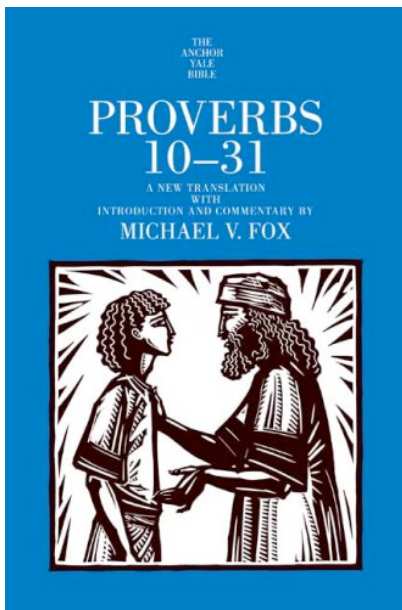


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Fox, Michael V.

Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary

The Anchor Yale Bible

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The eagerly anticipated second volume on the book of Proverbs, *Proverbs 10–31*, by Michael V. Fox, Halls-Bascom Professor in the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, does not disappoint. Like the first volume, *Proverbs 1–10* (hereafter cited as vol. 1), the second (vol. 2) models wisdom’s virtues: diligent, honest, competent, and judicious, to name those adjectives that come immediately to mind. The ethos that emanates from his commentary gives Fox authority and credibility and encourages others to emulate his wisdom (see 1:349). Like volume 1, volume 2 is erudite in depth, comprehensive in scope, copious but not tedious in length, and profoundly thoughtful in height. He converses easily with the ancient sages, traditional Jewish commentators, and his peers. Profitably, in volume 2 he also converses with evangelical scholars. By their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they hear God’s voice in his “lisper” spokesmen as a sweet sound and hear the voice of higher biblical criticism, which replaces faith in God’s revelation with faith in the sufficiency of human reason, as the grating of an old scratched record. It matters not whether the tune of higher biblical criticism be Troeltschian, Duhemian, or Spinozistic. Fox converses with my *Proverbs 1–15* (Eerdmans, 2004; cited by title below) but not *Proverbs 15–31* (Eerdmans, 2007; cited by title below), presumably because he had cut off conversation

with commentators before the end of 2007. This review will, I hope, advance the conversation—heretofore inadequate on my part—by focusing on points of disagreement.

Fox divides volume 2 into several sections: first, “Introduction” (477–506) pertaining to “Reading Proverbs as a Collection” (477–83), “Reading a Proverb” (484–98), and “The Dating and Social Setting of the Proverb Collection” (499–506); second, “Translation and Commentary” (507–922), which he analyzes according to the book of Proverbs’ editorial divisions, except, with most modern scholars, he isolates 30:10–33 from the sayings of Agur and 31:10–31 from the teachings of Lemuel’s Mother. (For arguments supporting the tight unity of Prov 30 and the loose unity of Prov 31, see *Proverbs 15–31*.) Third, four additional “Essays” to the first four in volume 1: “The Growth of Wisdom” (923–33); “Ethics” (934–45); “Revelation” (946–62); and “Knowledge” (963–76). He draws the volume to its conclusion with “Textual Notes” (977–1068), “Translation” (1069–1116), “Bibliography” (1117–94) and “Indices” (1195–1205).

I turn first to the introduction’s “Reading a Proverb” (2:484–98). Fox corrects the notion that a proverb is “alive only as a potential” by the simile of a coin, “which ... gains its ‘performance-meaning’ only when it is spent on something, when it is *used* in a particular situation to attain a certain goal” (484–86). He subsequently considers the recurrence of couplets, lines, or components of line with variation and labels them “permutations”: “the constant transformation of proverbs based on templates implied in other proverbs,” not as mere repetitions (487, 492). As for parallelism, he essentially follows J. Kugel with regard to their semantics and A. Berlin with regard to their linguistic categories (493). He breaks new ground, however, in his analysis of what he calls “disjointed parallelism” (494–98). Others have recognized that many parallels leave a gap between the lines and so invite the reader to fill it in, but Fox fleshes out the phenomenon so successfully that “disjointed parallels” ought to be recognized in any future taxonomy of parallelism.

By contrast, in “Reading Proverbs as a Collection,” Fox loses an opportunity. In his view, “for the most part they [proverbs in 10–29] are not [organized into larger clusters]” (2:477). Nevertheless, he recognizes, “quite a few proverbs [are] clustered about a shared topic,” and he says that he tries, while trying to respect the individuality of each proverb, to consider “the new meanings created by context.” “The process,” he thinks, “that best explains the groupings is associative thinking,” what he calls “proverbs strings. This accounts for most of the phenomena sometimes thought to indicate editorial designs: alliteration, wordplay, catchwords, and repetitions of words, roots and phrases” (480).

Let me illustrate what I mean by a lost opportunity by reflecting briefly upon only the first two topic clusters in the “Proverbs of Solomon,” 10:1–5 and 10:6–14. Fox recognizes with most that 10:1–5 is delimited as a collection about wealth and work (see *Proverbs 1–*

15, 450) but uniquely suggests that “v 6 caps off the bracketed group by summarizing the preceding verses.” He subsequently notes that “speech is the predominant theme in 10:8–32, appearing in 8b, 10b, [11a, b], 13a, 14b ...” (2:515). His novel grouping fails, however, since verse 6a also refers to speech/communication, verse 6, not verse 8, begins the new topic cluster, albeit he did help me realize the janus affect of verse 6. Let us now reflect upon verses 6–14. Note first that the proverbs occur in proverb pairs (2:478), with the first couplet mentioning “mouth” and its equivalent (vv. 6–7, 8–9, 11–12, 13–14). Second, note that the first two pairs refer to benefits of wise speech to the speaker (vv. 6–9) and the second set to benefits of wise speech to others (vv. 11–14). Finally, note that the two sets of pairs pivot on the only synthetic, single couplet, which, in a chiasm, mentions the benefits of wise speech to others (v. 10a) and to self (v. 10b; see *Proverbs 1–15*, 456–62). Exegesis is as much an art as a science, and interpreters will have to judge for themselves whether this is merely a “proverbs string,” as Fox and Longman think, or an intricately woven unit communicating a richer meaning than its proverb parts. The proof of the pudding is in both its taste and its tasters.

Fox rejects the use of the exegetical tools forged by rhetorical criticism techniques for constructing “larger” collections together—he does not define “larger”—for three reasons:

[1.] it is far-fetched to imagine editors compiling proverbs according to grand and detailed designs. It is implausible that an editor would write down all the proverbs on little bits of papyrus or parchment and move them around until they fit into tidy-well organized groupings and larger, well-designed structures, with certain repeated words and phrases—which were already present in the original sayings—being located in exactly the right places. It is even more implausible that the editor did all this in his head. [2.] And what would have been the purpose of such designs? [3.] Rhetorical effect is an unlikely motivation, seeing that very few commentators—who have studied the book ... have uncovered the same patterns. (2:775)

The recognition of patterns by modern scholars, however, began seriously only twenty years ago with R. van Leeuwen’s St. Michael’s doctoral dissertation (*Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25–27* [SBLDS 96; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988]). One should expect some missteps and disagreements when scholars begin their baby steps in this new approach. As to the purpose of this lacing of proverbs together, Fox earlier recognized that clusters give richer meaningful contexts for the individual proverbs.

Fox infers that poetics of this rich texture point to a single author-editor, a notion that he dismisses out of hand (cf. 1:325). Nevertheless, his inference is bang-on, even if a single author-editor is conceptualized as a committee (cf. 25:1). Does not the factual reality of

these intricate designs (cf. 10:6–14), sometimes a chapter and more in length (cf. Van Leeuwen [chs. 26–27], Malchow [chs. 28–29] and Waltke (ch. 30 [*Prov* 15–31, 454–501])), suggest that they were composed and compiled by the wit and encyclopedic knowledge of Solomon-like figures? According to the Deuteronomist, Solomon “had a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore, [whose] wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt” (1 Kgs 3:29–31). In short, the factual data validates Solomon’s authorship of Prov 1:1–24:33 (hereafter Solomon I), and Solomon’s authorship explains the data. Let me now segue into conversing about “The Dating and Social Setting of the Proverb Collections.”

Fox dates Prov 10–29 to the monarchy (eighth to seventh centuries) because “the eighth-seventh centuries were a time of growth in the Judean royal administration and a concomitant expansion in literacy, as evidence in epigraphic remains” (499). The growth of the Judean royal administration, however, flourished even more during Solomon’s reign (see 1 Kgs 4), and, as for literacy, Solomon’s court, according to the Deuteronomist, entertained artistic and literary geniuses. The royal setting of Proverbs also supports Solomon’s authorship. Fox says: “The proverbs literature such as we have in chapters 10–29 was cultivated, collected, and redacted there [in the Judean court]” (2:499). Again: “My conclusion is that the royal proverbs are integral to the proverb collection and are therefore indicative of the date of the collection” (503). If his conclusion is valid—and I think it is—why not locate the author-editor in Solomon’s court, as the biblical writers assert?

The only putative objective evidence Fox offers for an eighth–seventh-century date is the presence of Aramaisms in the text: “There are also a number of Aramaisms in these chapters that would accord well with a dating in the late-eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E., when Aramaic was known among the Jerusalem elite” (2:504). But surely we ought not to assume that Aramaic was unknown in Solomon’s court. According to the Deuteronomist, Rezon, ruler of Aram, was Israel’s adversary “as long as Solomon lived” (1 Kgs 11:25).

Let me take this opportunity to thank Fox for being the first, after thirty years of waiting, to test the validity of Kitchen’s arguments for the unity of Prov 1:1–24:33 and for Solomon as its author-editor (K. A. Kitchen, “Proverbs and Wisdom Books of the Ancient Near East: The Factual History of a Literary Form,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 28 [1977]: 69–114). Kitchen builds his case for the unity of Solomon I and of Solomon as its author on the basis of some thirty or more sufficiently preserved instructional wisdom texts of Egypt and of West Asia.

On structural grounds, our competent Egyptologist at the University of Liverpool distinguishes two types of collections: types A and B. Type A collections have a formal title + main text, whereas Type B collections consist of a formal title + a prologue (introductory discourses) + main text (subtitles, such as 10:1, being optional). Proverbs 1:1–24:34 belongs to type B, whereas Prov 25–29, 30, and 31 belong to type A. I prefer to nuance Kitchen, suggesting that the “[Thirty] Sayings of the Wise” (22:17–24:22) and “More Sayings of the Wise” (24:23–34) are two appendices to 1:1–22:16 (see below). Moreover, since, according to Kitchen, no formal titles that occur in the other examined texts is as brief as 10:1a, “Proverbs of Solomon” is best understood as an optional subtitle. This comparative evidence supports the notion that Prov 1–24 is a unity and marginalizes Fox’s arguments that Prov 1–9 stems from a much later period than chapters 10–29. Fox recognizes that “it is very difficult to determine its [chapters 1–9] date” (1:48) but ill-advisably proceeds to date the prologue as consisting of strata later than the aphorisms of chapters 10–29 and so rejects the identification of Solomon I as a type B collection by Solomon.

Fox counters Kitchen’s thesis with several arguments. (1) “One could as well class Prov 1–9 (without 10–24) as Type B with 1:2–7 its prologue” (2:506). This rebuttal fails, for Prov 1:8–9:18 contains the content that characterizes instructional prologues (i.e., the use of direct personal address in hearkening contexts), not the pithy aphorisms of Prov 10–29.

(2) “The headings in 10:1a and 24:23 could just as well begin Type A.” As for 24:23, this is true, but as for 10:1a, his statement is questionable for two reasons. First, according to Kitchen, the title in 10:1a is too short in comparison with formal titles of comparable type A and type B collections. Second, the book’s preamble (1:1–7) and prologue (1:8–9:18) would exist uniquely without a main text.

(3) “No other work, early or late, has a subtitle that simply repeats the identification of the author, as 10:1a does, or that identifies a different one, as 24:23 does, in the *middle* of the ‘main text’” (2:506). As for the repetitive subtitle in 10:1a, Kitchen notes that in all periods and regions from the mid-third millennium B.C.E. onward, authors were free to create their own titles and subtitles; they were hidebound by no rules in the matter. What matters is not the presence of a unique, optional subtitle in type B but the type B unification of the prologue’s hortatory genre (cf. Prov 1–9) with the main text’s aphoristic genre (cf. Prov 10–24). As for the title in 24:23, it is better to regard both the “Thirty Sayings of the Wise” and “More Sayings of the Wise” as appendices to the proverbs of Solomon I. In my opinion, the “Thirty Sayings of the Wise” belong to type B (prologue, 22:17–21 + main text, 22:22–24:22), and “More Sayings of Wise” (24:23–33) belong to type A (title, 24:23a, + main text, 24:23b–33). In the prologue to the “Thirty Sayings of the Wise,” the sage, presumably Solomon, claims that he is adopting the sayings of others

and presumably adapting them to Israel's prophetic religion: "Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach" (Prov 22:17). The formal title in 24:23a, "These also are sayings of the wise," implies that both 24:23–33 and 22:17–24:22 are appendices to Solomon I. The recognition that the two sayings of the wise are appendices to *mshly shlmh* does not detract from Kitchen's thesis.

(4) The prologue "with its 249 verses is much longer than any of Kitchen's designated prologues" (2:506). To be sure, textual quantity may be important to distinguish between titles and subtitles, since they are of the same genre quality. Here, however, the issue is the difference in genre quality of Prov 1–9, not textual quantity, as over against chapters 10–29—that is to say, extended exordia over against pithy sayings. Moreover, Fox himself explains the extended textual quantity in volume 1: "This reformulation, by placing repeated emphasis on the importance of hearkening to wisdom and on wisdom's benefits, becomes the vehicle for a teaching on the nature of wisdom" (325). In sum, I find cogent evidence for the unity of Solomon I as a type B collection, provided one reckons, as the text itself claims, that the Thirty Sayings of the Wise and More Sayings of the Wise are appendices to Solomon I, and I find Fox's rebuttal not cogent. Kitchen's thesis withstands this first test under fire.

Thus far in the argument Kitchen's data points to the unity of Solomon I but not necessarily to Solomon as its author. Kitchen's analysis of the ancient data that spans the entire Levant from the early third to the late first millennia, however, points to the time of Solomon for the composition of Solomon I: "This use of sub-titles in Solomon I (1:1–24:33), it should be noted, finds parallels only in the 3rd and early 2nd millennia BC in Mesopotamia and (so far as 'occasional' sub-titles go) in the 3rd and 2nd millennia in Egypt. Only Ankh-sheshonqy (perhaps Ahiqar?) offers any parallel in the later 1st millennium, and then in a form immensely more elaborate than the very simple sub-titles in Solomon I. Thus, overall, the usage visible in Solomon I looks back into the 2nd millennium BC and beyond for its best models and analogies, a fact worth noting" ("Proverbs and Wisdom Books," 80).

Fox disagrees with Kitchen's argument that Solomon should be regarded as the real author/compiler by default: "critical scholars would not accept such 'default' arguments" (506). Originally, however, scholars rejected the biblical ascription of Solomon's authorship because they thought their created typologies of theology and of language pointed to a late date. Those arguments, however, have been discredited. Influential comparisons of biblical wisdom literature with Egyptian instructional literature began when E. A. W. Budge in 1923 published the Instruction of Amenemope. Were this data available about fifty years earlier in the time of Julius Wellhausen, scholars probably would have neither created their fallacious typologies nor questioned the biblical ascriptions of

authorship any more than modern scholars by default discount the ascription of authorship of nonbiblical instruction literature. Why do modern scholars hang on to a conclusion denying Solomon's authorship when it is based on arguments discredited more than two generations ago and when Kitchen's factual data supports Solomon's authorship of Solomon I?

After a lengthy discussion on pseudepigraphic Egyptian instructions and arguments supporting Davidic authorship of the Psalms, I wrote, and still affirm, that "no attribution of authorship within the Old Testament has been proved spurious" (cited by Fox, 505). Before dismissing my assertion out of hand, consider, however, that all the biblical historical books, including those in the Pentateuch, are anonymous. (Elsewhere I argue that Deuteronomy, the foundation stone of the Deuteronomistic History, achieved its final form in the exile; see Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* [Zondervan, 2007], 57) Moreover, I do not necessarily regard a book's superscript as pertaining to an entire book. This can be inferred from my acceptance of the Masoretic Text of Prov 25:1; 30:1; 31:1 against the Septuagint. According to the MT, Solomon cannot be the author of the entire book of Proverbs. That I do not hold that 1:1 refers to the whole book of Proverbs can also be inferred from my dating the final form of the book of Proverbs in the Achaemenid or Hellenistic period (*Proverbs 1-15*, 37).

Dating and settings are important issues for: (1) the grammatico-historical hermeneutics, (2) the reasonableness of meticulous and intricate design of larger, hermeneutically richer units than Fox allows, and (3) the reckoning of Prov 1:1-9:18 as the hermeneutical key to the collections of aphorisms. Fox expressed the last point well: "Indeed all the exordia look beyond the lessons of the units they are in. The 'words' and 'precepts' and 'wisdom' that the listener is to absorb are not limited to the words of the particular lectures that follow but refer to the entirety of the teachings. ... The lessons, in other words, instantiate, but certainly do not exhaust, the wisdom that the exordia praise" (1:325). In short, in this statement Fox recognizes that the prologue (chs. 1-9) and Solomon's proverbs (10:1-22:16) is a literary unity of Kitchen's type B collections.

Turning now to the commentary, I will limit my discussion to several texts that speak of life and/or death. In my judgment, these texts speak of an already-not-yet life that outlasts clinical death and of an already-not-yet death without personal existence beyond clinical death. Fox, like most of his peers, interprets them as referring solely to the present life or, at best, life that continues beyond clinical death only in one's posterity, though he cites no textual evidence to support that notion, and I know of none. (Though Prov 4:1-9 pertains to one's posterity, what is meant by life and death does not come within its purview of that lesson.)

On Prov 10:2, Fox comments, “‘righteousness saves from death’ does not promise a ‘spiritual, eternal life,’ contrary to Waltke” [albeit not exactly my wording or thought] (2:511). Fox argues that “death” in 10:2b refers more narrowly to the “day of wrath” (presumably a premature, judicial death) because in the similar proverb, 11:4, “righteousness delivers from death” stands juxtaposed to “wealth does not save from the day of wrath.” Yet in his discussion of permutations (see above), he notes that proverb permutations do not mean the same thing. The permutation of 10:2 in 11:4 is a case in point. The permutation of 10:2a in 11:4a is paradoxically more comprehensive in its subject (“wealth” versus “treasures of wickedness”) and more restrictive in its predicate (“does not save from death” versus “does not profit”). Consequently, the predicate in 10:2b may be more comprehensive than in 11:4b.

Among other proverbs pertaining to the subject of life and death are 12:28 and 14:32. Since Fox does not converse with me, it seems best that I simply ask the reader to appraise critically our different exegeses. May I suggest—I hope I am not being presumptuous—that scholarship would be better served if Fox conversed with my essay on this most important subject for a proper interpretation of the book of Proverbs (see *Proverbs 1–15*, 107–9).

I now turn to the four essays. As for “The Growth of Wisdom,” Fox helpfully distinguishes between the nature and rewards of wisdom and the nature and rewards of righteousness but rightly follows K. Heim in reckoning “wisdom” and “righteousness” as correlative terms; that is, they have different meanings but refer to the same person. I am uncertain, however, of his distinction that, whereas “wisdom” pertains to growth, “righteous” is a static quality. According to 4:18, “the path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.” The prologue’s nuclear metaphor (Habel’s term), “way/path,” refers to both conduct and its consequences. If so, the metaphor implies that the righteous grow in their righteous behavior and its rewards. According to 25:26, “like a muddied spring or a polluted well are the righteous who give way to the wicked.” Apparently, the righteous are not so static that they cannot slip. The rest of this essay tries to unravel the stages of the development of Prov 1–29, but Kitchen’s work as précised above renders Fox’s many and lengthy discussions on stages of development nugatory.

Fox divides “Ethics” into “The Primary Axiom,” “The Ethics of Proverbs and the Socratic Principles,” and “The Use of the Mind.” According to Fox, “the primary axiom of Proverbs’ ethics is that *the exercise of the human mind is the necessary and sufficient condition of right and successful behavior in all reaches of life: practical, ethical, and religious*” (2:934, emphasis original). This way of putting the primary axiom is misleading,

for although moral knowledge is virtue, it is not primarily a matter of the exercise of the mind. Rather, the primary axiom is hearkening to the sage's teachings out of piety.

According to the book's "motto" (1:67), its primary axiom is "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Fox defines "beginning" (Heb. *re'shit*) as expressing temporal priority, "a precondition," "a precursor," but it should be emphasized that this beginning is on the vertical axis on which all else depends—the *initium* and *principium*—and not on the horizontal axis and can be left behind. Fox defines the "fear of the LORD" as piety: "an attitude compounded of knowledge, love, humility, and appropriate trepidation—in brief piety" (938; see 1:69–71), but this definition does not do justice to the rational component of the collocation. This important collocation consists of both a rational component that intellectually engages the sage's/prophet's catechetical, moral teachings and an emotional response of fear of, love for, and trust in the Lord who upholds those moral teachings (*Proverbs 1–15*, 100–101). "My son, if you accept my words ... you will understand the fear of the Lord" (2:1–5).

The prologue's exordia repeatedly call upon the son/pupil to "listen to," "to accept," and "to memorize" the aphoristic proverbs of Solomon and sayings of the wise: "Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips" (Pro 22:17–18). In 2:4 the exhortation to strive for wisdom occurs within the context of "accept," "store up," "turning the ear to," and "call out" for the father's wisdom (2:1–3).

Moreover, hearkening entails faith in the Lord who ultimately reveals and upholds the moral order represented in the book of Proverbs: "for the LORD gives wisdom, from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (2:6); "trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding" (Prov 3:5). Trust in the Lord, however, is a platitude; it cuts no ice in one's thinking, unless Lord is qualified as the one who reveals wisdom through inspired sages. In sum, the exercise of a pious heart in accepting and memorizing the sage's teachings is the necessary and sufficient condition of right and successful behavior in all reaches of life: practical, ethical, and religious.

The essay "Revelation" is divided into "The Autonomy of Wisdom," "Proverbs' View of Revelation," and "Torah and Wisdom." As for the first, Fox says: "Proverbs treats wisdom as a sufficient source of practical success, ethical knowledge, social harmony, and piety.... Wisdom offers itself as a complete and self-contained moral system." This is true, but the question must be asked "what is the basis for wisdom's ethical knowledge," for not all societies agree on ethical knowledge. For many, *realpolitik*, which is coercive, amoral, or Machiavellian (cf. Jezebel [1 Kgs 21]), leads to practical success. Fox turns to this question in "Proverbs' View of Revelation" (see below).

Fox also argues that “verbal revelation” is not part of Proverbs’ religious system. Let me join the conversation by noting first that I essentially agree with Steiert (cited at 2:947), who, on the basis of the preamble (cf. 1:7) and prologue (cf. 1:7; 1:20–33; 2:6; 3:5; 8:1–36), argues for the verbal revelation of wisdom. Fox rightly argues that the trope of Woman Wisdom (1:352–59), in my view a personification of Solomon’s wisdom, represents herself a mediatrix begotten by God who, by virtue of her comprehensive knowledge, offers an authoritative revelation of eternal wisdom to humankind (*Proverbs 1–15*, 83–87).

Agur brilliantly makes the case for the need of verbal revelation. He begins by confessing that even with the help of his teachers he was unable to attain wisdom (vv. 2–3). Without comprehensive knowledge, Agur reasons, no human is capable of attaining certain or absolute knowledge (v. 4a). Only the Lord, the God of Israel, he argues, has comprehensive knowledge and so absolute knowledge (v. 4b), and he reveals this knowledge to his son, Israel (v. 4c), in the trustworthy verbal communication of Israel’s written Scriptures (vv. 5–6). Within that coherent system of revealed wisdom Agur is able to add his own wisdom, praying to God to keep him from falsehood (vv. 7–9; cf. *Proverbs 15–31*, 463–81). Fox muffles Agur’s case for the necessity of verbal revelation in connection with wisdom by contrasting him with the rest of the book: “The editor who added Agur’s poem sought to rectify the lack of concern for divine revelation in the book of Proverbs that had reached him” (2:957).

Baruch, like Job before him (cf. the Princeton dissertation by S. C. Jones, *Rumors of Wisdom: Job 28 as Poetry* (BZAW 138; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), also argues that God must reveal wisdom: “Who has gone up into heaven and taken her [wisdom], and brought her down from the clouds? ... There is neither one who knows her way, nor one who comprehends her path. But he who knows all things, knows her. He found her out in his understanding.... This is our God.... he found the way of understanding and gave it to Jacob his servant and Israel whom he loved” (Bar 3:26–29).

As for “Torah and Wisdom,” Fox argues that “even when Deuteronomy does give [sic] wisdom some prominence and affirm [sic] its value, it effectively *subordinates* it to Torah: ‘You shall observe [these laws] diligently, for *this* will be your wisdom...’ (Deut 4:6).” Fox comments: “The point is,” says Fox, “that Israel needs no wisdom besides *this* Torah ... to make it wise” (2:952–53, emphasis original). I suggest, on the one hand, that Fox overreads the text. To say that this Torah is your wisdom does not entail that this is the only wisdom. If parents say to a child “Eat this spinach because it will make you healthy,” their promise does not entail that the child needs no food besides this spinach for good health.

On the other hand, Fox underreads the Deuteronomistic History, of which Deuteronomy is the foundation stone. (For the sake of the argument it does not matter whether Dtr is fictional or historical or a mixture of both.) David on his death-bed commanded Solomon to keep the law of Moses (1 Kgs 2:3). Nevertheless, upon assuming the throne, Solomon found Moses' book of the law insufficient for the wisdom he needed to rule Israel, so he prayed that the Lord would give him "a discerning heart to govern [his] people and to distinguish between right and wrong." Whereupon the Lord gave him "a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been nor would there ever be anyone like him (1 Kgs 3:7–12). And "God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight.... He spoke three thousand proverbs" (1 Kgs 4:29–32). In sum, according to the Deuteronomist, who takes his scholarly name from the book of Deuteronomy, the book of the law is wisdom but not altogether sufficient wisdom. In fact, the whole Deuteronomistic History, not just the book of Deuteronomy, is *torah*.

The final essay, "Knowledge," is brilliant and a most profitable read. The conversation could be advanced by addressing a quandary that Fox raises. He argues for knowledge through a theory of coherence. He explains: "The propositions, stated and assumed, of the sayings and epigrams in Proverbs receive their validation by virtue of consistency with the integrated system of assumption that inform the book." That reflection raises the prior question, "where do these assumptions come from?" "If coherence theory is accepted as a valid characterization of the implicit epistemology of Proverbs, we may still wonder where the axioms came from in the first place. The answer to this important question lies not in epistemology but in the realm of historical anthropology and related disciplines, which attempt to account for the innumerable assumptions and attitudes that are embedded in a society or a cultural group for generations.... But the origin of each assumption lies outside of epistemology which is the study of the nature and validation of knowledge" (2:969). At this point Fox drops the ball and walks off the court without reflecting further upon the historical anthropology of Israel's sages.

If I understand Fox correctly, I suspect he creates his quandary by dating Prov 10–29 before the promulgation of the book of the law (ca. 620 B.C.E.) and the Priestly document (ca. 500 B.C.E.), and so locates the sage in an uncertain social context. If, however, one accepts that the book of Deuteronomy (ca. 550 B.C.E.) records the history of the making of the book of the law by Moses (ca. 1250 B.C.E.), as the book claims, the social context for the book's assumption is the so-called Mosaic covenant (cf. *Old Testament Theology*, 497–503; cf. 736). The book of the law commanded: "When the king takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests (Deut 17:18).

The book of Proverbs seems to assume this history by: (1) identifying Solomon son of David as king of Israel (1:1) and Hezekiah as king of Judah (25:1); (2) referring to God as *YHWH* (“The I AM WHO I AM), Israel’s covenant-keeping God; (3) its theological harmony with Torah, albeit without citing it (Bruce Waltke, “The Book of Proverbs and Old Testament Theology,” *BibSac* 136 [1979]: 302–17); (4) Agur’s confession that he composed his sayings within the context of Israel’s developing canon.

Fox’s textual notes are provisional until he writes “a critical edition of Proverbs for the Oxford Hebrew Bible” (2:979). His index of authors is incomplete.

In this essay I focused on some salient points of disagreement with Fox to sharpen the scholarly ongoing conversation for a more accurate interpretation of the book of Proverbs. As iron sharpens iron, I hope this review contributes to that end. To the unreflective, my criticism may seem to tarnish my opening kudos of Fox’s work. To the reflective, however, against the darker background of criticism that accolade shines brighter.