisdom as factual knowledge, (3) wisdom as useful knowledge, and (4) wisdom as successful living. Cumulatively the four criteria might approximate a functional list of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for instantiating the property of being wise.

Introduction

The concept of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible has been thoroughly discussed from a variety of perspectives. Linguistic, literary, historical, social-scientific and theological approaches have made it possible to imagine how wisdom was interpreted in ancient Israel against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern sage traditions (see Murphy 2002; Crenshaw 2010). Despite the massive amount of literature available on the subject and the depth of the attempts at clarifying the phenomenon of biblical wisdom, a conceptual analysis of the concept has hitherto not been attempted. In other words, there has been little to no interest in providing a *philosophical* clarification of Yahwistic conceptions of wisdom *vis-à-vis* Greek philosophical perspectives of the same phenomenon. One of the reasons for this is the popular trend seeking to oppose biblical wisdom and western philosophy along very rigid lines. Anti-philosophical sentiment is itself part of a larger biblical-theological attempt at distancing Hebrew religious thought from Greek secular philosophy (see Barr 1961). Biblical wisdom is considered to be at most a practical philosophy of life (when associated with philosophy at all) as opposed to theoretical, secular and substantive varieties of Hellenistic philosophies (see Barr 1999:160).

In this article the aim is not to repeat the discussions of the nature of Old Testament wisdom in its ancient Near Eastern context (see Crenshaw 2010). Rather, the novel objective is to offer a descriptive philosophical elucidation of the biblical concept by way of experimenting with allegedly necessary conditions for being considered wise, *vis-à-vis* related perspectives in the history of philosophy. In doing so I offer the briefest type of decompositional analysis by tracing elements of nascent definitions of wisdom implicit in both philosophical and biblical (mostly wisdom) literature.

The structure of the presentation to follow is indebted to the outline offered by Ryan (2008) who ventured a more purely philosophical explication of the concept. As for recourse to biblical materials that serve as a candidate analysis for a given theory, only a verse or two must suffice in any given subsection of the discussion. Detailed exegesis is excluded because of limitations of article space; all interpretations are acknowledged as being essentially contested and based on the meanings taken-for-granted in official Bible translations. On offer are not proof-texts seeking to serve as a supposedly 'biblical' perspective on the matter nor are the findings meant to be taken as normative. The more modest goal of the article is simply to demonstrate the presence of some overlapping identity conditions for the states of affairs that obtain when the property of wisdom is instantiated. The phenomenon of biblical wisdom in the context of the history of Israelite religion is in fact far more polymorphic and complex than this brief philosophical introduction can show.

Wisdom as epistemic humility

The first definition offered by Ryan (2008) is the so-called 'humility theory of wisdom'. In particular, Socrates' view of wisdom, as expressed by Plato in *The Apology* (20e–23c), is sometimes interpreted as an example of this theory (Ryan 1996). In Plato's *Apology* (1978a) Socrates and his friend Chaerephon consult the oracle at Delphi. Chaerephon asks the oracle whether anyone is wiser than Socrates, to which the oracle answers 'no'. Socrates reports that he is puzzled, as so many other people in the community are well known for their extensive knowledge and wisdom,

whereas Socrates feels that he lacks this. Socrates then performs an investigation to get to the bottom of this puzzle by interrogating a series of politicians, poets, and craftsmen. What he discovers is that these people did not really know any of the things they claimed to know. Many claimed to know things far beyond the scope of their expertise. Socrates, so we are told, neither suffers the vice of claiming to know when he does not know nor of claiming to have wisdom when he does not have wisdom. Socrates does not *boast* of his own wisdom and he does believe the oracle.

Philosophers have interpreted Socrates' view as amounting to what Ryan (2008) calls the Humility Theory 1 (H1). According to Lehrer and Smith (1996:3), this is the view that:

- **Humility Theory 1 (H1)**: *P* is wise if *P* believes he or she is not wise.

It is not difficult to find biblical parallels to this view as several texts suggest the need for epistemic humility as part of a nominal relativist account of wisdom-possession:

> Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
>
> (Pr 26:12)

> Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!
>
> (Is 5:21)

In texts like these it is not the claim that there are no wise people. Nor is humility in itself assumed to be a sufficient condition for possessing wisdom. It is however assumed to be a necessary condition in some sense. In these biblical texts the concern lies with those whose conception of themselves as wise is not collaborated by an outside source, for example, Yhwh (which offers a parallel point of authority to Socrates' oracle). Indeed, in the Hebrew Bible the notion of wisdom as epistemic humility usually takes the form of giving Yhwh the honour for whatever wisdom is forthcoming (especially in postexilic traditions featuring mantic wisdom, e.g. Daniel). Humility when combined with wisdom also relates to the social values of honour and shame amongst sages and there is often a denial of wisdom on the part of the human agent so as to acknowledge either the deity or a social superior.

A second version of the humility theory noted by Ryan (2008) is also worth considering. When Socrates demonstrates that a person is not wise, he does so by showing that the person lacks some knowledge that he or she claims to possess. Thus, one might think that Socrates' view could be better captured by focusing on the idea that wise people believe they lack knowledge (rather than lacking wisdom). According to Ryan (2008), this view claims that:

- **Humility Theory 2 (H2):** *P* is wise if *P* believes *P* does not know anything.

This variety of humility is well known in the form of the denial of being wise found in sceptical traditions. Job is a case in point. After the first session of cross-questioning by Yhwh, Job shows humility when he acknowledges an awareness of his own ignorance of what he thought he had knowledge about. In Job 40:4–5 we read:

> Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.
>
> (Job 40:4–5)

This reply is assumed to be 'wise' from the narrator's evaluative point of view. Here we see again wisdom as knowledge combined with humility. Another particularly good example of this type of agnostic epistemic humility is found in Proverbs 30:1–4.

> The man says to Ith'i-el, to Ith'i-el and Ucal: Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!
>
> (The words of Agur son of Jakeh of Massa)

Agur is in fact wiser than he lets on and his denials of having knowledge have a lot to do with the etiquette of humble discourse. In this text as well as in those discussed above it should be clear that both some philosophical and some biblical traditions assume humility to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for being wise. Humility is required as the agent's recognition of complexity in life and of his or her place in the cosmic hierarchy. However, neither in philosophical thought nor in the Hebrew Bible was humility in itself assumed to represent a sufficient condition for the possession of wisdom.

Wisdom as factual knowledge

According to Ryan (2008), Socrates can be interpreted in another way. The poets, politicians, and craftsmen all believe that they have knowledge of things that they do not know. Socrates, one might argue, believes he has knowledge when, and only when, he really does have knowledge. Along these lines it may be concluded that wise people restrict their confidence in their belief that they possess knowledge to propositions for which they have knowledge or, at least, to propositions for which they have excellent justification. On this view, perhaps Socrates is better interpreted as having held what Ryan (2008) calls the Epistemic Accuracy Theory. According to Ryan (2008), this understanding of what wisdom involves assumes that a wise person is wise when they are accurate about what they know and don't know:

- **Epistemic Accuracy Theory 1 (EA1)**: *P* is wise if for all *p* (*P* believes *P* knows *p* if *P* knows *p*.)

So in this view, if the epistemic agent knows *p*, they believe they know *p*. And, if they believe they know *p*, then they really do know *p*. EA1 is consistent with the idea that Socrates accepts that he is wise and with the idea that Socrates does have some knowledge. As Ryan (2008) notes; however, whilst EA1 is a plausible interpretation of the view Socrates endorses, it is not a plausible candidate for what was assumed to be the core property of wisdom.

Both philosophical and biblical traditions assume wise people can make mistakes about what they know (e.g.

Socrates, Solomon, Job, Qoheleth, etc. all recognised that they had held justified, false beliefs about what they did and did not know, hence their disillusionment). If this is assumed to be a plausible interpretation of the view Socrates endorses then the following expression of Qoheleth's religious epistemology (which is often internally inconsistent) may be noted as a biblical counterpart:

> When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night one's eyes see sleep; then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out; even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.
>
> (Ec 8:16–17)

Here we find the paradox of having the knowledge that one cannot know certain things; that in itself is assumed to be a form of wisdom. Yet it is easy to imagine a wise person being justified in believing her or she knows p and also easy to imagine that p could be shown to be false as a result of lessons learned through painful life experience. If EA1 is true, then just because P believe they had knowledge when they do not, they are not wise. That seems wrong and it is hard to imagine that anyone is at all, or ever has been, wise if EA1 is correct. According to Ryan (2008), therefore, we could revise the Epistemic Accuracy Theory to get around this problem. We might only require that a wise person's belief is *highly justified* when he or she believes they have knowledge (Ryan 2008):

- **Epistemic Accuracy 2 (EA2)**: P is wise if for all p (P believes P knows p if P's belief in p is highly justified).

EA2 gets around the problem with EA1. When Socrates' interlocutor is left dumbfounded, or reduced to absurdity, Socrates rests his case. Through his questioning, Socrates reveals not merely that his opponents lack knowledge because their beliefs are false, but he also demonstrates that his opponents are not even justified in holding the views they professed to know. The Socratic Method as centred around the assumption of wisdom as justified true beliefs is similar to what is assumed by the challenges set to Job by Yhwh in Job 38–41. Here too it is presupposed that one has to produce reasons for one's views:

> Then Yhwh answered Job out of the whirlwind: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me'. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements – surely you know!
>
> (Job 38:1–4)

It is indeed assumed to be necessary that a wise person recognises the epistemic value of what he or she believes. Yhwh charges Job's friends with not doing so even when they defended the deity. According to this perspective from the Hebrew Bible, however, one can have accurate beliefs about what one does and does not know; yet one is not necessarily wise. It should be noted therefore that although accuracy theories do not provide an adequate account of the concept of wisdom in ancient Israelite religion, they might

reveal an important insight. Perhaps a necessary condition for being wise in biblical wisdom is that wise people think they have knowledge only when their beliefs are highly justified on the alleged authority of Yhwh himself. Or, even more simply, perhaps it is assumed that wise people have very few divinely unjustified beliefs.

Wisdom as useful knowledge

An alternative approach to wisdom focuses on the more positive idea that wise people are very knowledgeable (Ryan 2008). Whilst in the previous theories we were concerned with the quality and depth of knowledge, this section's perspective assumes wisdom as determined by the quantity and type of knowledge. Many views in historical and contemporary philosophical literature on wisdom have knowledge, as opposed to humility or accuracy, as at least a necessary condition of wisdom. Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics* VI, ch. 7), Descartes (*Principles of Philosophy*), Richard Garrett (1996), John Kekes (1983), Lehrer and Smith (1996), Nicholas Maxwell (1984), Robert Nozick (1989), Plato (1978b), and Sharon Ryan (1996, 1999), for example, all have theories of wisdom that require a wise person to have knowledge of some sort. All of these views very clearly distinguish knowledge from mere expertise and maintain that wise people know 'what is important'. The views differ, for the most part, over what it is that the wise person must know and whether there is any action that is required for wisdom.

In the biblical context, theological-ethical and social-psychological insights are paramount. Here the phenomena of wisdom and understanding and/or knowledge often appear in parallelism:

> For Yhwh gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
>
> (Pr 2:6)

> Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding.
>
> (Pr 3:13)

> Yhwh by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.
>
> (Pr 3:19)

Wise men and men of understanding are one and the same in some contexts:

> Hear my words, you wise men, and give ear to me, you who know.
>
> (Job 34:2)

> Men of understanding will say to me, and the wise man who hears me will say…
>
> (Job 34:34)

The concept of understanding in these texts is vague. It is not clear what exactly the kind of knowledge was that wisdom involved. On this topic, Aristotle distinguished between two different kinds of wisdom, theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. Theoretical, or philosophical wisdom is, according to Aristotle, 'scientific knowledge, combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are highest by nature' (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1141b). According to Aristotle, then, theoretical

wisdom involves knowledge of necessary, scientific, first principles and propositions that can be logically deduced from them. On this view a wise person is a person who knows a lot about the Universe and our place in it. The following view of Ryan (2008) captures a basic feature of Aristotle's theoretical wisdom:

- **Wisdom as Extensive Factual Knowledge (WFK)**: *P* is wise if *P* has extensive factual knowledge about a variety of topics.

A good prephilosophical biblical parallel to this is found in the following description of the wisdom of Solomon:

> And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore … He also uttered three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

> (1 Ki 4:30–34)

The knowledge here clearly pertained to the science or natural philosophy of the day as this was indistinguishable from theoretical wisdom in ancient Israel. The main problem for WFK is that even according to the Hebrew Bible some of the most knowledgeable characters were not wise. Although these characters displayed an abundance of what was considered to be very important factual knowledge, they lacked the kind of practical know-how that is a mark of a wise person.

As Ryan (2008) notes, Aristotle's idea that scientific knowledge is knowledge of necessary truths and their logical consequences is, however, not widely accepted anymore. He was well aware of the limitations of theoretical wisdom. However, rather than making improvements to something like WFK, Aristotle distinguishes it as being but one kind of wisdom. Other philosophers would be willing to abandon WFK, as is, claim that it provides insufficient conditions for wisdom, and add on what is missing. Aristotle therefore coined a concept of practical wisdom that makes up for what is missing in theoretical wisdom. In Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he claims:

> This is why we say Anaxagoras, Thales, and men like them have philosophic but not practical wisdom, when we see them ignorant of what is to their own advantage, and why we say that they know things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine, but useless; viz. because it is not human goods they seek.

> (Aristotle 1941:1141a)

Knowledge of contingent facts that are useful to living well is required for Aristotle's practical wisdom. According to Aristotle:

> Now it is thought to be the mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g. about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general.

> (*Nichomachean Ethics* VI, 1140a–1140b)

Thus, for Aristotle, practical wisdom requires knowing, in general, how to live well. Many philosophers agree with Aristotle on this point.

Wisdom, according to both many philosophical and biblical perspective, includes any practical wisdom. What Aristotle calls theoretical wisdom, many would contend, is not wisdom at all. Aristotle's theoretical wisdom is merely extensive knowledge. Thus Nozick (1989:267) holds a view very similar to Aristotle's theory of practical wisdom and is trying to capture the essence of wisdom. He is not trying to define one alternative kind of wisdom. Nozick (1989) claims:

> Wisdom is what you need to understand in order to live well and cope with the central problems and avoid the dangers in the predicaments human beings find themselves in.

> (Nozick 1989:267)

Kekes (1983:280) maintains that, 'What a wise man knows, therefore, is how to construct a pattern that, given the human situation, is likely to lead to a good life'. This practical view of wisdom, according to Ryan (2008), could be expressed as follows:

- **Wisdom as Knowing How To Live Well (KLW)**: *P* is wise if *P* knows how to live well.

This view captures Aristotle's basic idea of practical wisdom. According to Ryan (2008), extensive factual knowledge is not enough to give us what a wise person knows. Wise people also know how to get on in the world in all kinds of situations and with all kinds of people. As Robert Nozick (1989) points out:

> Wisdom is not just knowing fundamental truths, if these are unconnected with the guidance of life or with a perspective on its meaning. There is more to wisdom than intelligence and knowledge of science and philosophy or any other subject matter.

> (Nozick 1989:269)

Nozick (1989:269) also relates that wisdom has never been considered to be just one type of knowledge. It always addressed diverse topics (see Ryan 2008):

- the most important goals and values of life – the ultimate goal, if there is one
- what means will reach these goals without too great a cost
- what kinds of dangers threaten the achieving of these goals
- how to recognise and avoid or minimise these dangers
- what different types of human beings are like in their actions and motives (as this presents dangers or opportunities)
- what is not possible or feasible to achieve (or avoid)
- how to tell what is appropriate when
- knowing when certain goals are sufficiently achieved
- what limitations are unavoidable and how to accept them
- how to improve oneself and one's relationships with others or society
- knowing what the true and unapparent value of various things is
- when to take a long-term view
- knowing the variety and obduracy of facts, institutions, and human nature;

- understanding what one's real motives are
- how to cope and deal with the major tragedies and dilemmas of life, and with the major good things too.

With Nozick's (1989) explanation of what one must know in order to live well, we have an interesting and quite attractive, albeit somewhat rough, theory of wisdom. From the perspective of the biblical wisdom literature, the list Nozick supplies would also find favour in the eyes of all the sages. Many philosophers, including Aristotle; however, would reject KLW as a complete account of wisdom. Aristotle rejected KLW as the full story because he believes theoretical wisdom is another kind of wisdom, and he appears unwilling to accept that there is a conception of one, general, kind of wisdom. Moreover, Aristotle asserts, 'Therefore it is evident that it is impossible to be practically wise without being good' (*Nichomachean Ethics* VI, 1144a).

This relates to a core statement of the biblical wisdom tradition (i.e. that wisdom and goodness are inextricably linked). Of course, in ancient Israel the instances of being good might have been viewed different from what Aristotle associated with goodness. Even so, it cannot be denied that in much of the Hebrew Bible's wisdom spirituality, wisdom was often linked to a very specific moral disposition.

> The fear of Yhwh is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who practice it.
>
> (Ps 111:10)

> The fear of Yhwh is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
>
> (Pr 10:9)

> And he said to man, `Behold, the fear of Yhwh, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding'.
>
> (Job 28:28)

One can clearly see the practical and pious element in these statements about wisdom. On a more secular point, Kekes (1983:277) claims, 'the possession of wisdom shows itself in reliable, sound, reasonable, in a word, good judgement. In good judgement, a person brings his knowledge to bear on his actions'. This is also an idea found in some biblical texts:

> I, wisdom, dwell in prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.
>
> (Pr 8:12)

> Now therefore hold him not guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol.
>
> (1 Ki 2:9)

> Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind to govern thy people, that I may discern between good and evil …
>
> (1 Ki 3:9)

These examples assume that being wise also includes actual moral action. On this view, to understand how wisdom is seen we have to understand its connection with knowledge, action, and judgement. However, in philosophy the supposed moral element postulated as a necessary condition for the possession of wisdom is essentially contested. Also in many biblical narratives, immoral agents can also be wise, for example, Solomon. Like Solomon a person could satisfy

the conditions of any of the principles we have considered thus far and nevertheless behave in a wildly reckless manner. Knowledge on how to live well in the biblical traditions was therefore seen as something that had the potential to lead one astray (see the King of Tyre's wisdom as reason for hubris in Ezekiel 28). Moreover, in ancient Israel wisdom was at times associated with practical (technical) knowledge that achieved ends that were not in themselves assumed to be moral:

> He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naph'tali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in bronze; and he was full of wisdom, understanding, and skill, for making any work in bronze.
>
> (1 Ki 7:14)

Wisdom here involves whatever one must know in order to live well, including shrewdness and technical skills. Thus we cannot be satisfied with the conclusion that for the biblical texts theoretical wisdom is one kind of wisdom and practical wisdom another. The Hebrew Bible does not as a rule make such a distinction.

Wisdom as successful living

But if wisdom is not simply knowledge of how to live well or moral, what then could it be? According to Ryan (2008), some philosophers who are attracted to the idea that knowing how to live well is a necessary condition for wisdom might will add that it is not simply the knowing how to live well or living morally that makes one wise. What is also required is the evidence that one is living fruitfully. This shows how wise a person is. Kekes (1983) opines:

> Wisdom ought also to show in the man who has it.
>
> (Kekes 1983:281)

Many philosophers, therefore, think that wisdom is not restricted to theoretical and practical knowledge. These philosophers believe that being wise also includes success in action. A person could satisfy the conditions of any of the principles we have considered thus far and nevertheless be a failure – something that hardly sounds wise. Some philosophers who are attracted to the idea that knowing how to live well is a necessary condition for wisdom might want to simply tack on a success condition to KLW to get around cases in which a person knows everything about living well, yet fails to put this knowledge into practice:

- **Wisdom as Knowing How To, and Succeeding at, Living Well (KLS)**: *P* is wise if (1) *P* knows how to live well and (2) *P* is successful at living well.

This view captures an important aspect of the views defended by Deuteronomistic literature:

> Keep the commands and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'.
>
> (Dt 4:6)

The blessing and cursing for keeping commandments (Deut 28), and the moral interpretation of Deuteronomistic history assumes that wisdom and actual successful living go hand in hand. The judgement of Job by his friends shows they also associated wisdom with successful living. So did

Job and Qoheleth, which is why they are so disturbed by the lack of a moral order in the cosmos and because wisdom is no guarantee that one's life will be filled with fortune. But it is especially in nonsceptical biblical wisdom traditions that actual successful living is considered to be the direct result of wisdom. A classic example here is Proverbs 3:13–18:

> Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding, for the gain from it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy. Yhwh by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke forth, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, keep sound wisdom and discretion; let them not escape from your sight, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.
>
> (Pr 3:13–18)

Biblical scholars know of the so-called crisis of this kind of wisdom in Job and Qoheleth, although it must be remembered that both characters are depicted as having initially lived a successful life thanks to their wisdom (and Job's success was restored for it). The idea of the success condition is therefore that one puts one's knowledge into practice. And whilst it does seem to be a necessary condition for being considered wise it too is in itself not sufficient to indicate what people mean when they talk about the wise.

Conclusion

A brief survey of general approaches to understanding the nature of wisdom has left us with a number of partial philosophical and biblical answers to our question of what wisdom was assumed to be. In a number of biblical and philosophical traditions, the accumulated basic theory we are left with is that P is wise if:

1. P has humility in the face of reality and/or divinity.
2. P has knowledge of having many justified true beliefs.
3. P has extensive moral knowledge on how to live.
4. P is successful at living well.

Clearly, every one of these conditions can be disputed and needs some careful explanation and qualification. Yet together they form a cumulative list for individual necessary conditions that some philosophical and biblical perspectives considered to be jointly sufficient conditions for instantiating the property of wisdom. If a classical or neoclassical analysis of the conceptual structure of wisdom fails then perhaps a prototype analysis based on typical features, family resemblances and a hierarchy of candidate analyses can do better. However, as Ryan (2008) concludes, the cumulative theory has all the benefits of the other theories and none of the problems of minimalist and reductionist perspectives. As such it might be a step in the right direction also for the biblical scholar seeking to answer the age-old question: where shall wisdom be found?

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