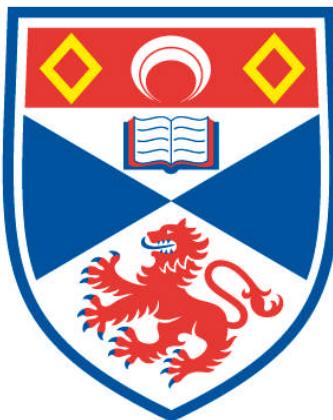


**MICHAL, CONTRADICTING VALUES
UNDERSTANDING THE MORAL DILEMMA FACED BY SAUL'S
DAUGHTER**

Jonathan Y. Rowe

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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Michal, Contradicting Values

Understanding the Moral Dilemma Faced by Saul's Daughter

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Divinity
in candidacy for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jonathan Y. Rowe

September 2008
St Mary's College
The University of St Andrews

ABSTRACT

Value conflicts due to cultural differences are an increasingly pressing issue in many societies. Because Old Testament texts hail from a very different milieu to our own they may provide new perspectives upon contemporary conflicts and, in this context, the present dissertation investigates one particular value clash in 1 Samuel.

Studies of Old Testament ethics have attended to narrative only relatively recently. Although social-scientific interpretation has a longer pedigree, there are important debates about how to employ the fruits of anthropology in biblical studies. The first part of this thesis, therefore, attends to methodological issues, advancing four main propositions. First, attention should be paid to the moral goods that feature in the text. Second, the family, a central feature of Old Testament morality, should be understood as a set of practices rather than an institution. Third, ‘models’ of social action that purport to comprehend the social world of the Bible should be used only cautiously. Finally, a modified version of Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossic voices can help readers appreciate how authors present a moral vision by approving some characters’ actions whilst undermining others.

The second part of the thesis employs this methodology to examine 1 Samuel 19.10–18a. The discussion of the moral dilemma facing Michal adduces anthropological theories and ethnographic data concerning violence, lying, and the relationship between fathers and daughters. Given that the conflicts of moral goods are ‘resolved’ by characters choosing to act in a certain way, the dissertation enquires after the author’s assessment of each character’s moral choices, and hence their theological import. The dissertation argues that Michal’s loyalty to David and deception of Saul was counter-cultural, and by approving of her choice the author affirms the importance of loyalty to the Davidic dynasty.

DECLARATIONS

I, Jonathan Rowe, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is a record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2004 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in May 2006; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2008.

..... **Signature of Candidate**

..... **Date**

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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DEDICATION

Hilary

and

Elizabeth & Benjamin

אנכי וּבִתְּךָ נִשְׁבַּד אֶת־יִהְוָה

– Joshua 24.15

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My most profound thanks for the support and encouragement that has resulted in this thesis are due to Hilary, one reason she starts this rather than trails these acknowledgments. Our children, Elizabeth and Benjamin, have grown a lot since the start of this adventure; they are no longer bemused by Daddy's 'boring books'—ones without pictures.

The search for a university willing to allow me to register for Ph.D. studies whilst continuing to work in Spain came to a providential end one summer evening in 2003 on the lawn in front of St Mary's in conversation with Dr Mario Aguilar. A congenial discussion and excellent dinner led, naturally, to years of hard work, during which the now Professor Aguilar has provided sage advice and guidance that I gladly acknowledge here. I have benefited enormously from joint supervision and it is an equal pleasure warmly to acknowledge Dr Nathan MacDonald's erudite comments on earlier drafts, probing questions, uncannily timely queries about progress, and his and Claire's hospitality when I visited St Andrews. I should also like to thank Dr Esther Reed, now of Exeter University, for a helpful conversation about ethics.

Whilst researching this thesis part-time I have continued to work at the *Seminario Evangélico Unido de Teología* in El Escorial, Spain. I would like to acknowledge the support of my colleagues, particularly the Rev. Dr Pedro Zamora, the seminary's director. In addition, sparring with Sergio Rosell over the use of models in social-scientific interpretation as he laboured on a New Testament thesis was always stimulating.

The Rev. Dr Christopher Wright was willing to read and discuss a final draft of the thesis. As always, he was both encouraging and helpful.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
AAASP	American Anthropological Association Special Publication
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AE	<i>American Ethnologist</i>
AJA	<i>Australian Journal of Anthropology</i>
AJEC	<i>Anthropological Journal on European Cultures</i>
AJS	<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
Ant.	Josephus, <i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
AQ	<i>Anthropological Quarterly</i>
ARA	<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
ASAOSP	Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania Special Publications
ASR	<i>American Sociological Review</i>
AT	<i>Anthropological Theory</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
Bd'A	La Bible d'Alexandrie
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBC	The Broadman Bible Commentary
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BI	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BJS	<i>British Journal of Sociology</i>
BR	Bucknell Review
BS	The Biblical Seminar
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BTCL	Biblical and Theological Classics Library
BW	<i>The Biblical World</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CA	<i>Cultural Anthropology</i>
CAT	Commentarie de L'Ancien Testament
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
Civ.	Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i> [The City of God]
CH	Codex Hammurabi
C. mend.	Augustine, <i>Contra mendacium</i> [To Consentius: Against Lying]
CSCD	Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine
CSSA	Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology
CSSCA	Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
CT	Colección Teorema
Curr Anthropol	<i>Current Anthropology</i>
DBHE	<i>Diccionario Bíblico Hebreo-Español</i>
DCCS	<i>Diccionario Crítico de Ciencias Sociales</i>
DEFM	<i>Diccionario de Ética y de Filosofía Moral</i>
De mend.	Augustine, <i>De mendacio</i> [On Lying]

DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DTMAT	<i>Diccionario Teológico Manual del Antiguo Testamento</i>
EJST	<i>European Journal of Social Theory</i>
EN	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
EP	<i>The Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>
ER	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i>
ESCA	<i>Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology</i>
EstBib	<i>Estudios Bíblicos</i>
FCI	Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation
FP	<i>Faith and Philosophy</i>
FZD	Father's Sister's Daughter
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , 2 nd English Edition, Edited by E. Kautzsch, Translated by A. E. Cowley
GS	<i>Gender & Society</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HumStud	<i>Human Studies</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IB	<i>The Interpreter's Bible</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEES	<i>International Encyclopedia of Economic Sociology</i>
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
IJMSS	<i>International Journal of Moral and Social Studies</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
JASO	<i>Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
JCC	<i>Journal of Cognition and Culture</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JLR	<i>Journal of Law and Religion</i>
JLS	<i>Journal of Libertarian Studies</i>
JMF	<i>Journal of Marriage and the Family</i>
JP	<i>The Journal of Philosophy</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JPSP	<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRAI	<i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JTSB	<i>Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior</i>
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LC	Lange's Commentary
LHB	Library of Hebrew Bible
LTE	Library of Theological Ethics

LXX	Septuagint
LXX ^A	Codex Alexandrinus of LXX
LXX ^B	Codex Vaticanus of LXX
LXX ^L	Lucianic manuscripts of LXX
MAQ	<i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i>
MBD	Mother's Brother's Daughter
MM	<i>Men and Masculinities</i>
MNK	F. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé and J. H. Kroeze, <i>Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i>
MS	Manuscript
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NDCEPT	<i>New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology</i>
NIB	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
NIV	New International Version
NLH	<i>New Literary History</i>
NLR	<i>New Left Review</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NS	New Series
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PC	Pulpit Commentary
PM	<i>Psychosomatic Medicine</i>
PPR	<i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i>
PS	<i>Philosophy of Science</i>
PSS	<i>Philosophy of the Social Sciences</i>
PSB	<i>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</i>
REP	<i>Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>
RTR	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SARASS	School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series
SBLit	Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBT ²	Studies in Biblical Theology Second Series
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SCE	<i>Studies in Christian Ethics</i>
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SSH	<i>Social Science History</i>
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
Summa	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i>

<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TOTC</i>	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>UCOP</i>	University of Cambridge Oriental Publications
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WO'C</i>	Bruce Waltke and M. O'Connor, <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> .
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Introduction

*Plaisante justice qu'une rivière borne!
Vérité au-deça des Pyrénées, erreur au-delà.*

– Blaise Pascal, *Pensées et opuscules*

Blaise Pascal's polemical response to Michel de Montaigne's relativism asserts universal moral standards exist, despite the fact of cultural plurality.¹ Nevertheless, the cultural differences that spurred Montaigne's reflections are now more obvious than in his day and, in an increasingly interconnected world, value conflicts due to cultural differences more frequent and pressing. In an essay on cultural diversity Clifford Geertz argues that they are “one of the major moral challenges we these days face”.²

Comprehensive Christian reflection about cross-cultural moral conflicts would marshal the gamut of biblical, theological, philosophical and social-scientific resources. This dissertation has more limited ambitions: I will investigate one particular value clash within 1 Samuel. The task is important for two reasons. First, a thorough examination of biblical sources is essential for a properly grounded theological ethic. Second, because Old Testament texts hail from a very different cultural milieu to our own, they may provide new perspectives upon contemporary conflicts.

The epigraph is from Blaise Pascal, *Pensées et opuscules* (20th ed. Paris: Librairie Hachette, nd), paragraph 294.

¹ Alan Gewirth distinguishes between positive morality (those rules for behaviour that exist) and normative morality (those rules for behaviour that should exist). Positive plurality does not imply normative pluralism, “Is cultural pluralism relevant to moral knowledge?” in *Moral Disagreements: Classic & Contemporary Readings* (ed. C. W. Gowans; London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 181. I will follow the customary distinction between ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ (and their variants): ‘morality’ is actual behaviour and standards; ‘ethics’ is reflection about these practices.

² Clifford Geertz, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 86. David Attwood objects to the use of ‘value’ as a term in ethical debate since it assumes that ‘value’ is a common denominator that allows ‘values’ to be compared and traded, thus excluding objective (i.e. reasoned rather than simply chosen) morality: ‘non-negotiable values’ are oxymoronic, *Changing Values: How to find moral truth in modern times* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 12–16. Whilst accepting his concerns I will continue to use ‘value’ as a useful shorthand for moral goods.

The ‘cultural distance’ between the biblical and modern worlds has led some commentators to highlight what one might call the moral problem of the Old Testament. Walter Kaiser, for example, observing a conflict between the behaviour of biblical characters and modern sensibilities, seeks to explain actions that impugn God’s character,³ or that of important persons,⁴ and morally offensive laws and sanctions.⁵ John Rogerson criticises this approach for supposing that the standard of morality is *modern* moral sensitivity.⁶ Whether ancient biblical, modern European or some other morality should be normative is not the concern of this dissertation: its focus is moral conflicts *within* the Old Testament and the text’s own assessment of their resolution. Rogerson identifies a number of passages where conflicts occur, noting that the “moral dilemmas explored in these stories must have been credible to the presumed authors and readers”.⁷ To appreciate these clashes contemporary readers must comprehend which moral values are presented in the text, something that is not always obvious.

In Chapter 1 I begin my investigation by enquiring into whether the Old Testament itself provides sufficient resources to address cases of conflicting moral values, proposing that the issue should be approached by focusing upon moral goods. Chapter 2 examines the nature of ‘the good’ and the ways in which it has been related to ‘the right’. Because this study is not an investigation in moral philosophy my aim is simply to show the contested nature of ‘the good’ and ‘goods’, and the implications of choosing a particular interpretation when seeking to comprehend Old Testament ethics. One prominent Old Testament scholar, John Barton, advocates using Martha Nussbaum’s work to study biblical narrative.⁸ Nussbaum uses studies of Greek tragedy to argue that particular situations should take precedence over ethical rules; I shall argue that rather than think in terms of rules or situations it is better to posit ‘the priority of the good’.

³ Cf. Walter Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 247–83. God is changeable (Gen 6.6), malevolent (Mal 1.2–3), deceptive (1 Kgs 22.2–23), approves of deception (Ex 3.18–20), and orders human sacrifice (Gen 22) and genocide (Deut 7.1–5).

⁴ Abraham lies (Gen 12.10–20), David commits adultery (2 Sam 11.2–5), Elisha curses (2 Kgs 2.23–24), and Ehud and Jael commit murder (Judg 3.15–26; 4.17–20).

⁵ Cf. Kaiser, *Toward*, 284–304. E.g. treatment of women, slavery, the death penalty and eudaemonism.

⁶ John W. Rogerson, “Old Testament Ethics,” in *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (ed. A. D. H. Mayes; Oxford: OUP, 2000), 116–37, especially 122.

⁷ Rogerson, “Old Testament Ethics,” 126. See Gen 18.22–33; Ex 1.15–20; 1 Sam 20.1–34; 2 Sam 14.1–11; 2 Kgs 8.7–15. See also the dilemma in 1 Macc 2.32–41.

⁸ John Barton, “Reading for Life: The Use of the Bible in Ethics,” in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2003), 55–64.

Since the ‘family’ has been identified as one of the most significant Old Testament moral goods, Chapter 3 examines anthropological approaches to kinship and the ethics of kinship, concluding the ‘family’ is not so much an institution as a ‘practice’. The analysis of ‘practice’ has typically been undertaken in terms of ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. Starting from Pierre Bourdieu’s seminal work on ‘Practice Theory’ I examine these categories, paying particular attention to the importance of accounting for ambiguity in interpersonal interaction.

The accounts of practice found in the Old Testament are to be *read*. Chapter 4 explains how a modified version of Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossic voices enables readers to appreciate how authors present a moral vision by promoting some voices whilst undermining others. Because biblical texts hail from temporally distant societies one can concur with Philip Esler that they “need to be investigated using disciplines developed specifically to comprehend the social dimensions of human experience”.⁹ I briefly discuss the use of anthropological resources in exegesis, before summarising the methodology I will use to seek ‘interpretative understanding’ of characters’ moral choices.

The study up to this point might be considered a methodological introduction. Although relatively extensive, I consider it essential to show that each of the elements that form part of my methodology are matters of dispute and debate, and that interpreters who tread unwarily, perhaps ignorant of the complexities of ‘good’, ‘kinship’, or ‘practice’, to name just some of the more important facets of this study, may produce explanations characterised more by their own context than that of the text’s. So Chapters 1 to 4, whilst they may appear episodic, are necessary to delineate an exegetical method and carefully to position my approach vis-à-vis those of other commentators. In addition to the exegetical conclusions themselves the methodology adopted here forms part of the original contribution of this thesis.

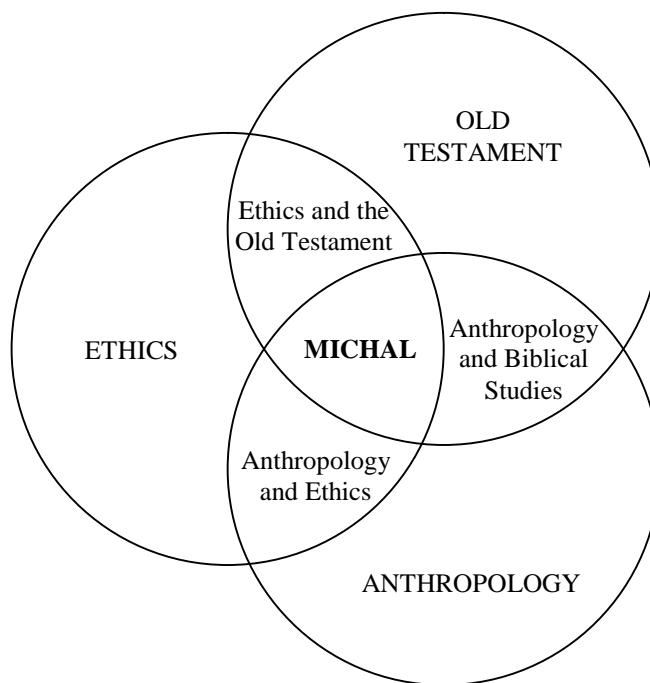
John Barton proposes that conflicts of moral values in the books of Samuel might be especially illuminating because neither God nor a divine word are adduced as literary *deus ex machina*. He suggests that they “could be read with an eye to the complexity of human ethical dilemmas and to the need for ethical conduct even in the

⁹ Philip Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2.

midst of far too many constraints on human freedom".¹⁰ For this reason Chapter 5 examines the moral conundrum facing Michal as she lies to save her husband against her father, King Saul. I am interested in the moral goods presented or alluded to within the text, and what happens when they conflict. Given that the conflict is ‘resolved’ by characters choosing to act in a certain way, I enquire after the significance of this resolution, and its theological import.

As an interdisciplinary study this project brings Old Testament studies, anthropology and ethics into conversation—Figure 1 presents the matter graphically.

FIGURE 1 — An Interdisciplinary Conversation



Although each discipline can inform the others, limitations of space preclude a systematic examination of, for example, how anthropology might interact with ethics¹¹—in the diagram such learning is shown by the un-capitalised letters. Instead, by maintaining a focus on the interpretation of a particular text I seek conclusions that involve all three disciplines, represented by the central space labelled ‘Michal’. In this light, the conclusion provides answers to the key research questions, *viz.* what are the moral conflicts faced by actors in these narratives?, how are the conflicts resolved?,

¹⁰ Barton, *Understanding*, 61.

¹¹ Cf. the interactionist paradigm for interdisciplinary work (as opposed to exclusivist or inclusivist approaches) proposed by Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 14–31, 170–72.

what is the author's evaluation of their choices?, and why do these assessments matter?

CHAPTER 1

Old Testament Morality and Value Conflict

חֶסֶד־וּאַמְתָה נִפְנַשׁ צְדָקָה וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ

– Psalm 85.11

The first outstanding 20th century attempt to investigate Old Testament morality was by Walter Eichrodt.¹ Despite problems with his analysis it is a convenient starting point for the present investigation because he attempts to delineate a comprehensive view.² Eichrodt concludes his systematization of Old Testament ethics by declaiming:

It is the loftiness of the obligation, the spirituality of the central good, the unconditional character of the Ought, and the perfect unity of these three aspects of moral conduct in the divine Thou as known in the gift of his favour, which give the ethics of the Old Testament their unique inner greatness.³

His is a vision of a perfectly harmonious and divinely undergirded ethical scheme. The ‘unity’ Eichrodt ‘discovers’, however, is suspiciously well informed by Lutheran systematic theology, and the disingenuity of his summary is evidenced by the sixty pages Eichrodt spends discussing the foothills of popular morality, detours along eudaemonistic trails, and the final plunge into a legalistic crevasse: respectively, either precursors to, or deviations from, the summit of individual, spiritual morality conforming to the divine will. Rather than marginalising the diversity of moral perspectives within the Old Testament, Barton argues persuasively that exegetes should acknowledge

¹ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (OTL; trans. J. A. Baker; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961–67), 2.316–79. First German edition 1933. Prior monographs are listed in Kaiser, *Toward*, 1.

² On the difficulties with Eichrodt see especially John Barton, “Understanding Old Testament Ethics,” in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2003), 15–31. These include: (1) a tendency to systematise even where diversity is apparent; (2) an assumption that the biblical texts reflect the values of actual historical Israelites; (3) a lack of sociological depth; and (4) a belief that the basis for morality is obvious. Note that this dissertation does not attempt to reconstruct ancient Israelite morality but identify normative Old Testament ethics.

³ Eichrodt, *Theology* 2.379.

‘Popular morality’ exists in all societies at all times: it is hard not to think that people were still vaguely saying, ‘Such things are not done in Israel’ even as the priestly author was putting the finishing touches to the perfectly theonomous Moses. If one is to attempt an analysis of ethics in ancient Israel, one cannot safely ignore ‘popular morality’ in any period.⁴

Barton’s approach quite properly eschews shoehorning the ethics of the Old Testament into a single mould, yet this does raise the question about how different perspectives might be reconciled. The matter is further complicated if, *pace* Eichrodt, who supposed the basis of ‘true’ morality was God’s demand, one does not make an *a priori* assumption in favour of a single source for Old Testament ethics—Barton, for example, supposes there are others: obedience to God’s will, imitation of God, and ‘natural law’.⁵ One may suppose, however, that the writers of the Old Testament were themselves cognisant of this issue, envisaging both situations in which moral values could conflict, and ways in which these clashes might be resolved. In this chapter I investigate the Old Testament’s own contribution to the resolution of value clashes, structuring my discussion by employing Eichrodt’s taxis of moral norms, moral goods and moral motives.

1.1 MORAL NORMS

The most obvious source of moral norms within the Old Testament is the law, either, as some writers have suggested, a ‘natural law’, or stipulations contained in the law codes. In addition, the imitation of God has been considered a source of ethics. Each will be examined for clues that may help resolve value conflicts.

1.1.1 Natural Morality

When the prophet Amos asks the rhetorical questions ‘Do horses run on rocks? Does one plough the sea with oxen?’ he assumes the answer is obvious.⁶ This is what gives the following phrase its force: ‘But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood’. The sins enumerated by Amos are presented as *obviously* unnatural, and the rejection of justice and righteousness as simply perverse, a

⁴ Barton, “Understanding,” 19. Cf. Henry McKeating, “Sanctions Against Adultery in Ancient Israelite Society, with some Reflections on Methodology in the Study of Old Testament Ethics,” *JSOT* 11 (1979): 57–72. Although not the focus of this study it is important to note that diversity of perspective *per se* need not be a problem: see the typology analysed by John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; BTCL; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995).

⁵ Barton, “Understanding,” 21, 29. On ‘natural law’, see below.

⁶ Amos 6.12. All English language biblical quotes NRSV unless otherwise indicated.

“cosmic nonsense” or “reversal of a sane way of viewing the world”.⁷ The right ‘order of things’ might be called ‘natural morality’: “the view that there are certain precepts or norms of right conduct, discernible by all men”.⁸ One must look quite closely for evidence of natural morality in the Old Testament.⁹ Nevertheless, there is no necessary conflict between it and the obligations of revealed law.¹⁰ As Jon Levenson notes, the

sovereignty of God is larger than his suzerainty...biblical Israel believed the will of God to be known not only through history, but also through what we moderns call nature, and not only through the word proclaimed, but also through thought and cognition.¹¹

James Barr, observing that biblical law shares affinities with other ancient Near Eastern law codes, even suggests Old Testament ‘revealed’ law has a ‘natural’ basis.¹²

What could natural morality contribute to the resolution of value conflicts? Three observations are possible. First, the matters in question are what one might call ‘goods’ and ‘evils’. In general it is a good thing that justice abounds; it is an evil thing that people exploit others. Thus when Isaiah pronounces ‘Woe to those who join house to house’ he specifies the goods in peril as a result of avaricious property speculation, *viz.*, agricultural productivity and ‘fairness’ with respect to the enjoyment of the fruit of

⁷ John Barton, “Natural Law and Poetic Justice in the Old Testament,” in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2003), 32–44, quote 38.

⁸ Barton, “Natural Law,” 33, quoting V. J. Bourke, “Natural Law,” in *Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (ed. J. Macquarrie; London: SCM, 1967). Barton originally used the term ‘natural law’ but in the reprint accepts John Rogerson’s ‘natural morality’. See Rogerson, “Old Testament Ethics,” 128; Barton, *Understanding*, 179, n.16. For other definitions of ‘natural law’ see Alan Johnson, “Is There a Biblical Warrant for Natural-Law Theories?” *JETS* 25 (1982): 185–99, especially 198–99.

⁹ Lists of texts can be found in John Barton, “Amos’s Oracles Against the Nations,” in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003), 77–129; Johnson, “Biblical Warrant”; Cyril Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land: Studies in Old Testament Ethics* (OTS; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 59–64; Markus Bockmuehl, “Natural Law in Second Temple Judaism” *VT* 45 (1995): 17–44, especially 18–28; Jon Levenson, “The Theologies of Commandment in Biblical Israel,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 17–33; Carol Newsom, “The Moral Sense of Nature: Ethics in the Light of God’s Speech to Job,” *PSB* 15 (1994): 15–27. On ‘Abraham’s question’ see Nathan MacDonald, “Listening to Abraham—Listening to Yhwh: Divine Justice and Mercy in Genesis 18:16–33,” *CBQ* 66 (2004): 25–42. For the debate about whether the wisdom literature is natural morality or merely accumulated experience see Levenson “Theologies of Commandment,” 26. On ‘natural theology’ in the Old Testament see James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology—The Gifford Lectures for 1991* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), 81–101.

¹⁰ See Terence Fretheim, *God and the World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), especially 140–44; James Bruckner, *Implied Law in the Abraham Narrative: A Literary and Theological Analysis* (JSOTSup 335; London: Sheffield, 2001), 44–50.

¹¹ Levenson, “Theologies of Commandment,” 32; cf. John Barton, *Ethics and the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1998), 72–76.

¹² Cf. Barr, *Biblical Faith*, 97–98; Ex 18; Hos 4.1–3, a text usually associated closely with the Decalogue. Levenson notes the “easy juxtaposition of Torah and creation” in Psalm 119, “Theologies of Commandment,” 28. For a contrary view see Joseph Jensen, *Ethical Dimensions of the Prophets* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 2–6.

the land.¹³ Second, this text presents a view of the prioritisation of goods, asserting that ‘large and beautiful houses’ or feasting should be less important than justice to the Judahites. Third, the identification of things as goods or evils, and their prioritisation, is either not always obvious or, if it is, people do not behave as they should.¹⁴ Perhaps the opacity of natural morality is what led the biblical writers to specify in more detail what sort of comportment was appropriate, most clearly in the ‘law’.

1.1.2 Old Testament Law

Christian writers have traditionally emphasised law as a source for ethics; and in cases of conflict have searched for a hierarchy of values. Norman Geisler calls his scheme ‘graded absolutism’.¹⁵ It is based upon three premises: the fact of higher and lower moral laws; the existence of unavoidable moral conflicts; and the absence of guilt for the unavoidable. Using the analogy of two cars simultaneously approaching a junction Geisler suggests that “when a person enters an ethical intersection where two laws come into unavoidable conflict, it is evident that one law must yield to the other”.¹⁶ He offers three signposts: love of God over love for people; obedience to God before government; and mercy before veracity.¹⁷ Despite Geisler’s assertion that this scale is divinely ordained,¹⁸ weaknesses include its very high level of abstraction, and the assumption that these pairings are themselves unproblematic, for example, that mercy and truth are mutually exclusive categories in situations of value conflict.

In terms of Old Testament ethics, Christopher Wright offers a more sophisticated proposal, arguing the law codes contain an implicit scale of values.¹⁹

¹³ Isa 5.8–12.

¹⁴ Daniel Carroll R. cautions that Barton does not take into account the difference between the existence of a consensus regarding moral convictions and natural law as philosophical or theological category, *Contexts for Amos: Prophetic Poetics in Latin American Perspective* (JSOTSup 132; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 131. This is an important point, although for appeal to ‘natural morality’ to be successful it must be widely recognised as an objective norm. Accepting Carroll’s distinction means the opposite may also be true: moral consensus can err—something with which Old Testament prophets would have concurred.

¹⁵ Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 113–32.

¹⁶ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 120.

¹⁷ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 121–22. Thus the deception by the midwives of the Hebrews was justifiable.

¹⁸ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 124–25. Geisler thinks that the hierarchy of laws does not emanate from God’s essence, but is simply an expression of God’s moral law, i.e. God is internally consistent.

¹⁹ Christopher Wright, “Ethics,” *NIDOTTE* 4.585–94, especially 593; idem, *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics* (Leicester: IVP, 1983), 163–68; idem, “Old Testament Ethics,” *NDCEPT* 48–55, especially 54; idem, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 305–14. Cf. Gordon J. Wenham, “Law and the legal system in the Old Testament,” in *Law, Morality and the Bible* (ed. B. N. Kaye and G. J. Wenham; Leicester; IVP, 1978),

According to Wright, the following ordering (in descending importance) is visible in the Decalogue: God, Sabbath for the good of the whole community, authority and integrity of the family, human life, sex and integrity of marriage, property, and judicial integrity.²⁰ Although YHWH is obviously the foundation and most important ‘value’, this ordering is problematic. Wright himself recognises that given the centrality of the ‘father’s house’ in the Old Testament its

strict sexual ethic must be seen in the context of [the] primary concern for preserving the stability of the larger family structure, since that in turn was an essential part of Israel’s understanding and experience of the covenant relationship between the nation and Yahweh.²¹

Furthermore, judicial integrity is connected both to individual wellbeing and justice within the community; and whilst the individual appears to be inferior to the family and community in Wright’s prioritisation, there are laws protecting the wellbeing of the individual from communal and familial tyranny.²²

Wright considers other laws also reveal a scale of values: life matters more than property; persons matter more than punishments; and needs matter more than rights and claims.²³ The justification of this ordering is based upon the fact that capital punishment is not prescribed for property and could not, according to Wright, be commuted for murder;²⁴ an interpretation of the *lex talionis* as restricting punishment along with limitations to judicial beating and the absence of bodily mutilation;²⁵ and the placing of human physical need above property rights.²⁶ Although significantly more nuanced and textually founded than Geisler, Wright’s scheme is insufficient for two reasons. First, on a technical level, although it is possible that Old Testament law reflects a scale of values, a finer tool is necessary to sketch it with sufficient precision for it be useful in more than a handful of straightforward cases. Second, legal values are not the only relevant ones for Old Testament ethics.²⁷ Gordon Wenham highlights the important,

²⁰ 24–52, especially 29.

²¹ Wright, “Ethics,” 593.

²² Wright, “Old Testament Ethics,” 54.

²³ E.g. Deut 19.15–21; 21.18–21.

²⁴ Wright, “Ethics,” 593.

²⁵ On whether capital punishment was always executed see also McKeating, “Sanctions”; Kaiser, *Toward*, 297–99; Gordon Wenham, *Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 281–86.

²⁶ With the single exception of Deut 25.11.

²⁷ Deut 23.24–5; 24.19–22.

²⁷ Something Wright would not contest. See also Gordon Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (OTS; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 2, where he criticises Otto for an exclusive focus upon law, cf. Eckhart Otto, *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer,

albeit not absolute, difference between law and ethics.

In most societies what the law enforces is not the same as what upright members of that society feel is socially desirable, let alone ideal. There is a link between moral ideals and law, but law tends to be a pragmatic compromise between the legislators' ideals and what can be enforced in practice.²⁸

Although Old Testament 'law' is frequently paraenetic, this difference means that even if were possible exactly to delineate the law's scale of values it may prove insufficient to resolve particular value conflicts. Wright himself observes that narratives might shed light on cases of moral conflict since "actors in a story have to make choices according to some implicit prioritizing even of the Ten Commandments".²⁹ This is suggestive, although I propose it is unnecessary to suppose either that law always precedes narrative, or that the matter need be restricted to the Decalogue.

Despite these cautions it is possible that law does assist the resolution of value clashes. I remarked above that natural morality can be conceived as an expression of the way moral goods should be organised. It is possible to view revealed law in the same way. Consider, for example, Exodus 22.2–3: 'If a thief is found breaking in, and is beaten to death, no bloodguilt is incurred; but if it happens after sunrise, bloodguilt is incurred'. The two moral goods in view are human life and property. The law states that life is more important than belongings, refusing to exculpate the daytime killing of an intruder when, one assumes, the owners of the house could both see and overpower the thief. At night, however, the risk to the lives of household members is heightened, since a ruckus in the dark could easily lead to injury to the residents themselves, and so there is no culpability should the trespasser be bludgeoned to death. In both cases the good of human life is preferred: during the day, life is preferred to property; during the night, the life of the innocent to that of a guilty intruder. Three observations are in order. First, I propose that the fundamental issue at stake in law is the desirability of a moral good or evil vis-à-vis other moral goods or evils. Second, laws can indicate the prioritisation of goods to be adopted in particular cases. Third, the prioritisation reflected in these laws may depend upon the circumstances of a situation. This is obviously so with casuistic laws, but even apodictic decrees must be employed in concrete circumstances. In this

²⁸ 1994); idem, "Of Aims and Methods in Hebrew Bible Ethics," *Semeia* 66 (1994): 161–172.

²⁹ Gordon Wenham, "The Gap between Law and Ethics in the Bible," *JJS* 48 (1997): 17–29, quote 18.

²⁹ Christopher Wright, *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 1995), 143.

respect, it is important to observe that Old Testament codes were not used in the same way as modern laws, which are applied by a judge to specific cases. If a similar approach is taken to Old Testament law it can lead to questions like: ‘What if a son is rebellious but not a drunkard?’.³⁰ Bernard Jackson argues that the “modern model of law, based upon the ‘application’ of statutes in court, is not applicable to the ancient Near East. The ‘codes’ have a different purpose – didactic, sapiential, monumental.”³¹ ‘Law’, therefore, had a similar function to the wisdom literature, but in a different environment: the wisdom sayings provided guidance for the young whilst the law codes were to educate adults, perhaps especially elders.³² In neither case were either wisdom or legal stipulations ‘applied’, but used to inform individuals’ judgments in particular situations.

It seems Old Testament legal texts may provide some help in the resolution of value conflicts, but that they do not tell the whole story. It is necessary to look at other sources of norms for moral living, starting with God himself.

1.1.3 Imitation of God

Several scholars suggest that imitation of God is a vital premise of Old Testament ethics.³³ Cyril Rodd, however, is sharply critical, branding the concept of

³⁰ Cf. Deut 21.18–20; Jonathan Burnside, *The Signs of Sin: Seriousness of Offence in Biblical Law* (JSOTSup 364; London: Continuum, 2003), 16.

³¹ Bernard Jackson, “Ideas of Law and Legal Administration: a Semiotic Approach” in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 185–202, quote 186. For a more extensive justification of this thesis see idem, “Models in Legal History: The Case of Biblical Law,” *JLR* 18 (2002–2003): 1–30; idem, *Wisdom—Laws: The Mishpatim of Exodus 21:1–22:16* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 3–76. On ANE judicial procedure see Franco Pintore, “La Estructura Jurídica,” in *El Alba de la Civilización: Sociedad, economía y pensamiento en el Próximo Oriente Antiguo* (ed. S. Moscati; trans. J. L. Albizu; Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1987), 430–523, especially 499–518.

³² Cf. Jackson, “Ideas of law”; James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (London: SCM, 1982). For the Old Testament’s own presentation of the use of law see James Watts, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch* (BS 59; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 15–31.

³³ See Barton, “Understanding,” 29–30; idem, “The Basis of Ethics in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003), 45–54, especially 50–54; Eichrodt, *Theology* 2.373; Otto, *Ethik*, 185; Wright, *Living*, 26–28; Kaiser, *Toward*, 143; Verne Fletcher, “The Shape of Old Testament Ethics,” *SJT* 24 (1959): 47–73, especially 57–61; Eryl Davies, “Walking in God’s Ways: The Concept of *Imitatio Dei* in the Old Testament,” in *In Search of True Wisdom* (ed. Edward Ball; JSOTSup 300; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1999), 99–115, especially 100–101, where he notes the importance of ‘imitating God’ within the rabbinic tradition. Barton is more cautious in his subsequent article, “Imitation of God in the Old Testament,” in *The God of Israel* (UCOP 64; ed. R. P. Gordon; Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 35–46. For a though survey of the evidence and measured discussion see also Walter Houston, “The Character of YHWH and the Ethics of the Old Testament: Is *Imitatio Dei*

imitatio Dei, “a scholarly wish”.³⁴

The clearest indication of *imitatio Dei* is usually thought to be Leviticus 19.2: ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy’.³⁵ Wenham considers this not merely the levitical motto, “but the key to biblical ethical theory”.³⁶ According to Wright, the text declares that Israel’s “quality of life...must reflect the very heart of God’s character”.³⁷ Waldemar Janzen disagrees. He opines that ‘holiness’ speaks of ‘otherness’ and questions whether the same standard of perfection can be applied to Creator and created, before concluding that it is impossible for humans to imitate *God’s* perfection.³⁸ A key issue is the nature of holiness.³⁹ Mary Douglas argues holiness signifies completeness and the normal order of things.⁴⁰ Given that God is ‘normally’ holy, Isaiah describes God as the ‘Holy One of Israel’ and Hosea uses the title ‘Holy

³⁴ Appropriate?,” *JTS* 58 (2007): 1–25.

³⁵ Rodd, *Glimpses*, 73.

³⁶ Cf. Lev 11.44; 20.7, 26; 21.8.

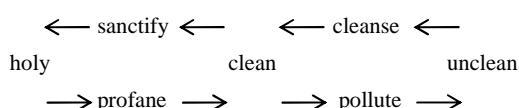
³⁷ Wenham, “Gap,” 27.

³⁸ Wright, *Living*, 27; cf. Matt 5.48.

³⁹ Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 115–16. He allows a formal comparison only: God perfectly fulfills his expectations of himself; humans should do perfectly what God expects *them* to do. Rodd asserts that the imitation of God “rests ultimately on the belief in a God who has been brought down to the human level, and this God is never found in the Old Testament”, *Glimpses*, 76. In other words, the fact that God is holy precludes imitative human holiness. This is problematic for two reasons. First, Janzen appears to depend upon Rudolf Otto’s attenuated concept of the holy as the numinous other in *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (2nd ed.; trans. J. W. Harvey; New York: OUP, 1950), especially, 25–30; for a critique see, *inter alia*, Walter Moberly, *Bible, Theology and Faith* (CSCD; Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 88–96. Second, excluding imitation on these grounds thereby disallows all talk of God, since if the deity’s ways are so far beyond human comprehension no theological can reflection occur, and even the affirmation that God’s ways are far above human ways would be impossible—hence Isa 55.8–9 does not support Rodd’s case.

⁴⁰ For a survey of views see Philip Jenson, “Holiness in the Priestly Writings of the Old Testament” in *Holiness: Past & Present* (ed. S. C. Barton; London: Continuum, 2003), 93–121.

⁴¹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 53–54: “Holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused.” For a critical summary of Douglas see Walter Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (JSOTSup 140; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 93–114, 120–22. Wenham observes that movement between classes is sometimes possible, subject to ritual restrictions, especially sacrifice, *Leviticus*, 18–29. He presents his schema in diagrammatic form:



Jackie Naudé notes, “there is a dynamism associated with those objects typified by the adj. ...all possess the ability to move things or people into, or at least toward, the realm of the divine”, “שְׁקָדֵם,” *NIDOTTE* 3.877–87, quote 881.

One'.⁴¹ Whilst Isaiah employs some of the Old Testament's most exalted language to describe God, he also proclaims that, "holiness calls".⁴² Although God's holiness should evoke human holiness, is this the same as imitation? Rodd asserts that to, "imitate God is to attempt to recreate in the life of Israel and the activities of the individual the virtues and actions of God".⁴³ He claims that this is distinct from merely 'mirroring' God by obeying commands or natural law. Rodd overreacts, first, because God's character is frequently linked to human conduct. In Deuteronomy, for example, the attributes of love, mercy, compassion and justice are highlighted, and the authors expect these virtues to be evident in his people.⁴⁴ A similar perspective is found in the prophetic literature, where God's will is related to his character as well as the law. As Eryl Davies comments, "[s]ince the ethical behaviour of the people was to flow naturally from the apprehension of God's character, it was clearly a matter of grave concern for the prophets that there appeared to be no 'knowledge of God' in the land".⁴⁵ Similarly, mention of moral virtues in the Psalms was "designed to inculcate the same ethical values in the worshipper".⁴⁶ Narratives are more problematic, however, because the deity sometimes acts in ways that are thought inappropriate for imitation.⁴⁷ The second reason for thinking Rodd overreacts is that the behaviour demanded of Israelites emulates God's actions. Deuteronomy 10.12–19 exhorts imitation of God by Israel

⁴¹ Isa 1.4; 10.20; 17.7; 30.12; 40.25; 43.14–15; 45.11; 50.5; cf. 2 Kgs 19.22; Jer 50.29; 52.5; Ezek 39.7. Note also the description of God as holy without using this phrase in Isa 6.3–5; Hos 11.9; 11.12[12.1]; cf. 1 Sam 2.2; 6.19–20; Ps 22.3[4]; 99.3; Hab 1.12.

⁴² John Gammie, *Holiness in Israel* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 96. Gammie identifies various ways in which the Old Testament presents Israel's response to God's holiness: priests considered the demand of holiness to be ritual purity and separation, prophets called for the purity of social justice and sages advocated individual right living, although he recognises that these categories are more heuristic than hermetic. This approach is more sophisticated than the standard dictionary articles which emphasise holiness as purity or consecration, although Naudé provides a more nuanced analysis, noting that the noun and adjective, "have linguistic ranges that do not overlap significantly", "קדש," 881; cf. David Wright, "Holiness (OT)," *ABD* 3:237–49; Helmer Ringgren, "קדש, qds," *TDOT* 12:527–43;

⁴³ Rodd, *Glimpses*, 73.

⁴⁴ See Deut 4.31; 6.5; 7.7–8; 14.28–29; 16.19–20; 30.3; 32.4.

⁴⁵ Davies, "Walking," 106; cf. Mic 6.8; Hos 4.1; 5.4; 6.6; Jer 4.22; 5.4–5; 9.3, 6.

⁴⁶ Davies, "Walking," 106. See also Houston, "Character of YHWH," 13–14; Wright, *Living*, 28; Wright, *Walking*, 139–40; Gammie, *Holiness*, 129–33; Ps 25.6; 33.5; 37.28; 119.156; 146.6–9. The parallel acrostic Psalms 111 and 112 are especially illustrative: the righteousness of both God and the upright endures forever (Ps 111.3; 112.3), both are gracious and merciful (Ps 111.4; 112.4); God gives food to his worshippers the godly give to the needy (Ps 111.5; 112.9) and both act justly (Ps 111.7; 111.5). Thus there is no reason to limit moral action by 'those who fear the LORD', the subjects of Psalm 112, to 'mirroring' divine attributes, perhaps by obeying the law. This is one way of doing so but, *pace* Rodd, deliberate imitation is another. Indeed, this appears to be enjoined by the juxtaposition of the psalms.

⁴⁷ On 1 Sam 26.19 Barton comments that "God may persecute David if God chooses, even through the agency of Saul; humans following their own volition may not", "Basis," 51. See also Houston, "Character of YHWH," 42–45; Barton, "Imitation," 20–25.

based upon the paradigmatic event of the exodus, but Wright astutely observes that whilst God's "action for Israel was paradigmatic *for them*...it was also paradigmatic *of God*", that is, it revealed what God was like.⁴⁸ The fact that the response demanded of Israel is not labelled 'imitation' is besides the point.⁴⁹ Barton concludes that the "sense of community of moral perception between God and humanity, which seems inherent in the idea of imitating God, takes us well beyond the few texts which in so many words tell their readers to behave as God does".⁵⁰

To conclude, although imitation of God is a facet of the Old Testament's moral programme, its importance can be over-pressed.⁵¹ In terms of resolution of value conflicts it does not seem to offer anything distinctive. The laws that comprise the literary context of Leviticus 19.2, for example, are elsewhere enjoined.⁵² This

⁴⁸ Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBC 4; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 150. Emphasis original. Note Ze'ev Falk's comment that "God is not only the commander but also the paradigm of all moral conduct", "Law and Ethics in the Hebrew Bible," in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence* (ed. H. G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman; JSOTSup 137; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 83. Deut 10.12–19 is adduced by several writers, e.g., Wright, *Living*, 27–28; Davies, "Walking," 102–103; Barton, "Basis," 51; Fletcher, "Shape," 58. Rodd accepts that *this* passage might support *imitatio Dei*, but denies other instances of 'walking in God's ways' endorse the concept, strictly defined, *Glimpses*, 330–33. He is correct. Within Deuteronomy all other occurrences elucidate the phrase with reference to commandments (Deut 8.6; 11.22: 19.9; 26.17; 28.9; 30.16 and, negatively, Deut 13.5[6]). Incidences within the Deuteronomistic History associate walking in God's ways with law, both positively (Josh 22.5; 1 Kgs 3.14; 8.58; 11.38 and 1 Kgs 2.4, in which the walking is to be 'in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul', a clear reference to the Deuteronomic law) and negatively (Judg 2.17–22; 1 Kgs 11.33; and 1 Kgs 15.26, 34; 16.2, 19, 26; 22.52; 2 Kgs 8.18, 27. 'Sin' is a synonym for *not* walking in God's way, cf. 2 Kgs 16.3; 21.21–22), rather than imitating his character or action. The Chronicler fuses the two, speaking of Jehoshaphat as having 'walked in his commandments' (2 Chr 17.4; cf. 2 Chr 6.16, 27, 31; 11.17; 17.3; 20.32; 21.6, 12–13; 22.3; 28.2; 34.2). The psalmist predicts judgment upon 'those who walk in their guilty ways'; and presents a strong contrast with 'the way that is blameless', that is, 'the law of the LORD' (Ps 68.21; 119.1). It is significant that this way is taught, since this strengthens the link between 'walking in the way' and law, rather than imitation (Ps 86.11, cf. Ps 81.13). Instruction in the way is central to the wisdom literature (Prov 4.10–27; 8.32); and, among the prophets, Isaiah's eschatological vision has many peoples voyaging to Zion so that God can teach them his ways (Isa 2.2–3, cf. 30.21; 42.24 and, negatively, 8.11; 59.8; 65.2. Note also the similar vision in Micah 4.2). In the meantime Jeremiah notes a more typical response: God's people refuse to walk in his ways, that is, they reject his teaching (Jer 6.16–19, cf. Jer 7.23; Hos 14.9). It appears, therefore, that 'walking in the ways of the LORD' speaks more of obedience than imitation as commonly conceived.

⁴⁹ In terms of methodology, Rodd demands too much when he requires the biblical text to offer a "clear and categorical" statement of Old Testament ethics as imitation of God, *Glimpses*, 72. A better standard is adequate evidence, which should, of course, be properly grounded, Barton, "Imitation," 39.

⁵⁰ Barton, "Basis," 52. Barton argues the vocation of particular individuals also witnesses to "the possibility of the divine life and human life running in parallel", "Basis," 53. Whether this is, as Barton claims, a special sort of imitation demanded only of selected individuals is debateable; it is equally possible that these characters are notable for living the life to which all should aspire.

⁵¹ Barton probably overstates the case when he posits that imitation of God is, "a potentially unifying theme for much that the Hebrew Bible has to say about ethics", "Basis," 52. He is more measured in "Imitation," 45–46. See also Houston's nuanced conclusion, "Character of YHWH", 25.

⁵² Davies states that "the kind of holiness here envisaged was thoroughly practical in its orientation, for it entailed the fulfilment of specific social obligations, such as filial respect towards parents (19.3),

assessment is not entirely negative, however, for if, as suggested above, laws are statements about moral goods then the link to God's character might give these goods a degree of objectivity. The next section investigates moral goods in more detail.

1.2 MORAL GOODS

The Old Testament declares God to be unambiguously good,⁵³ and it is unsurprising, therefore, that Kaiser should assert the “standard of the good, the right, the just, and the acceptable is nothing less than the person of the living God”.⁵⁴ Despite the promise that an imitative ethic coupled with the goodness of God might appear to offer, few scholars have considered ‘being good’ an important focus for the study of Old Testament ethics.⁵⁵ On the contrary, commentators are often more impressed by mundane ‘goods’. Note, for example, the remarks of Newman Smyth:

the idea of the highest good which is to be derived from the prophetic literature of the Old Testament is the summation...of all those material goods—such as plentiful harvests, springs of water, increase of cattle, a vine and fig tree for every man, peace and prosperity within all the borders of a land flowing with milk and honey,—which make a people contented and prosperous.⁵⁶

In this section I will ask what is ‘good’ according to the Old Testament, and how an understanding of goods might aid resolution of value conflicts.

generosity to the poor at harvest (19.9–10), compassion towards the infirm (19.14), integrity in the judicial process (19.5) and honesty in commercial transactions (19.35–36), “Walking,” 101; cf. Wright, *Living*, 26–27; Deut 5.16 (filial respect); Deut 10.19 (generosity); Deut 19.15–21 (judicial integrity); Deut 5.19–20 (honesty).

⁵³ See H. J. Stoebe, “תּוֹב *tôb Bueno*,” *DTMAT* 1.902–918. E.g. Ps 31.19; 86.5; 100.5; 106.1; 107.1; 118.1, 29; 145.7, 9; also 1 Chr 16.34; Ezra 3.11; Jer 33.11; Nah 1.7; cf. Mk 10.18. Note the parallelism of seeking God and seeking good in Amos 5.4, 6, 14–15 and the rejection of good as rejection of God in Hos 8.3. God’s name is good in Ps 52.9 [11]; and he is ‘good to Israel’ Ps 73.1. Further, in Ex 33.19 God tells Moses that he will make his goodness pass before him, cf. Ex 31.6–7.

⁵⁴ Kaiser, *Toward*, 6.

⁵⁵ Two exceptions are Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 368–74; Bruce Birch, “Moral Agency, Community, and the Character of God in the Hebrew Bible,” *Semeia* 66 (1994): 23–41; idem, “Divine Character and the Formation of Moral Community in the Book of Exodus,” in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium* (ed. J.W. Rogerson, M. Davies and M.D. Carroll R.; JSOTSup 207; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 119–135. Note also the recent interest in virtue ethics in the Old Testament: John Barton, “Virtue in the Bible,” in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003), 65–74; M. Daniel Carroll R. and Jacqueline E. Lapsely, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); M Daniel Carroll R., “La ética de los profetas y su relevancia para América Latina hoy: La contribución de la ética filosófica,” *Kairós* 35 (2005): 7–30.

⁵⁶ Newman Smyth, *Christian Ethics* (3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1892), 92. Cf. George Berry, “The Ethical Teaching of the Old Testament,” *BW* 21 (1903): 108–18, especially 111–12.

1.2.1 Good in the Old Testament

In a canonical context the first thing described as ‘good’ is creation itself.⁵⁷ Gerhard von Rad thinks that טוב “contains less an aesthetic judgment than the designation of purpose, correspondence”.⁵⁸ According to Norman Whybray it is creation’s usefulness to people that is in view.⁵⁹ This coheres with the general usage of ‘good’ identified by Robert Gordon: “a state or function appropriate to genre, purpose, or situation”.⁶⁰ Thus it is ‘not good’ that animals are unable to be a companion for Adam, that is, they cannot serve this function. Christopher Wright, however, sees in the creation narratives a description of “a place of order, system and structure. We live in a cosmos, not a chaos...[which] provides an objective basis and authority for the exercise of moral freedom and sets limits to moral relativism.”⁶¹ He continues

There is a basic shape to that world which we did not invent, and therefore a corresponding shape to the moral response required of us if we are to live within it with the kind of freedom which, by God’s so ordering, it authorizes. Morality, in biblical terms, therefore, is preconditioned by the given shape of creation, which underlies the relativity of cultural responses to it within history.⁶²

Similarly, Walter Houston argues that if the Old Testament writers “perceive that they do not live in a just society, at least they live in a just world. The world, or to put it in

⁵⁷ Gen 1.4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31. Moral goods are not always described using טוב, which is used as both verb and adjective, the difference not always easily distinguishable, cf. Robert Gordon, “טוֹב,” *NIDOTTE* 2.353. See also I. Höver-Johag, “טוֹב *tôb*; טוב *tûb*; יְטוּב *yîb*,” *TDOT* 5.296–317; Luis Alonso Schökel, “טוֹב,” *DBHE* 291–93; Stoebe, “טוֹב *tôb Bueno*,” 902–918; BDB 373–75. I take the כִּי in Gen 1.4 *et passim* to be emphatic, so Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (NICOT 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 118; J. Gerald Janzen, “Kugel’s Adverbial *kî tôb*: An Assessment,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 99–106; *pace* James Kugel, “The Adverbial Use of *Kî TÔB*,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 433–35.

⁵⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (OTL; trans. J. H. Marks; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 50.

⁵⁹ Norman Whybray, “Genesis,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (ed. J. Barton and J. Muddiman; Oxford: OUP, 2001), 38–66, especially 42. Contrast the translations ‘God was pleased with what he saw’ (Speiser), or ‘God saw how beautiful it was’ (Hamilton), which point to some sort of intrinsic goodness, cf. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB 1; New York: Doubleday, 1964), 3, 5; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 118, 124. Wenham thinks that both ‘fitness for purpose’ and a reflection of the goodness of God in his works is meant, cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Waco: Word, 1987), 18.

⁶⁰ Gordon, “טוֹב,” 353; cf. Höver-Johag, “טוֹב *tôb*,” 304. The Old Testament frequently highlights instrumental, rather than intrinsic, goodness with the construction ‘טוֹב ל’, ‘good for’ or ‘good to’, Alonso Schökel, “טוֹב,” 291–93.

⁶¹ Wright, “Old Testament Ethics,” 49. cf. Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (2nd ed.; Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 31–52.

⁶² Wright, “Old Testament Ethics,” 49. On the priestly vision of natural order in the first chapters of Genesis see William Brown, *Structure, Role, and Ideology in the Hebrew and Greek Texts of Genesis 1:1–2:3* (SBLDS 132; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 214–20. Note discussion of the contention that such an orderly view is hegemonic, utopian ‘royal’ ideology, pages 225–29.

theological terms, God's creation, is ordered and therefore exhibits justice".⁶³ That Wright and Houston are correct to identify an ethical and not merely functional created order is confirmed by the biblical author's evaluation of the immoral behaviour of humankind in Genesis 6.5, which mirrors God's initial positive appraisal. Whilst 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good', post-Fall, 'The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually'.⁶⁴ Furthermore, it is unnecessary to drive a wedge between creation as instrumentally good and creation as good because it possess a moral order, for one aspect of this ordering is teleological.⁶⁵

Genesis 3 attributes the Fall to the primeval couple's consumption of fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁶⁶ Scholars debate whether this knowledge is moral awareness or a totality of knowledge inappropriate for humans,⁶⁷ but the important aspect of this phrase for our purposes is that good and evil are a contrasting pair.⁶⁸ The impossibility of achieving both at the same time explains Amos' injunction to 'seek good and not evil', a text that has a clear covenantal matrix.⁶⁹ Amos rails against Israel's unjust practices on the understanding that the reconciliation of justice and other goods is straightforward. In other places, however, the Old Testament is aware that moral living is more complicated. For example, Psalm 85.10[11], this chapter's epigraph, envisages a time when 'faithfulness and truth meet; justice and well-

⁶³ Walter Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (LHB / OTS 428; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 15.

⁶⁴ Gen 1.31; 6.5.

⁶⁵ The other is generic. On whether a Platonic (A ordered to serve B) or Aristotelian (A ordered to flourish as A) conception of teleological ordering is to be preferred see O'Donovan, *Resurrection*, 34.

⁶⁶ Gen 2.9, 17.

⁶⁷ For a summary of the debate see Gordon, "תָּוֹב," 354–55. A moral interpretation of the idiom 'good and evil' is suggested by 1 Kgs 3.9; Isa 7.15, 17; Deut 1.39, but it does not fit 2 Sam 19.35[36], cf. Speiser, *Genesis*, 26. Von Rad is unequivocal when he states that 'good and evil' is "a formal way of saying what we mean by our colorless 'everything'" *Genesis*, 86–87. 'Everything' could, of course, include a moral evaluation, and it is certain that some instances of the expression do refer to ethical discernment; for references and discussion see Höver-Johag, "תָּוֹב *tôb*," 309–11.

⁶⁸ Gordon calls the need to choose between good and evil a "two-way theology", "תָּוֹב," 354. Cf. Deut 30.15; Jer 21.8.

⁶⁹ Amos 5.12. 'The good' is occasionally a synonym for the covenant, see Antonio González Lamadrid, "Pax et Bonum: «Shalom» y «*tôb*» en relación con «berit»," *EstBib* 28 (1969): 61–77; idem, "Apuntes sobre תָּוֹב / יְתָבֵךְ y su traducción en las Biblias modernas," *EstBib* 50 (1992): 443–56; Michael Fox, "Tôb as Covenant Terminology," *BASOR* 209 (1973): 41–42; Michael Barré, "The Formulaic Pair תָּוֹב (ו)חַסְדָּךְ in the Psalter," *ZAW* 98 (1986): 100–105, cf. Höver-Johag, "תָּוֹב *tôb*," 309. On the dynamics of good and evil, i.e. whether good always produces good, etc., see Mignon Jacobs, "The Conceptual Dynamics of Good and Evil in the Joseph Story: An Exegetical and Hermeneutical Inquiry," *JSOT* 27 (2003): 309–38.

being kiss'.⁷⁰ These goods are often difficult to achieve simultaneously because, for instance, being loyal to one person can mean deceiving another, therefore concurrent realization of loyalty and truth, or justice and peace, is God's gift. Thus the psalmist sums up his vision of people acting morally with the phrase 'the LORD will give the good'.⁷¹ This ample conception of the good is juxtaposed with a productive land. Kirkpatrick offers a pithy summary: "Material prosperity will go hand in hand with moral progress. Earth responds to the divine blessing."⁷² Psalm 85, therefore, presents a vision not only of individual goods, but recognises that they are often difficult to achieve at the same time: only with divine blessing can a conflict of moral values be overcome.⁷³

Many other things are considered 'good' in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the comparative construction **מן טוב** points to a suggested prioritisation of goods, although many of the sayings are general.⁷⁴ Norman Whybray, in the only sustained study of goods in the Old Testament, collates them into twelve categories, suggesting that together they comprise a vision of 'the good life'.⁷⁵ It is instructive to examine his work in more detail.

1.2.2 The 'Good Life'

Whybray defines the good life as "a desirable state of happiness and prosperity"

⁷⁰ JPS Tanakh (1985); MT נְשַׁקָּו (qal), without object, although many translations read נְשַׁקָּנוּ (niphil), 'kiss each other'; Kraus argues נְשַׁקָּו (niphil of נִשְׁקָה, 'rush together') would be a better emendation, thus 'embrace each other', cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Los Salmos II: Salmos 60–150* (trans. C. Ruiz-Garrido; Salamanca: Sígueme, 1995), 262; also Arnold Anderson, *Psalms (73–150)* (NCBC; London: Marshal, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 612. Notwithstanding emendations the meaning is clear: these goods will be realised together, regardless of the usual difficulties of doing so. Kidner expresses it thus: "The prevailing concept...is that of concord: vast, unspoilt and rich with life" Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150* (TOTC; Leicester: IVP, 1975), 309 (although without accepting his view that verse 10 speaks of atonement); *pace* Marvin Tate, who sees no conflict between the goods, *Psalms 51–100* (WBC 20; Waco: Word, 1990), 366. A. F. Kirkpatrick asks whether these are divine attributes or human virtues, concluding, with many commentators, that these goods are personifications of YHWH's agency in the world. He recognises, however, that there is no need to exclude human virtue, indeed, this is the prominent thought in the next verses, cf. *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: CUP, 1902), 513–14; Prov 3.3; Isa 32.16; Tate, *Psalms*, 371; Kraus, *Salmos II*, 268–69.

⁷¹ My translation.

⁷² Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, 514.

⁷³ Verse 13[14] frames the question in terms of walking in God's ways, and hence obedience to the law, see above.

⁷⁴ Especially in Proverbs: 12.9; 15.16–17; 21.9, 19; 25.7; 27.5, 10; Eccl 4.6, 9; 5.4[5]; 7.10. See also the goods listed in reply to the question 'what is good?' in Eccl 1.3; 2.3, 22; 3.9; 5.15[16]; 6.8, 12; 10.10–11; for comprehensive lists see Gordon, "טֹב"; Höver-Johag, "טֹב tōb,". There are similar rhetorical statements in prose e.g., 1 Sam 1.8; 15.28. For other frequent constructions with טֹב see Alonso Schökel, "טֹב," 291–93.

⁷⁵ Norman Whybray, *The Good Life in the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002).

and “a life of entire contentment with things as they are”.⁷⁶ He reviews the elements that comprise this ideal state by biblical book.⁷⁷ What each good signifies depends upon the text being examined, or even the development of the plot within a book. For example, within the Old Testament canon, possession of the land is presented as first a promise, then a reality, and then ‘paradise lost’; and within the former prophets there is relative insecurity under Saul, security under David and Solomon, and eventual exile. Despite these vicissitudes the *land*, the first element of the good life described by Whybray, is an integral part of the vision of the ideal.⁷⁸ It is a place of *security*, which, he posits, is “the most fundamental of human goods”.⁷⁹ He argues that it is the good of *power* that enables secure possession of the land. Who exercises power is a theme of 1 Samuel 8. The prophet cautions that the pressing need for national restoration should not lead to precipitate decisions, painting a picture of ‘the bad life’ under an ancient Near Eastern monarch as a reversal of what YHWH had given Israel.⁸⁰ Note that injustice forms a key part of this portrayal: the king would enjoy the good life, but at the expense of his subjects. Apart from the very worst times, however, Israel is presented as benefiting from strong leaders possessing divinely endowed authority as they attempt to obtain peace and security for the people. One benefit of a securely held land is the produce or *food* it yields. ‘A land flowing with milk and honey’ is the epitome of this aspect of the vision of the good life.⁸¹ In the face of the danger of famine regular harvests are a blessing from God, and the Old Testament asserts that the rains necessary for the land’s fecundity are under his control.⁸² A *long life* is a further characteristic of the blessed good life. Whybray summarises

The precariousness of life with the possibility of serious illness or death

⁷⁶ Whybray, *Good Life*, 4. He acknowledges that ‘the good life’ is not a biblical expression.

⁷⁷ Excepting Obadiah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Habakkuk, which, Whybray maintains, do not contain information about the good life, *Good Life*, xi. In the following discussion I will illustrate, where necessary, by reference to the books of Samuel, since the moral conflict I examine later in the dissertation is found in 1 Samuel.

⁷⁸ On the land as *good gift* see Norbert Lohfink, “God the Creator and the Stability of Heaven and Earth,” in *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (trans. L. M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 116–35, especially 126–27.

⁷⁹ Whybray, *Good Life*, 4.

⁸⁰ Cf. Whybray, *Good Life*, 72–77. On the religious justification for social stratification in the ANE see Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (London: SCM, 1979), 498–554.

⁸¹ Cf. Ex 3.8, 17; 13.5; 33.3; Lev 20.24; Num 16.13; Deut 6.3; 11.9; 26.9, 15; 27.3; Jos 5.6; Jer 11.5; 32.22; Ezek 20.6, 15

⁸² טוֹב is sometimes a euphemism for ‘rain’, cf. Höver-Johag, “טוֹב *tôb*,” 305; but not, in my view, in Ps 85.12[13], *pace* Gordon, “טוֹב,” 356. On the theological importance of YHWH’s control of the elements see Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC 7; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 132–34.

by violence led the Israelites also to place great emphasis on *long life*, and especially on the ideal of a ‘good old age’ – a long life lived to the full in peace and prosperity.⁸³

In the books of Samuel, for example, David and Barzillai are credited with advanced years. Old age is not unambiguous, however, since Eli is old, but enfeebled.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, a prophetic anticipation of premature death can signify divine judgment.⁸⁵ *Material prosperity* is regarded as a natural consequence of these goods. Although riches are associated with wickedness, especially in the latter prophets, wealth is not intrinsically evil, but is more often associated with divine blessing.⁸⁶ Indeed, poverty is viewed negatively,⁸⁷ and the misery caused by Philistine aggression is portrayed as a negation of the good life.⁸⁸ The *family* is the arena in which food and material goods are enjoyed, and throughout the Old Testament the continuity of the kin group, conceived in terms of male heirs to inherit patrimony and continue the ‘family line’, is a prominent preoccupation. Harmonious family and communal living is summed up by Whybray under the rubric of *justice*, for which end many of the Old Testament’s *laws*, are formulated. *Wisdom* is another aspect of the good life he identifies, as is the good of *pleasure*. Finally, Whybray finds that living with reference to *God* himself is a key component of the Old Testament’s view of the good life. He contends that the “idea that people could enjoy the good life without reference to the gods would have been unthinkable in the ancient world”⁸⁹

Are the broad categories of goods that comprise the good life prioritised in the text? A preliminary observation is that the answer to this question will depend upon the passage being examined and, therefore, the context of the authors and their theological concerns. Overall, Whybray plumps for security expressed as possession of the land as the chief good.⁹⁰ In the books of Samuel, however, he thinks the principle of family continuity is especially prominent, echoing Smyth’s conclusion (under the sub-title of

⁸³ Whybray, *Good Life*, 5. Emphasis original. E.g. 1 Kgs 3.11; 2 Chr 1.11; Ps 91.16; Prov. 3.16; 28.16.

⁸⁴ 1 Sam. 4.15; cf. David’s final state 1 Kgs 1.1–4.

⁸⁵ 2 Sam 12.13–19. Note the contrary activity of prophetic healing: 1 Kgs 17.17–24; 2 Kgs 4.18–37; 5.1–19; 20.1–7.

⁸⁶ See Nabal in 1 Sam 25.

⁸⁷ E.g. David’s description of himself as ‘poor and insignificant’ (1 Sam 18.23), the poor shepherd in Nathan’s parable (2 Sam 12.1–6), cf. the risk of debt slavery for a poor woman’s child in 2 Kgs 4.1–7.

⁸⁸ 1 Sam 13.6, 19–22.

⁸⁹ Whybray, *Good Life*, 6.

⁹⁰ Cf. Whybray, *Good Life*, 288.

‘The Old Testament conception of the supreme good’)⁹¹ that “family life and its blessing came first in the divine order of blessing”.⁹² Perhaps the crux of the matter is the definition of each good. Whybray defines ‘family life’ as “the sense of an intimate community in which husband and wife, parents and children and brothers lived together”, so it is unsurprising that he thinks it “is depicted only comparatively rarely”.⁹³ I propose that a different understanding of this good may lead interpreters to perceive it as more widespread, and thus more influential in terms of the moral actions portrayed in the text. Understanding Old Testament ethics, therefore, necessitates an adequate comprehension of the nature of the moral goods presented in the text.

The benefit of seeking particular goods, or observing laws that are statements about the limits to achieving goods, is sometimes advocated by reference to their consequences. In the next section I examine the motives for moral behaviour found in the Old Testament, and the extent to which they provide resources for the resolution of value conflicts.

1.3 MORAL MOTIVES

Eichrodt considered ‘the fear of God’ the dominant motive for moral comportment.⁹⁴ Johannes Hempel concurred, suggesting that divine power was moderated by love.

Behind all sayings of Yahweh there is the same authority of his tremendous power, shown first of all in the liberation from Egypt, and of his anger, shown in his punishing the people in the wilderness. From this authority the two main motives of Israel’s ethics gained their historical and not at all dogmatic reason: to fear and to love him.⁹⁵

The emphasis upon YHWH as the sole source of motivation is followed by other authors.⁹⁶ Theodore Vriezen, while perceiving both a divine and cultural source, views

⁹¹ Here supreme is used as synonym for ‘highest’, as evidenced in the section title ‘The Biblical Doctrine of the Highest Good’, Smyth, *Christian Ethics*, 88; Whybray, *Good Life*, 88.

⁹² Smyth, *Christian Ethics*, 89. Although Smyth contends that this later became a national good, and then a vision of “social welfare to be realized in righteousness in the reign of the Holy One of Israel”, Smyth, *Christian Ethics*, 92. It is not necessary, of course, to think that family and national concerns are mutually exclusive.

⁹³ Whybray, *Good Life*, 290.

⁹⁴ Eichrodt, *Theology* 2.368.

⁹⁵ Johannes Hempel, “Ethics in the Old Testament,” *IDB* 2.157.

⁹⁶ E.g., Fletcher, who considers his four patterns (responding to divine deeds, reflecting the divine nature, living as a people under a divine ruler and obeying the divine command) perspectives upon a single phenomenon, “Shape,” 52; and Wright, who proposes Old Testament ethics are God centred in origin, history, content and motive, *Living*, 21.

the distinctive feature of Old Testament ethics as its origin in YHWH, who alone knows what is good.⁹⁷ Whilst one can concur that ethical motivation within the Old Testament is often related to God, various other motives are also evident. Following Barton, they can be conveniently presented as past, present and future motivations.⁹⁸ Many scholars note the importance of historical events, particularly the exodus, as a motivation for moral living.⁹⁹ In Deuteronomy 15.13–15, for example, Israel is instructed to treat captives justly since having “experienced God’s justice and compassion themselves, the Israelites could only properly express their gratitude by showing a similar concern for the weak and underprivileged in their midst”.¹⁰⁰ Covenant relationship as the motivation for ethical behaviour is highlighted by James Muilenburg.

[The Israelite] knew perfectly well that he had not been confronted with ethical abstractions, but rather had been addressed by One who had spoken to him in the events of the great tradition of which he was a part, to which he inwardly belonged, and which described him as a person.¹⁰¹

Ingratitude and indifference to the covenant are two reasons why the prophets railed against Israel’s rebellion.¹⁰² Present motivation includes the reward for keeping the laws intrinsic to the regulations themselves: keeping them should be a delight.¹⁰³ Barton notes that the law was conceived as revealing God, which “implies a very high evaluation of the expressed will of God as the way by which people are meant to live, and which will be their whole and only good, whatever consequences may or may not follow”.¹⁰⁴ Future motivations are the most frequent, comprising conditional promises and threats against disobedience. The intertwining of act and consequence means that to desire the one is to will the other. This perspective is so pervasive that Barton suggests the Old Testament is not the paradigm case of deontological ethics as it usually presumed to be.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ Theodore Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 315–17. His point is that neither reason nor conscience are the source of Old Testament morality.

⁹⁸ Barton, *Ethics*, 82–95.

⁹⁹ E.g. Barton, *Ethics*, 91; Wright, “Old Testament Ethics,” 54; Fletcher, “Shape,” 52–57.

¹⁰⁰ Davies, “Walking,” 103; cf. Wright, *Living*, 40.

¹⁰¹ James Muilenburg, *The Way of Israel: Biblical Faith and Ethics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 15.

¹⁰² Cf. Micah 6.3–4; Isa 63.7–64.12; the idea is not found in the wisdom literature.

¹⁰³ Cf. Deut 4.5–8; Ps 19; 119.

¹⁰⁴ Barton, *Ethics*, 96; cf. Rodd, *Glimpses*, 120.

¹⁰⁵ Pace, e.g., Thomas Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 48: “Consequentialist thought in the modern sense does not appear at all, that is, the weighing of possible courses of action in terms of the impact of their probable consequences on critically assessed value priorities”.

A teleological element in ethics seemed simply common sense to ancient Israelites, who acted so as to obey God, of course, but in the belief that he had promised good things to those who did obey him and threatened with misfortune those who left his ways. To say that we should be moral, but not for the sake of gaining anything, would have struck them as an unrealistic refinement of piety.¹⁰⁶

1.3.1 Motive Clauses

Motivations for moral living are particularly visible in biblical motive clauses.¹⁰⁷ Rifat Sonsino distinguishes between exhortations independent of the legal codes, and motive clauses proper attached to individual commands, which he classifies.¹⁰⁸ On the basis of this classification, could one seek a hierarchy of motivations? Perhaps, for example, motivations linked to God are more pressing than the promise of well-being? Taking the goods of honour, truth and loyalty one observes that commands relating to these values are variously motivated.¹⁰⁹ ‘Honour’ features in Exodus 20.12: ‘Honour your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you’.¹¹⁰ Leaving to one side what ‘honour’ might mean, the injunction is motivated by reference to YHWH’s acts and the eudaemonic incentive of longevity. This is conceivably a baser motive than that attached to Exodus 23.8: ‘You shall take no bribe, for a bribe...subverts the cause of those who are in the right’. Should someone need to decide between honouring parents and not taking a bribe, perhaps the latter duty should trump the former? Matters are complicated by Leviticus 19.3. The command ‘You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths’ is immediately preceded by the phrase ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy’, and succeeded by the refrain ‘I am the LORD your God’. Thus *both* of these commands are unequivocally tied to the deity, which is more important? Furthermore,

¹⁰⁶ Barton, *Ethics*, 90.

¹⁰⁷ In an early, influential study Berend Gemser defined motive clauses as “grammatically subordinate sentences in which the motivation for the commandment is given”, “The Importance of the Motive Clause in Old Testament Law,” in *Congress Volume: Copenhagen 1952* (VTSup 1; ed. G. W. Anderson, et al; Leiden: Brill, 1953), 50–66, quote 50. Rifat Sonsino notes that motive clauses feature in many literary genres, being especially numerous in law and wisdom, *Motive Clauses in Hebrew Law: Biblical Forms and Near Eastern Parallels* (SBLDS 45; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 117–120.

¹⁰⁸ Sonsino, *Motive Clauses*, 66–69. For the full list of texts see Sonsino, *Motive Clauses*, 106–17. He observes that motive clauses are attached to 30% of laws in the main collections, the majority (268) to the apodictic form. The collections with the highest percentage of laws are the Holiness Code (51% of 214 laws) and Deuteronomy (50% of 225 laws), *Motive Clauses*, 98–100. For five alternative classificatory schemes and a comparative summary of motive clauses in other ANE texts see Rodd, *Glimpses*, 110–13.

¹⁰⁹ If they are motivated at all: compare Ex 20.12 with Lev 19.3; and Ex 20.16 with Lev 19.11.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Deut 5.16, where the motivation is similar.

Deuteronomy 25.13–16 contains two motivations for transacting honest commerce: ‘so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you’ and ‘all who act dishonestly, are abhorrent to the LORD your God’. A further, prominent example is the Sabbath command in Exodus and Deuteronomy, which are motivated by creation and Egyptian slavery, respectively.¹¹¹ One observes that different texts supply disparate motives for very similar commands, and that the same law can be variously motivated. Finally, Sonsino remarks that the motivations actually attached to individual laws are not the only ones that could have been used.

The same law could very well have been motivated by another kind of motive clause (e.g., Exod 20:9–11 and Deut 5:12–15) or, if it does not already have it, by a multiple motive clause. Probably the intention was not to provide a motivation that would justify the law from all perspectives but to select from among all the possible rationales the one that would denote best the law’s appropriateness in the eyes of the people to whom it was addressed.¹¹²

It would seem that comparison of motivations as the basis for addressing value conflicts is a stony and unfruitful path.

This approach, however, does not exhaust the usefulness of motive clauses. Sonsino observes that the choice of motive clauses reveals a particular mode of thinking.¹¹³ This may be clear from the clause, or it may be necessary to understand some of the context to know why an action is considered wrong. For example, a series of prohibitions of sexual relations simply state that the action is forbidden because it is *that* relation. Leviticus 18.14 is illustrative: ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt’.¹¹⁴ To discern the force of the motivation, it is necessary to understand relevant cultural assumptions. Even in the case where the motive is ostensibly transparent, knowing the cultural outlook can add richness to one’s reading. For example, Deuteronomy 25.3 deals with flogging: ‘Forty lashes may be given but not more; if more lashes than these are given, your neighbour will be degraded in your sight’. Most commentators talk of ‘protection of human dignity’ and the like,¹¹⁵ but comprehending the place of ‘shame’

¹¹¹ Ex 20.8–11; Deut 5.12–15.

¹¹² Sonsino, *Motive Clauses*, 116.

¹¹³ Sonsino, *Motive Clauses*, 116–17.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Lev 18.3, 8, 16.

¹¹⁵ E.g., Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (OTL; trans. D. Barton; London: SCM, 1966), 154; Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and ethics in Deuteronomy* (NSBT; Leicester: Apollos, 1998), 141; Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (AOTC 5; Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 368.

in ancient Near Eastern culture enables readers to perceive an added dimension to the law's concern.¹¹⁶ In fact, motive clauses can be important clues to key moral goods. In Leviticus 18.14 knowing something of ancient Near Eastern family structure enables readers to appreciate that the good of harmonious internal family relations is in view; whilst Deuteronomy 25.3 attests to the goods of personal honour and appropriate punishment for misdemeanour, conceiving of situations in which they might be in conflict by setting a limit to the number of lashes that can be administered. Thus whilst it is impossible to deduce a hierarchy of motives, and thus ethical obligations, from biblical motive clauses, they may yet serve, in conjunction with other data, to address our problem.

1.3.2 Sanctions

Having considered the carrot of positive motivation for ethical living, I turn to the stick of sanction. Gordon Wenham discerns five principles of punishment within Old Testament law: the offender must receive his legal desert, which is not equal to revenge; to purge guilt from the land and its inhabitants; deterrence; atonement for the offender, with no subsequent loss of civil rights; and recompense by the offender to the injured party.¹¹⁷ There are three main types of penalty: capital punishment (as a maximum penalty); 'cutting off';¹¹⁸ and restitution.

One approach to value conflicts might be to examine the punishments that accrue to individual commands, and order 'crimes' accordingly. Appendix A contains a table of 'Crime and Punishment' in the Book of the Covenant. Supposing that death is the most severe penalty it is clear that murder, for example, is more serious than assault. This level of detail, however, is not especially useful in most cases. Furthermore, given

¹¹⁶ Craigie speaks of the fellow Israelite not being "publicly humiliated" but does not mention 'shame' as a cultural value, Peter Craigie, *Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 312. Wright notes *both* the covenant and human dignity as reasons for the limit of 40 strokes, observing that *qll* is the verb used for dishonouring parents in Deut 27.16, cf. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 264–65. Only Lyn Betschel points to the importance of 'honour and shame' for understanding the text, cf. "Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming," in *Social-Scientific Old Testament Criticism: A Sheffield Reader* (BS 47; ed. D. J. Chalcraft; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1997), 232–58; repr. from *JSOT* 49 (1991): 47–76; for a summary see Rodd, *Glimpses*, 19–27.

¹¹⁷ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 282–84.

¹¹⁸ Although sometimes synonymous with the death penalty (cf., e.g., Ex 12.15, 19; Lev 7.20–27; 17.4; 18.29; 19.8; Num 15.30–31) in Lev 20.2–5 'cutting off' is contrasted with execution. However, since both Lev 13.45–46 and Num 5.1–4 refer to animals it probably does not mean 'excommunication'. Wenham concludes it speaks of premature death by divine intervention, cf. *Leviticus*, 285; Rodd agrees, listing proponents of alternative views, *Glimpses*, 127.

that capital punishment is stipulated for murder, kidnap, bestiality, sorcery, and striking or cursing parents, the method does not even prioritise these crimes (even though it is difficult to imagine situations in which this might be problematic). Appendices B and C contain similar tables for the Holiness and Deuteronomic Codes, respectively. Two issues are worthy of mention. First, the slight differences between the codes, for example, Exodus 22.18 prescribes death for the female sorcerer whilst the sanction in Lev 20.27 applies to mediums of both sexes, point to the need for interpretation of the laws, they cannot be applied automatically. The need for interpretation is evident also from a comparison of Leviticus 18.16 and Deuteronomy 25.5.¹¹⁹ In the Holiness Code sexual relations between a man and his brother's wife are prohibited on pain of being 'cut off' from the people, whilst in Deuteronomy *not* having sexual relations with the same woman is sanctioned by 'shaming'.¹²⁰ The juxtaposition of these laws within the canon raises issues of possible contradiction. S. R. Driver thought that the Leviticus text was the general rule and the Deuteronomic an exception.¹²¹ It is better, however, to interpret them both with respect to the moral goods they have in view rather than as a qualification of the other. This reveals that both laws, although differently motivated, strive to protect the same thing. The Leviticus text seeks intrafamilial harmony, expressed in terms of taboo, whilst the Deuteronomic teaching aims to protect the patrimony of the 'father's house'. Both have in mind the good of family continuity (conceived as male heirs farming their own land), but this is expressed and motivated differently according to the specific context in mind.

The second issue is which punishments were considered more severe. Whilst modern people might not think that 'shaming' is especially severe, Lyn Betchel's analysis of the function of 'shame' reaches the opposite conclusion, arguing that this lies behind the seriousness of the offence in Deuteronomy 25.5–10.¹²² Thus, regardless of whether this punishment was ever applied, the *threat* of shame will have added to the persuasive power of the sanction.¹²³ Similarly, Henry McKeating argues that law can still affect behaviour even though transgressed: a 30mph sign (and related sanction) will

¹¹⁹ Cf. Lev 20.21.

¹²⁰ Cf. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 369–70.

¹²¹ S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (ICC; 3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1901), 285.

¹²² Betchel, "Shame as Sanction," 47–76; cf. Rodd, *Glimpses*, 29, 130.

¹²³ If punishments could be transmuted into cash payments then the threat may have been diminished for the rich.

induce few to drive at that speed, but will prevent many from accelerating to 50mph.¹²⁴ In this way Old Testament sanctions can illuminate ethical dilemmas, even though they do not provide sufficient evidence on their own to enable prioritisation of moral values.

Apart from the legal sanctions the wisdom literature points to a natural order of penalties. For example, regarding adultery, Proverbs 6.27–35, “has a whole battery of discouragements to offer”,¹²⁵ from general hints of consequences, ‘Can one walk on hot coals without scorching one’s feet?’ to intimations of more specific ramifications, ‘For jealousy arouses a husband’s fury, and he shows no restraint when he takes revenge’.¹²⁶ Although by examining the cultural background one could conceivably present these ‘natural sanctions’ in rough order of perceived severity the same problems are faced as with legal sanctions. In short, it would appear that sanctions offer a similar assistance to the resolution of value conflicts as motivations.

To conclude, whilst prioritising ethical obligations on the basis of sanctions’ severity alone is insufficient to resolve values conflicts in most cases, sanctions are an important element of the overall picture of Old Testament ethics because they provide information about moral goods.

1.4 CONCLUSION: CONFLICTING MORAL GOODS

In this chapter I have examined what Old Testament moral norms, goods and motives might contribute to the resolution of value conflicts. Several conclusions are possible. First, it is important to recognise the great variety of resources for moral reflection in the Old Testament. At times this may result in *prima facie* contradictions, but in place of over-precipitous attempts at harmonisation it is necessary to understand moral injunctions, et cetera on their own terms in the first instance.

A second conclusion is that whilst moral norms and motivations can provide useful information about Old Testament morality they are not themselves foundational. Rather, moral goods are basic. On this view legal stipulations or sapiential aphorisms, for example, are statements about configurations of particular goods. Approaching Old

¹²⁴ McKeating’s example, “Sanctions,” 70.

¹²⁵ McKeating, “Sanctions,” 59.

¹²⁶ McKeating opines that the text means the offended spouse may press for the most severe legal punishment, even if it did not happen frequently, “Sanctions,” 59; I think it is more likely the text speaks of the risk of being murdered as vengeance for dishonouring the husband.

Testament morality in this way provides new possibilities for understanding its view of value conflicts, for rather than centring upon ostensibly incompatible laws, the task becomes one of understanding the moral goods that they seek to protect.

Third, there are indications that moral goods *are* prioritised within the Old Testament. Slightly different orderings are discernable depending upon whether one examines moral norms, goods, or motivations, and, indeed, within these categories. These scales of values, however, are rather general and do not work at the level of detail necessary to inform value conflicts that people might ordinarily face. This is not to say that the biblical text could not provide this guidance, but that looking at resources other than those surveyed will be necessary. A lacuna in the field of Old Testament ethics is evidenced by the paucity of extant studies attending to narrative. Recently, some scholars have suggested biblical story be mined for its ethical import;¹²⁷ I propose that researching clashes of moral goods in narrative could be especially fruitful, and shall take up the challenge by focussing upon one particular value conflict in 1 Samuel.

Finally, when considering moral goods a proper understanding of their nature is required. Thus, for example, whilst there is some evidence that the family is near the top of the Old Testament's scale of values further work is necessary to define this institution before any definitive evaluation of its importance is possible.

I have proposed that the problem of value conflict in the Old Testament is one of conflicting moral goods. The task of the next chapter is to explain what this innovative approach means for Old Testament ethics.

¹²⁷ Cf. Barton, "Reading," 55–64; idem, "Disclosing Human Possibilities: Revelation and Biblical Stories," in *Revelation and Story: Narrative Theology and the Centrality of Story* (ed. J. Barton and G. Saute; Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 53–60; Wenham, *Story*; Bruce Birch, "Old Testament Narrative and Moral Address," in *Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation* (ed. G. M. Tucker, D. L. Petersen and R. R. Wilson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 75–95; Robin Parry, *Old Testament Story and Christian Ethics: The Rape of Dinah as a Case Study* (PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004). On the relationship between law and narrative see the typology in Pamela Barmash, "The Narrative Quandary Cases of Law in Literature," *VT* 54 (2004): 1–16.

CHAPTER 2

The Priority of the Good

*[The] question, how ‘good’ is to be defined,
is the most fundamental question in all Ethics...
a mistake with regard to it entails a far larger number of
erroneous ethical judgements than any other.*

– George Moore, *Principia Ethica*

A danger of investigating biblical texts for their ‘ethics’ is that one may force a modern concept upon documents to which systems of rules or right action are foreign, and potentially in opposition.¹ The previous chapter concluded that a focus upon moral goods as they are presented in narrative may be a fruitful approach to investigating value conflicts within the Old Testament. This chapter’s epigraph suggests a particular conception of ‘good’ has far reaching consequences; it is the task of the following pages to delineate a view in harmony with the Old Testament’s own.

2.1 MORAL GOODS

This section commences with a brief discussion of the nature of moral good and the relationship between good and right. It then examines how moral goods could relate to moral rules and the moral order, before refuting the contention that attempting to resolve ‘moral dilemmas’ is futile.

2.1.1 The Nature of Moral Goods

The study of ‘the good’ has a long history, although perhaps the most influential analysis remains Aristotle’s.² He uses ἀγαθός in three ways.³ First, ‘the good rationally

The epigraph is from George Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: CUP, 1959 [1907]), 5.

¹ Paraphrase of Philip Esler, “Social Identity, the Virtues, and the Good Life: A New Approach to Romans 12:1–15:13,” *BTB* 33 (2003): 51–63, especially 52. See also Peter Paris, “An Ethicist’s Concerns about Biblical Ethics,” *Semeia* 66 (1995): 173–79.

² Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (2nd ed.; trans. T. Irwin; Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett, 1999), 1094a17–24, 1097a24–37. For surveys of philosophical thought concerning ‘the good’ see Robert Olson, “Good, The,” *EP* 3.367–70; Christine Korsgaard, “Good, theories of the,” *REP*; Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the*

aimed at'. Since there are many rational aims there are many goods, although there can also be a rational balance of multiple goods.⁴ Second, goods that are 'good for' something else, for example, exercise as good for health.⁵ Third, 'a good something', for example, 'a good horse' as a good specimen of horses, where goodness is determined by the function of horses. These uses are related:

What makes a knife a good knife (3), depends on what good (1) we want the knife to achieve, and that will depend on what the knife is good (2) for. Similarly a good (3) person will be able to achieve goods (1) that depend on what is good (2) for a person—his final good or happiness.⁶

Goods have been classified either as being means or ends, or as having intrinsic or extrinsic value. Aristotle thought that the attributes of intrinsic goodness were completeness and self-sufficiency, proposing that *εὐδαιμονία* was the highest good, since it is chosen only for itself.⁷ The centrality of intrinsic good was maintained by Aquinas, who argued that the "very nature of good is that something flows from it, but not that it flows from something else".⁸ Thus the good for a thing depends upon the nature of that thing: the human moral good is behaviour in accordance with human nature.⁹

The modern era saw a break with claims for the natural basis of goodness. George Moore, for example, argued that 'good' is simply an evaluative expression that cannot be defined with descriptors; it "is incapable of any definition", but is known intuitively.¹⁰ R. M. Hare, on the other hand, considered that the problem is not that the good cannot be defined but that in different contexts it is used in different ways.¹¹ So

³ *Twentieth Century* (2nd ed; London: Routledge, 1998), especially 5–13, 42–44, 57–63, 249–66.

⁴ Cf. Terence Irwin, Introduction, Notes and Glossary to *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle (2nd ed.; trans. T. Irwin; Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett, 1999), 332.

⁵ *EN* 1097a15–22.

⁶ There is also a contrast between unqualified goods that are good for everyone and those goods 'for someone' in a specific situation, cf. *EN* 1113a22, 1129b2, 1152b26, 1155b24, 1157b26.

⁷ Irwin, "Introduction," 332. Without original emphasis. Cf. *EN* 1098a8–12, 1106a15.

⁸ *EN* 1097a15–b21. *εὐδαιμονία* is often rendered 'happiness', but MacIntyre cautions that to change the language is to alter the concept, cf. *Short History*, 59; I leave it untranslated.

⁹ *Summa I-II* q.1 a.4 r.1. On Aquinas' general theory of good see *Summa Theologica* (2nd ed.; trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province; London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1920), I q.5 a.1–6; Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1990), 34–68.

¹⁰ On Aquinas' theory of the human good see *Summa I-II* q.1; Porter, *Recovery*, 69–99. Perfect happiness, according to Aquinas, is contemplation of God, *Summa I-II* q.1 a.8.

¹¹ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 9. Note that Moore did not say that the good was unknowable or obscure, only indefinable: it is itself the ultimate term of reference by which other things must be defined, *Principia Ethica*, 10–12, 35.

¹¹ R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: OUP, 1964), 137–50.

although ‘good’ means ‘better’ than others in a class of things this set is not fixed but dependent upon context, and statements about the good are simply commendations according to a person’s chosen criteria.¹² Alasdair MacIntyre criticises both Moore’s intuitionism and Hare’s prescriptivism, arguing it is insufficient to think of ‘good’ as merely evaluative, “a status symbol for expression of choice”.¹³ MacIntyre asks,

why should it carry this type of prestige? The answer can only be that it carries with it a distinction derived from its past, that it carries a connection between the speaker’s individual choices and preference and what *anyone* would choose, between *my* choice and the choice which the relevant criteria dictate.¹⁴

These ‘relevant criteria’ are learnt and, therefore, conceptions of ‘the good’ change through time.¹⁵ Traditional aristocratic values, for example, considered thrift a vice and conspicuous consumption a virtue, whilst Puritanism thought the opposite was true. MacIntyre uses the example of Homeric ἀγαθός, with its ideal of warrior bravery, to question whether it is necessary or possible to distinguish between evaluative and descriptive uses of ‘good’.

[T]hat a man has behaved in certain ways is sufficient to entitle him to be called ἀγαθός. Now, assertions as to how a man has behaved are certainly in the ordinary sense factual; and the Homeric use of ἀγαθός is certainly in the ordinary sense evaluative. The alleged gulf between fact and appraisal is not so much one that has been bridged in Homer. It has never been dug. Nor is it clear that there is any ground in which to dig.¹⁶

The descriptive basis of evaluation is taken further by Philippa Foot. She argues that calling someone ‘daughter’ or ‘father’ indicates what ‘goodness’ in each case means, and that the variety of cultural practice must occur within certain limits for it to be described as ‘good’.

If it were expected, as in Nazi Germany, that a daughter (like a son) should denounce disloyal parents to the police, this still could not be part of being a good *daughter*; a word which combined with ‘good’ to give this result would be closer to our word ‘citizen’ or ‘patriot’.¹⁷

¹² Cf. Hare, *Language*, 183.

¹³ MacIntyre, *Short History*, 254–62, quote 92.

¹⁴ MacIntyre, *Short History*, 92.

¹⁵ Cf. MacIntyre, *Short History*, 266.

¹⁶ MacIntyre, *Short History*, 7. See Philippa Foot’s discussion of rudeness: if ‘rude’ is a lack of respect, this can be conventional (e.g., a man keeping his hat on indoors) or naturally disrespectful (e.g., pushing someone out of the way); the point is that it is possible for a descriptive term to be evaluative, *Virtues and Vices - And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 133–35.

¹⁷ Foot, *Virtues and Vices*, 137. Emphasis original.

According to Foot, the ‘nature of things’ determines the range of permissible meanings of ‘good’, however, as the Puritan and aristocratic attitudes to money demonstrate, such appeals to nature do not mean people from different historical or cultural contexts agree about goods; indeed, they may be incompatible.¹⁸ Although this is conceivably an epistemological problem, the difficulty of determining a cross-culturally valid content to the category ‘good’ remains one of the greatest challenges facing those who would employ nature in ethics.

For those who do accept natural foundations there arises the question of how the multiplicity of goods may be prioritised. John Finnis wrestles with this question, identifying seven basic human goods, but arguing that they are equally fundamental and cannot be ordered.¹⁹ This contrasts with Aquinas’ contention that goods do possess a hierarchical ordering, *viz.* self preservation, procreation, life in society, and knowledge of the truth about God.²⁰ He states that living things incline to goods desired by lower creatures as well as to goods appropriate to their own nature. This raises the question of why some people do not seek the highest goods. Porter, in conversation with Aquinas, makes two observations. First, a person’s prioritisation of lower goods may exclude the possibility of achieving higher ones because human life is limited by time and place.²¹ Second, that something is a higher good may not be obvious. Indeed, the contested nature of goods—occasionally people need to be convinced that some things *are* good—demonstrates that their relative desirability is not always self-evident.²²

In the light of these observations and the discussion in Chapter 1 it is possible to make four points about the Old Testament’s view of the nature of the good. First, although the functional usage is prominent, all three of Aristotle’s uses of good can be identified in the biblical text: one must not opt exclusively for any single one.²³ Second,

¹⁸ In fact, Foot rather vitiates her argument when she continues the quote above with: “Only in the context of a belief that denunciation would lead to regeneration could this be seen as one of the things by which the goodness of a daughter could be judged”.

¹⁹ John Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1983), 51. Finnis’ basic goods are: life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability, practical reasonableness and religion. For other lists of basic goods and discussion see Sabina Alkire, “The Basic Dimensions of Human Flourishing: A Comparison of Accounts,” in *The Revival of Natural Law: Philosophical, Theological and Ethical Responses to the Finnis-Grisez School* (ed. N. Biggar and R. Black; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 73–110.

²⁰ *Summa I-II* q.94 a.2.

²¹ Porter, *Recovery*, 90; cf. *Summa I-II* q.10 a.1, 3; q.94 a.2.

²² Porter, *Recovery*, 88.

²³ In addition to the discussion above the following examples might be provided from 1 Samuel: Good aim 1 Sam 15.22; 20.12; 25.15, 30, 36; Functional good 1 Sam 1.8; 16.16, 23; 19.4; 27.1; Good

whilst it is clear that the ethical concerns of Old Testament writers changed over the centuries, several texts appeal to the ‘nature of things’ as the basis for right behaviour. In other words, they do not seem to have conceived a breach between descriptive and evaluative uses of good. Third, contrary to a simple view that would categorise each good as a member of a species and then sub-species, Old Testament goods can pertain to more than one category.²⁴ Finally, it is very obvious, especially in the prophets, that some configurations of goods are considered better than others; indeed, some are condemned as sinful.

Though our analysis of the Old Testament’s resources for resolving value conflicts revealed that there were few detailed ‘scales of values’ there was an assumption that one ought to seek higher goods. It is usually thought that there is difference between a theory of obligation, concerning right and wrong, and a theory of value, of good and evil. Charles Larmore affirms that the “idea of right refers to what is obligatory, to a prescription to which we ought to conform...The idea of good, by contrast, refers to what is desirable; it applies to whatever is worth having or doing and enhances the life of which it is a part”.²⁵ This is a very neat division. The relationship between the good and the right, however, is normally considered to be rather more complicated, even “obscure”.²⁶

2.1.2 Good and Right

Any attempt to illuminate good and right must account for the radical change in the way their relationship has been perceived over the centuries. Henry Sidgwick warns that ancient ethical controversy employed a generic notion of the good, in contradistinction to the more specific judgements of action found in modern ethics.²⁷ Sidgwick contends that it is not simply that *what* is thought of as good has altered, but that there has been a transformation from an attractive view of the good to an imperative one. Ancient ethics, therefore,

specimen 1 Sam 8.14, 16; 15.28; 16.12; 25.8. Note also the contrasting pairs 1 Sam 24.18; 25.21 and the comparative forms 1 Sam 15.22, 28.

²⁴ Cf. O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 34.

²⁵ Larmore, “Right and good,” *REP*.

²⁶ Nicholas J. H. Dent, “Good,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (ed. T. Honderich; Oxford: OUP, 1995), 322. For a summary of views of the right in general see Michael Slote, “Right Action,” in *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 744–46.

²⁷ Paraphrase of Henry Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics* (7th ed.; London: MacMillan, 1907), 105. On the relationship of the right and good see also Richard Kraut, *What is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being* (Cambridge / London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 21–28.

can scarcely be understood by us unless with a certain effort we throw the quasi-jural notions of modern ethics aside, and ask (as they did) not ‘What is Duty and what is its ground?’ but ‘Which of the objects that men think good is truly Good or the Highest Good?’²⁸

Although ‘ancient’ in this context is normally understood to mean Greek and Roman, it is suggestive to consider whether it could also include the Old Testament. If so, modern (Western) readings that take its numerous rules as evidence for the primacy of the right over good misrepresent the order assumed by original authors and readers.

The issues can be broached with a very brief statement of three common views of the relationship between good and right. I start with the position expounded by deontological theories, *viz.* “there are some basic moral principles and rules in terms of which acts can be judged right and wrong and which can be justified independently of any developed idea of the good”.²⁹ To give an example of such reasoning: I should keep my promises because it is an act of fidelity, even if fidelity is not efficiently produced, that is, my keeping a promise causes others to break theirs.³⁰ The deontological approach is typically exemplified by Immanuel Kant, who argues that the right can be deduced from a formal primordial ‘ought’, the categorical imperative, and that the only unqualified good is a ‘good will’ that chooses the right. “A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes—because of its fitness for attaining some proposed end: it is good through its willing alone—that is, good in itself”.³¹ MacIntyre observes that Kant’s imperative, being solely formal, can be given content by any moral tradition. Problematically, however, because

it detaches the notion of duty from the notions of ends, purposes, wants, and needs it suggests that, given a proposed course of action, I may only ask whether, in doing it, I can consistently will that it shall be universally

²⁸ Sidgwick, *Methods*, 106. Cf. the thesis of MacIntyre, *Short History*. With respect to the good and the right Plato is *not* a precursor to Kant. Plato thought that the basis of obligation was conformity to an ideal Form, which is the criteria for right action. Thus the ideal governor is “occupied with the sight of things which are organized, permanent, and unchanging, where wronging and being wronged don’t exist, where all is orderly and rational; and he makes this realm the model for his behaviour, and assimilates himself to it as much as is feasible.” Plato, *Republic* (trans. R. Waterfield; Oxford: OUP, 1993), 500c.

²⁹ Peter Byrne, *The Philosophical and Theological Foundations of Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Theory and its Relation to Religious Beliefs* (2nd ed.; Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999), 86. Rosalind Hursthouse, in a nuanced discussion of the issues, argues against the bold proposition that deontological theories presume the priority of the right whilst utilitarian and aretaic theories the priority of the good, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), especially 25–31. For our purposes, however, the contrast is clear.

³⁰ Cf. Korsgaard, *REP*.

³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1948 [1785]), 61–62. He compares this to talents or gifts of fortune, which may be directed to bad ends.

done, and not ask what ends or purposes it serves.³²

In contrast to the construction of good and right in deontological ethics, consequentialist moral theories make the ends of action the criteria of the right. For classic utilitarianism, right actions are those that maximise social wellbeing, and other goods are good to the extent that they promote such happiness. Although the simplicity of consequentialism is attractive, it has been criticised on three main fronts. First, it fails to allow questions of justice or, indeed, of any other consideration apart from outcomes of action. Second, it is impossible to know in advance all the consequences of an action.³³ Third, the incommensurability of goods precludes execution of the required calculations.³⁴ A final approach, aretaic moral theory, is not consequentialist in the traditional sense because right action does not merely lead to the good, it manifests it; acts are ‘constitutive means’ to good.³⁵ However, the right *is* predicated on the good, and in this respect it differs from deontology. The essential insight is that right acts are those that are good for something: aretaic moral theories allow for actions that are wrong ‘by reason of their object’.³⁶ A prominent representative of the approach asserts that “the basic goodness of a moral act is provided by the befitting objective in which it is set: hence some moralists refer to an act as being ‘good of its kind’ ”.³⁷ In this scheme the object of an act leads to classification of species of acts, for example, charity, lying, or killing. Peter Byrne summarises that

Aquinas’ general teaching is that such classification begins the work of deciding whether individual acts are choiceworthy. If an act falls into a good species by virtue of its objective, consideration of its end and

³² *Short History*, 198. MacIntyre highlights the ease with which people can be educated into conforming to malevolent authority.

³³ Philippa Foot raises another epistemological problem, *viz.* whether it is possible to evaluate the final ‘states of affairs’ produced by consequences apart from some other measure of good, cf. “Utilitarianism and the Virtues,” *Mind* NS 94 (1985): 196–209, especially 199.

³⁴ Thus, even if J. S. Mill’s principle of justice is used to soften Bentham’s original proposal, utilitarianism in particular, and consequentialism in general, cannot provide an adequate view of the right. For a helpful, if trenchant, critique of consequentialism that also highlights the dangers of exegetes unwittingly assuming its precepts see Michael Banner, *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 272–78.

³⁵ Byrne, *Foundations*, 108.

³⁶ Virtue ethics has usually considered moral motivation decisive, but recent approaches have attempted to avoid positing right as solely determined by “inner properties of a virtuous agent”, Christine Swanton, “A Virtue Ethical Account of Right Action,” *Ethics* 112 (2001): 32–52, quote 32. On virtue ethics in general see Stephen Darwall (ed.), *Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Oxford: OUP, 2003); Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*.

³⁷ Aquinas I-II q.18 a.2 as translated by Byrne, *Foundations*, 44. He follows Aristotle, who maintained that the criteria of right is the good of human εὐδαιμονία, *EN* 1122b29.

circumstance will establish whether it is finally good.³⁸

Objects are also the basis of moral rules that sum up the rationale for the classification of acts into good and bad, for example, ‘do not kill’.³⁹ Moral rules, therefore, are adduced to protect moral goods, thus saving agents the effort of reinventing morality in every situation they face, since it is necessary only to identify the object of action.⁴⁰

How might the Old Testament’s view of the relationship between right and good be informed by these schemes? Three aspects of the discussion in Chapter 1 may be highlighted. First, it was clear that the basis of many affirmations of what is good or right is God. So, for example, because he is good both the things he has created and those that he commands share this characteristic.⁴¹ Second, although divine commands are prominent I have argued that they should be considered statements of how to configure particular goods, that is, commands themselves do not make something good, but arise from the need to prescribe or proscribe the seeking of specific goods or evils, often in particular situations. Furthermore, appeals to ‘natural morality’ reveal that the Old Testament indicates certain things are wrong because they are ‘not good’. Third, discussion of the goodness of the created order highlighted not only its functional goodness but also that the structure of creation invites a morally good response from its inhabitants. In short, although opting for any one deontologic, teleologic or aretaic theory would be reductionist, when considering Old Testament ethics it does appear wise to heed Sidgwick’s advice and, contrary to much modern ethical thinking, posit ‘the priority of the good’.

Accepting this stance, however, does not exhaust the discussion. Even if one acknowledges the existence of a moral order of goods this is distinct to knowledge of that order.⁴² It is obvious people can configure goods differently, in some cases to such an extent that one person can consider another’s arrangement not good, but evil. In any

³⁸ Byrne, *Foundations*, 45.

³⁹ The difference between moral rules and principles in Aquinas is that moral rules relate to species of act.

⁴⁰ So also Kraut, *What is Good*, 29–34. Note that rules can favour particular groups and are thus not ideologically neutral, see Friedrich Nietzsche’s first thesis in *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic* (trans. M. Clark and A. J. Swensen; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998 [1887]), 9–33.

⁴¹ Some modern divine command theorists also attempt to push the start point back beyond the command itself to the nature of God, see, e.g., Philip L. Quinn, “Divine Command Theory,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory* (ed. H. LaFollette; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 53–73.

⁴² That is, questions of ontology are different to those of epistemology, cf. O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 76–97.

case, the complexity of circumstances means that conflicts between goods, or the rules that describe them, are ubiquitous. Sidgwick is correct, therefore, to observe that simply identifying goods is insufficient, for even “when we have judged conduct to be good, it is not yet clear that we ought to prefer this kind of good to all other good things: some standard for estimating the relative values of different ‘good’ has still to be sought”.⁴³ Martha Nussbaum, a philosopher in the Aristotelian tradition, has suggested that the grounds for deciding between goods can be found in the particular situations in which they are in view, and maintains that it is necessary to attend to the particularity of each case. Since John Barton has invited biblical scholars to consider Nussbaum’s studies of Greek tragedy as suggestive for Old Testament ethics it is important to examine her proposal in more detail.⁴⁴

2.1.3 Moral Goods, Moral Rules and Moral Order

Nussbaum’s thesis is that the form of Greek tragedy is intrinsic to its message. “Conception and form are bound together...Certain truths about human life can only be fittingly and accurately stated in the language and forms characteristic of the narrative artist.”⁴⁵ Nussbaum contrasts the ethics of narrative and that of moral rules. In *The Fragility of Goodness* she frames this distinction in terms of Platonic deductive philosophy, which operates from first principles, and Aristotelian inductive empiricism.⁴⁶ Nussbaum observes that at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle asserts that “the educated person seeks exactness in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows”.⁴⁷ Nussbaum takes this proposition and argues that moral principles “fail to capture the fine detail of the concrete particular, which is the subject matter of ethical choice”.⁴⁸ Narrative, in contrast, can explore moral problems in more depth than aphorism or legal stipulation. It is “unlikely to conceal from view the vulnerability of human lives to fortune, the mutability of our circumstances and our

⁴³ Sidgwick, *Methods*, 106.

⁴⁴ Barton, “Reading,” 55–64. Barton refers to two of Nussbaum’s books: *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (2nd ed. Cambridge: CUP, 2001) and *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford / New York: OUP, 1990). See also her “Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach,” in *The Quality of Life* (ed. M. Nussbaum and A. Sen; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 242–269.

⁴⁵ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 4–5.

⁴⁶ In *Love’s Knowledge* Nussbaum extends her insights to modern literature.

⁴⁷ EN 1094b24.

⁴⁸ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 301.

passions, [and] the existence of conflicts among our commitments”.⁴⁹ For Nussbaum it is the idiosyncrasy of every moment that renders prefabricated rules inadequate. Instead, she contends, moral reasoning must attend first to the particular situation, and then see what rules might contribute, not *vice versa*.

Nussbaum argues that it is *always* impossible to give a general account of moral action that can be encapsulated in a set of laws, since rules can *never* become sufficiently detailed to accommodate all situations. This, she claims, is due to three features of practical situations: mutability, indeterminacy and particularity.⁵⁰ The mutability of the practical derives from its historical rooted-ness. Even justice is mutable, thus, she claims, “a kind of improvisatory conjectural use of reason” is required rather than a thoughtless application of rules.⁵¹ Indeterminacy derives from the fact that different people find different things attractive or repellent. The example she gives is of humour, concluding that “excellent choice cannot be captured in universal rules, because it is a matter of fitting one’s choice to the complex requirements of a concrete situation”.⁵² Finally, particularity or non-repeatability is an inherent feature of many situations, above all personal relationships.

Despite her view of the limitations of general rules Nussbaum does allow them *a* role in moral deliberation as part of the perception of a situation: “Perception, we might say, is a process of loving conversation between rules and concrete responses, general conceptions and unique cases, in which the general articulates the particular and is in turn further articulated by it”.⁵³ It is important to realise what Nussbaum means by ‘rule’. She rejects the idea of rules as ultimate authorities against which to judge the particular. Instead, she views principles as summaries or rules of thumb derived from previous ‘good’ decisions. “Principles are perspicuous descriptive summaries of good judgments, valid only to the extent to which they correctly describe such judgments”.⁵⁴ Even so, their strength, their simplicity, is also their weakness, they cannot adapt to complex cases. Rules, therefore, may be guidelines for growth in moral perception for those not yet fully equipped with practical wisdom, but they are not the culmination of

⁴⁹ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 13.

⁵⁰ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 302–4.

⁵¹ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 303. Cf. *EN* 1109a23, 30; 1106b15, 28; 1134b18–33.

⁵² Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 303. Cf. *EN* 1128a27.

⁵³ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 95.

⁵⁴ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 299; cf. *Love’s Knowledge*, 69.

moral understanding: the rule is a falling away from fully fledged practical reason, not its fulfilment. Regarding the authority of rules Nussbaum states:

Rules are authoritative only insofar as they are correct; but they are correct only insofar as they do not err with regard to the particulars. And it is not possible for a simple universal formulation intended to cover many different particulars to achieve a high degree of correctness.⁵⁵

In other words, rules are not prior to practical perception but subject to it. In this way she aims to avoid the “ethical crudeness” of morality based exclusively upon general rules.⁵⁶ Rules, in summary, are only *prima facie* obligations.⁵⁷

Hilary Putnam has chided Nussbaum for her “derogatory attitude towards rules” and suggested that her ethics veers towards “an absolutely empty ‘situation ethics’”, in which everything is a “matter of trade-offs”.⁵⁸ Although she protests that she allows rules an important place in her ethics, Nussbaum has attempted to assuage some of this criticism by appealing to Aristotle’s idea of ‘spheres of experience’, each of which possesses a corresponding virtue.⁵⁹ This, she avers, means one can speak of non-relative virtues. She is careful to distinguish between the formal definitions of each virtue and a more complete ‘thick’ description, asserting that “we can understand progress in ethics, like progress in scientific understanding, to be progress in finding the correct fuller specification of a virtue, isolated by its thin or nominal definition”.⁶⁰ Nussbaum adopts this approach because she, like Aristotle, wishes to ground her ethics in experience rather than deducing it from first principles. Nevertheless, by appealing to “grounding experiences”⁶¹ as the basis for fixed spheres of experience she appears to be implying some sort of foundational order. Is this the case?

Despite Nussbaum’s explicit rejection of a teleological moral order,⁶² she seems to depend upon it in other places. At one point, discussing relations between the

⁵⁵ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 301; cf. *Love’s Knowledge*, 69, where ‘principles’ replace ‘rules’ in the same quotation.

⁵⁶ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 37.

⁵⁷ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 156. Although Nussbaum is no intuitionist see Ross’ claim that his *prima facie* duties rest on definite circumstances, *The Right and the Good* (ed. P. Stratton-Lake; Oxford: OUP, 2002), 21.

⁵⁸ Hilary Putnam, “Taking Rules Seriously: A Response to Martha Nussbaum,” *NLH* 15 (1983): 193–200, quote 193.

⁵⁹ Cf. EN Book VI; Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues,” 263–64. She suggests the following features of common humanity as spheres: morality, body, pleasure and pain, cognitive capability, practical reason, early infant development, affiliation, and humour.

⁶⁰ Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues,” 248, cf. 249–50.

⁶¹ Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues,” 262.

⁶² Cf. *Fragility*, xv.

particular and general, she asserts that the general should be governed by the particular. However, “particular human contexts are never, if seen well, *sui generis* in all of their elements, nor divorced from a past full of obligations. And fidelity to those, as a *mark of humanity*, is one of the most essential values of perception.”⁶³ But what is a ‘mark of humanity’ except a description of a generic order?⁶⁴ And one which would seem to have *some* authority over the particular. In fact, she makes this very point, but does not reconcile her different statements:

Aristotelian particularism is fully compatible with the view that what perception aims to see is (in some sense) the way things are...surely the use of the concept ‘human being’ will play an important role in suiting the conception to make cross-cultural judgments.⁶⁵

Nussbaum also argues that moral agents come to situations with a history of ethical predispositions and obligations, perhaps expressed in rules of thumb, and that they have to be faithful to both these and the particulars of the situation. This does not mean that agents can do anything as long as they wrestle sufficiently with the situation. Instead, they must improvise, which may be difficult.⁶⁶ “An improvising actress, if she is improvising well, does not feel that she can say just anything at all. She must suit her choice to the *evolving story*, which has its own form and continuity”.⁶⁷ But what is the ‘evolving story’ if everything is particular? It is necessary to have a stage as well as the

⁶³ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 95. My emphasis. Barton makes a similar move, promoting particularity but also appealing to ‘human affinities’, “Reading,” 59.

⁶⁴ Note that Nussbaum rejects a *teleological* ordering, but I identify her references to a *generic* ordering. O’Donovan explains why the created order must possess both, cf. *Resurrection*, 31–54; my discussion of Nussbaum is not capricious.

⁶⁵ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 96.

⁶⁶ Nussbaum follows Aristotle, who asks regarding anger with respect to his concept of the golden mean: “How far, then, and in what way must someone deviate to be open to blame?” His answer is that it “is not easy to answer in a [general] account; for the judgment depends on particular cases, and [we make it] by perception”, *EN* 1126b3–4. Nussbaum defines perception as “the ability to discern, acutely and responsively, the salient features of one’s particular situation”, Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 37; cf. her other definition: “seeing a complex, concrete reality in a highly lucid and richly responsive way; it is taking in what is there, with imagination and feeling”, *Love’s Knowledge*, 152. Nussbaum recognises that different people perceive things differently, although she may have an overly ‘thin’ account of the process of perception. Lawrence Blum, for example, describes a process of moral deliberation comprising seven stages: accurate recognition of a situation’s features, to recognise these features as morally significant, the raising of the question as to whether one should act in this situation, then judging whether one should in fact take action, the selection of a rule that one takes to be applicable to the situation, determining the act that best instantiates the selected principle, and performing this action, *Moral Perception and Particularity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 57–59. Thus an observer of a situation must perceive that it involves promise-keeping, not just taking a walk, to be able to begin the process of moral judgment, cf. *Moral Perception*, 5. Blum argues that because different people perceive differently and see, or don’t see, the moral significance of situations to varying degrees it is obvious that perception is not a unified, intuitive capacity, and may be more difficult for some than others, cf. *Moral Perception*, 30.

⁶⁷ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 94. My emphasis.

individual acts, and it is the context (in the metaphor the play, in reality the moral order) that both authorises particular acts and constitutes the grounds for typifying other acts as ‘unethical’.

In the previous chapter I observed that the Old Testament, both in its appeal to a ‘natural morality’ and within the creation narratives, assumes a moral order. It is necessary, therefore, to ask how this order relates to particulars. O’Donovan’s analysis of the relationship is compelling.

Even unlike things can be seen as part of the same universe if there is an order which embraces them in a relation to one another. The *plurality* of situations and events which characterizes the experience of history, the fact that every event is ‘new’ and different from every other, can be seen as a *pluriformity* in the world-order, which is a capacity for different things to transpire and succeed one another within a total framework of intelligibility which allows for their generic relationships to be understood. Without a generic order new things would indeed be incomprehensible, for they would be absolutely particular, which is beyond the power of human thought to grasp.⁶⁸

Thus people see things within the framework of what they already know. This applies to knowledge in general, and moral knowledge in particular. So an individual has already learnt what is good, because she has an understanding of the moral order, before she appraises X in order to understand whether X is morally desirable.⁶⁹ What role should rules play in this evaluation?

Nussbaum commends Aristotle’s depiction of the rule used by the builders at Lesbos as encapsulating her vision of rules in ethics. The Lesbian rule “does not assume that the form of the rule *governs* the appearances; it allows the appearances to govern themselves and to be normative for correctness of rule”.⁷⁰ Aristotle thought that laws could not be formulated to apply to every situation, and that occasionally a decree addressed to a particular situation should be issued. “For the standard applied to the indefinite is itself indefinite, as the lead standard is in Lesbian building, where it is not fixed, but adapts itself to the shape of the stone; similarly a decree is adapted to fit its objects”.⁷¹ What, exactly, does this mean? The Oxford English Dictionary defines a Lesbian rule as “a mason’s rule made of lead, which could be bent to fit the curves of a

⁶⁸ O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 189.

⁶⁹ This is not the whole story, see below.

⁷⁰ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 301.

⁷¹ EN 1137b30.

moulding”, and thus, figuratively, “a principle of judgement that is pliant and accommodating”. This encompasses two attributes of the rule, its descriptive role and its prescriptive function. I suggest that the difference between these attributes is at the heart of a significant confusion regarding Nussbaum’s (rhetorical) appropriation of the Lesbian rule. Irwin, in notes to his translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, comments that

Aristotle refers to a flexible lead ruler that could be made to fit the shape of an irregular stone, and hence could be used to find a second stone to fit next to the first in a dry stone wall. For this purpose, having a rigid ruler would be useless for building. The point is that the rule or standard should be adaptable to fit the specific circumstances.⁷²

It is essential to recognise that here the situation determines the ‘rule’: the rule is a *description* of the situation. But description is not prescription. If the former is meant it would be better to say ‘measure’, one function of the rule, rather than ‘rule’. However, Nussbaum treats ‘rule’ and ‘principle’ as synonyms, thus demonstrating that she has in mind the latter, prescriptive, function of the rule. This creates some fundamental problems for her position, above all with respect to the authority of the (prescriptive) rule. When employed to ‘get the measure’ of a new stone, it is not the rule that is ‘authoritative’, but the shape of the original stone, for which the Lesbian rule is merely a proxy. The Lesbian rule, having *described* one stone, is *not* then used to *describe* another stone in all its marvellous complexity, but *prescribe* which stone should be selected to adjoin the first. By analogy, therefore, it would not be a flexible rule that is authoritative when confronted by a new moral situation but *another* particular situation. In short, the proposal that a Lesbian rule be governed by the situation refers to the descriptive moment and not its prescriptive use, for which the rule is *not* governed by appearances. Nussbaum’s appeal to the Lesbian rule, therefore, performs a solely rhetorical function and does not illuminate how rules, in the prescriptive sense, can aid ethical reflection.⁷³ A better view of rules, I have suggested, is to consider them descriptions of aspects of the moral order. The multitude of biblical moral rules, therefore, can be viewed as attempts to grasp something of the proper order of moral goods.

To answer the question concerning the role of rules in ethical decisions, one can

⁷² Irwin, “Introduction,” 238.

⁷³ This criticism can be levelled as much at Aristotle as Nussbaum.

distinguish between comprehension of principles and their application in particular situations. Thus agents must know *before* they take a decision about a particular case whether X is right or wrong: pondering the particular concrete situation confronting the agent does *not* add to knowledge about whether X is morally good, only whether *this* is a situation in which X is at issue, that is, whether rules concerning X are at all relevant. ‘Do no steal’, for example, places limits upon the achievement of other goods because people have learnt that the protection of a person’s possessions is fundamental for socially harmonious existence. In other words, the moral order, as they perceive it, demands this rule, and the relevant question in any particular situation is whether an action is ‘stealing’. If it is, then the rule applies. Of course, this is not quite the whole story since comprehension and application occur simultaneously: the perception of the particular situation and the application of the rule are two processes that take place in conversation with each other. O’Donovan concludes his discussion of a particular case by observing that the “engagement with the case showed up a measure of haziness and ill-definition in our understanding of the moral principle; the particular acted as a kind of magnifying glass through which the generic appeared with more clarity”.⁷⁴ However, neither this dialectic nor the *a priori* force of moral rules as descriptions of a moral order is what Nussbaum has in mind.

A further observation concerning the priority of the particular and moral rules can be made. Aristotle thought that because the mean was a fine edged ridge, falling away on both sides to ever greater depths of error, there were numerous ways of doing something wrongly, but few right ways. Using the idea of hitting a target, he maintained that “there are many ways of missing to be in error...But there is only one way to be correct. That is why error is easy and correctness is difficult”.⁷⁵ If one accepts a created moral order of the type envisaged by the Old Testament, however, Aristotle’s stance cannot be accepted. Instead, there will be many possible ways of responding well to the moral order, including in situations of moral conflict.⁷⁶ Just as Grotius suggested that justice cannot be defined, but that just ways could be known only *via negativa*, by observing injustice, so a negative decree, for example ‘do not murder’, sets a limit but leaves plenty of scope for perfectly moral human behaviour that values the good

⁷⁴ O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 195.

⁷⁵ EN 1106b30–32.

⁷⁶ The contrast between Aristotle and this notion could be illustrated by pinnacled mountains and Table Mountain, South Africa. See also the discussion of ‘good’ dilemmas in Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 66–67.

protected by the rule.⁷⁷

To conclude, Nussbaum argues for the priority of the particular but, for the reasons I have outlined, her thesis cannot be accepted without qualification and Barton is overly enthusiastic about the potential contribution of her approach. A better strategy is to approach Old Testament ethics thinking of the ‘priority of the good’, where rules reflect an understanding of goods in their generic and teleological relations. Thus although rules are not final—that status belongs to the moral order—neither are they rootless ‘rules of thumb’, and must have a fuller authority than allowed by Nussbaum. Nevertheless, because moral rules must remain provisional for epistemological reasons attention to the particular *can* produce greater moral understanding, especially by illuminating how moral rules, and the goods that they protect or promote, are to be understood.⁷⁸ With respect to the interpretation of the ethics of the Old Testament such a view allows one to take seriously both law and narrative without collapsing the one into the other.

Particular goods, however, may clash, indeed, may be expected to clash. Before proceeding further it is necessary to consider whether such conflicts are sometimes irresolvable.

2.1.4 Incommensurability and Moral Goods

In *The Fragility of Goodness* Nussbaum describes two very different approaches to ‘luck’, conceived as the vicissitudes of human existence. Plato argued *technē* could form a bulwark against luck, proposing a system of commensurable values in which differences between goods were quantitative, not of kind.⁷⁹ According to Nussbaum, the basic assumptions underpinning this scheme are: metricity, that there is a measurable value common to all goods; singleness, that only one metric exists; and consequentialism, that choices and actions have no intrinsic value but are purely

⁷⁷ Thomas Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace* (trans. A. C. Campbell; Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 7. It might be objected that ‘do not murder’ is also positive law, but one would expect important features of the moral order, like protection of human life, to be codified.

⁷⁸ On the epistemological question see Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1972), 96–97; O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 76–97. Outka observes that it is one thing to say that there *are* laws that cohere with a moral order but another to claim that (1) they are adequately *known*, or (2) given that they are known they have been formulated in sufficient detail so that they are binding *as stated*, and (3) that the rules or laws that fulfil (2) may be indisputably identified. It is obvious that we do not possess a complete and infallible knowledge of the rules corresponding to the moral order.

⁷⁹ Cf. Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 108, 110; *Love’s Knowledge*, 106–24.

instrumental means for procuring good consequences. Combining metricity and consequentialism produces the idea of maximisation. This, when combined with singleness, produces the idea of one value that is the point of rational choice.⁸⁰ Nussbaum rejects this calculus in its entirety. Following Aristotle, she asserts that the good life consists of various elements, each separate from the others and with its own intrinsic worth. To

effect the commensurability of [these] values is to do away with them all as they currently are, creating some new value that is not identical to any of them. The question will then be whether his single-valued world can possibly have the richness and inclusiveness of the current world. A world in which wealth, courage, size, birth, justice are all put into the same scale and weighed together, made in their nature functions of a single thing, will turn out to be a world without any of these items, as now understood.⁸¹

This does not mean that non-metric choice must be arbitrary: Nussbaum rejects the opposition of quantitative versus ignorant choice as false. The alternative is

qualitative and not quantitative, and rational just because it is qualitative, and based upon a grasp of the special nature of each of the items in question. We choose this way all the time; and there is no reason for us to let the rhetoric of weighing and measuring bully us into being on the defensive here, or supposing that we must, if we are rational, be proceeding according to some hidden metric.⁸²

Incommensurability, however, leaves open the door for insoluble ‘moral dilemmas’, situations in which it is not just *difficult* to give reasons for choosing between competing obligations, but impossible.⁸³ It is inappropriate to say that one ought is not relevant because one of the grounds for action trumps the other; nor can one affirm that both obligations are oughts, but that in this situation one takes precedence,⁸⁴ which

⁸⁰ Cf. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 56. In *Fragility* Nussbaum traces the development of Plato’s thought concerning commensurability, noting that his later work seems to move away from the advocacy of *technē* found in *Protagoras* and *The Republic*.

⁸¹ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 296.

⁸² Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 61. For an argument for this approach in Christian ethics see Banner, *Contemporary Moral Problems*, 136–203.

⁸³ “A moral dilemma is a situation in which an agent *S* morally ought to do *A* and morally ought to do *B* but cannot do both, either because *B* is just not-doing-*A* or because some contingent feature of the world prevents doing both”, Christopher W. Gowans, “The Debate on Moral Dilemmas,” in *Moral Dilemmas* (ed. C. W. Gowans; New York / Oxford: OUP, 1987), 3.

⁸⁴ Cf. Gowans, “Debate,” 17–18. The second strategy may produce feelings of guilt, which are the basis of one argument for the existence of moral dilemmas: guilt shows that the obligation remained even though the agent was not able to fulfil it. See Philippa Foot, “Moral Realism and Moral Dilemma,” in *Moral Dilemmas* (ed. C. W. Gowans; New York / Oxford: OUP, 1987), 250–70; Christine Trappolet, “Dilemas Morales,” *DEFM* 1.437–42; Alasdair MacIntyre, “Moral Dilemmas,” *PPR* 50 (1990): 367–82, especially 370.

seems to be the solution Nussbaum herself envisages.

Thomas Nagel identifies five types of values between which there can be such a conflict,⁸⁵ and is unwilling to prioritise these values for theoretical reasons.

I do not believe that the source of value is unitary—displaying apparent multiplicity only in its application to the world. I believe that value has fundamentally different kinds of sources, and that they are reflected in the classification of values into types. Not all values represent the pursuit of some single good into a variety of settings.⁸⁶

Nagel sees the fundamental conflict as that between personal and impersonal values.

Conflicts between personal and impersonal claims are ubiquitous. They cannot, in my view, be resolved by subsuming either of the points of view under the other, or both under a third. Nor can we simply abandon any of them. There is no reason why we should. The capacity to view the world simultaneously from the point of view of one's relations to others, from the point of view of one's life extended through time, from the point of view of everyone at once, and finally from the detached viewpoint often described as the *view sub specie aeternitatis* is one of the marks of humanity. This complex capacity is an obstacle to simplification.⁸⁷

Thus, argues Nagel, whilst people still need to make decisions, the fact that action must be unitary does not mean that the justification for action can be similarly distilled.

Whilst concurring that there can be good action without total justification there are several problems with Nagel's thesis. First, it is not certain that there are multiple sources of value. The biblical tradition claims a single source, God, and it is usually assumed that although there are different ethical obligations ultimately there are ways of resolving apparent contradictions between them because they are related to one, internally consistent, deity.⁸⁸ Whether this stance can be maintained with respect to the Old Testament is an empirical question and not to be decided *a priori*, although diversity of perspective *per se* may not be a problem.⁸⁹ O'Donovan suggests that

⁸⁵ Thomas Nagel, "The Fragmentation of Value," in *Moral Dilemmas* (ed. C. W. Gowans; New York / Oxford: OUP, 1987), 175–76. They are: (1) specific obligations to other people, institutions or community; (2) constraints on action deriving from universal rights, e.g. not to assault or coerce; (3) utility: the effects of one's actions upon the welfare of all; (4) perfectionist ends or values – those things with intrinsic value rather than utility; and (5) commitment to one's own undertakings, regardless of initial motives.

⁸⁶ Nagel, "Fragmentation of Value," 178.

⁸⁷ Nagel, "Fragmentation of Value," 180.

⁸⁸ Other traditions also look to this sort of resolution. Aristotle's doctrine of the unity of the virtues implies there can be no conflict between them, and Gowans notes that both Kantian and utilitarian theories of obligation are monist, "Debate," 10.

⁸⁹ In addition to Goldingay's typology note Leander Keck's suggestion that the perspectives of

uncertainty about moral judgements arises not because of multiple sources of value but “because the moral field is pluriform”.⁹⁰ Only a moral code with one principle could avoid conflicting demands, but that would be of insufficient use to moral agents because the moral field is complex. In his scheme individual moral injunctions are to the created moral order as bricks to a building. Ethical thinking, therefore, should seek a comprehensive moral perspective, a view of the whole edifice. Whilst not automatically solving the problem of conflicts in moral perspectives, O’Donovan does point to a way of accommodating different moral values without the need to posit multiple sources of value.⁹¹

The second problem with Nagel’s position is that it assumes people’s epistemological limitations vitiate arguments for a coherent moral order.⁹² Although I have argued such an order may provide resources to resolve moral conundrums, it does not mean one can avoid moral indeterminacy. Paul Ramsey acknowledges that whilst moral goods are occasionally commensurable, in other instances moral choices involve incommensurable conflicting values, either because there is no common scale, or because there are gaps in the hierarchy of values. This means it is impossible to compute morality, although it remains possible

that values are in some sense *comparable*, that some are higher than others. Values may be comparable qualitatively, yet there may be no way to measure addition to the one against subtraction from the other. Higher and lower values, more worthy and less worthy goods, may be known to us while still there may be gaps—incommensurability—in the scale, or perhaps there may be no clear single scale on which to measure the lesser or greater good or evil.⁹³

individual books are to ‘New Testament ethics’ as archipelagos to the submerged mountain ranges to which they attest, “Rethinking ‘New Testament Ethics’,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 3–16.

⁹⁰ O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 199.

⁹¹ Brian Hebblethwaite raises a slightly different objection from a Christian perspective, *Ethics and Religion in a Pluralistic Age* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 49–63. He argues that despite God being one, there are varieties of goodness because people relate to God in various ways. One can agree that relationship to God is morally important, but this does not preclude, as part of the relationship, behaviour that conforms to some divine standard(s) and/or some divinely ordained end(s), themselves part of the created moral order. In fact, O’Donovan reaches the opposite conclusion to Hebblethwaite: there is a unity behind the many ways of being good based on the fulfilment of the moral law. “That is what makes these differentiations of character good: they are true interpretations, each within a unique vocational matrix, of the one moral life, the life which is given to all men to live”, *Resurrection*, 223.

⁹² Cf. O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 19. This could be expressed in terms of Nagel’s non-realism, cf. Foot, “Moral Realism,” 269; O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 76–103; MacIntyre, “Moral Dilemmas”.

⁹³ Paul Ramsey, “Incommensurability and Indeterminacy in Moral Choice,” in *Doing Evil to Achieve Good: Moral Choice in Conflict Situations* (ed. R. McCormick and P. Ramsey; Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1978), 69–145, quote 71. Emphasis original.

In such a situation proportionate rather than commensurable reason is required. However, when “human goods or evils differ from one another qualitatively *and differ qualitatively in such fashion that they are incommensurate on any single scale*, then choice is irreducibly ambiguous”.⁹⁴ Are personal and impersonal values so separated? Is it, for example, impossible to decide between ‘truth’ and friendship with a particular individual? Even if no rule can be devised to determine this question, it is unnecessary to conclude with Nagel that a conflict of these or similar values constitutes an unsolvable moral dilemma. In the case of the Old Testament, for example, such conundrums are presented in narrative contexts that may offer clues to their resolution.⁹⁵ That there may be some moral loss in making the decision is obvious from genres such as tragedy, but that is the significance of the moral distinction between desiring and unwillingly permitting a particular outcome.⁹⁶

A final criticism of Nagel is that he supposes the possession by a single individual of myriad points of view means people can view the world from any place other than where they are, a fact not altered by people’s conception of multiple perspectives.⁹⁷ One advantage of cross-cultural moral reflection is that it may stimulate more accurate knowledge of the moral order since “[t]ruth may be one, but our apprehension of it is limited and perspectival”.⁹⁸

To conclude, whilst it appears that insoluble moral dilemmas are a spectre, knowing how to choose rightly in some situations remains difficult and may be indeterminate. In everyday situations, however, people do not seem to struggle to juggle moral goods, but exhibit a fairly clear idea of which ones are more important. Douglas Davies’ contrast between systematic and clustered convictions highlights how the spatial and temporal constraints of real life mean everyday thinking and practice centre around a dominant selection of goods.⁹⁹ This explains how clashes of moral values connected to this nexus are considered more significant than those that are not. The

⁹⁴ Ramsey, “Incommensurability,” 88. Emphasis original.

⁹⁵ Whilst Nussbaum’s emphasis upon narrative as a source of moral guidance is apt Pamela Hall suggests her predilection for tragedy and Henry James obscures the fact that ethical solutions may be more readily available than she would care to admit, “Limits of the Story: Tragedy in Recent Virtue Ethics,” *SCE* 17 (2004): 8–9.

⁹⁶ Cf. Ramsey, “Incommensurability,” 78.

⁹⁷ O’Donovan, *Resurrection*, 80–81.

⁹⁸ Janet Martin Soskice, “The Truth Looks Different from Here or On Seeking the Unity of Truth from a Diversity of Perspectives,” in *Christ and Context: The Confrontation between Gospel and Culture* (ed. H. D. Regan and A. J. Torrance with A. Wood; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 43–59, quote 57.

⁹⁹ Cf. Douglas Davies, *Anthropology and Theology* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 19–26.

variety of moral goods and their relations to socially important nexus are important factors to consider in cross-cultural comparisons. Because the social world depicted by the Old Testament is so distinct from our own, the next section moves from theoretical considerations of the good and right to how kinship has been considered a central feature of Old Testament morality.

2.2 KINSHIP AS A MORAL GOOD

Gerstenberger argues that Old Testament morality was profoundly affected by social location.¹⁰⁰ He asserts that, “everything that we learn in the Old Testament about interpersonal ‘loyalty to the community’ (*hesed*) and ‘trustworthiness’ (*‘emunah*) has its original setting in [...] family existence, orientated on mutuality”.¹⁰¹ In other words, what one might call the cluster of kinship forms the matrix of Old Testament morality.

2.2.1 Kinship as the Matrix of Old Testament Morality

Understanding the marked differences between the structure of contemporary Western and ancient families is essential. It is a commonplace among commentators to note the hierarchy שְׂבָט (tribe)—מַשְׁפֵּחָה (kin-group)—בֵּית (house).¹⁰² Many suppose the basic family unit in the Old Testament to be the בֵּית אָב, “all the descendants of a single living ancestor (the head, *rō’s-bêt-’āb*) in a single lineage, excluding married daughters (who entered their husbands’ *bêt-’āb*) along with their families”.¹⁰³ However, whilst it may have been “the smallest, viably self-sufficient unit within Israel’s system

¹⁰⁰ Erhard Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament* (trans. J. Bowden; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002). He analyses the following social locations: family and clan; the village and small town; tribal alliances; monarchical state; and exilic parochial communities.

¹⁰¹ Gerstenberger, *Theologies*, 31.

¹⁰² I follow Wright in translating מַשְׁפֵּחָה as ‘kin-group’, cf. *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / Exeter: Paternoster, 1990), 48; Gottwald, *Tribes*, 301–305; note Carol Meyers’ suggestion that בֵּית אָב should be translated “father’s household”, “The Family in Early Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel* (ed. L. G. Perdue et al; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 1–47, quote 19. For discussion of the relationship between these three groupings see Francis Andersen, “Israelite Kinship Terminology and Social Structure,” *The Bible Translator* 20 (1969): 29–39; S. Bendor, *The Social Structure in Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (Beit ’ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy* (JBS 7; Jerusalem: Simor, 1996), 67–86; Gottwald, *Tribes*, 257–70, 287–314; Paula McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel* (LAI; London: SPCK / Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 66–70, 87–94; Meyers, “Family,” 13–21; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of the Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 183–205; Wright, *God’s People*, 48–55; idem, “Family,” *ABD* 2.761–69.

¹⁰³ Wright, “Family,” 762. Although generally applicable note Niels Lemche’s discussion showing בֵּית אָב is used for the nuclear family, extended family and lineage, *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society Before the Monarchy* (VTSup 37; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 251–59.

of land division and tenure”, it was probably not the smallest discrete unit, which was the individual household.¹⁰⁴ Archaeological evidence reveals that the four roomed pillared house with an average of four inhabitants was typical of highland dwellings.¹⁰⁵ In many cases these were arranged around a common courtyard, and it is supposed that several, related nuclear families residing in close proximity comprised the **בֵּית אָב**.¹⁰⁶ A number of these, in turn, constituted a village.¹⁰⁷ Membership of the **בֵּית אָב** is suggested by Judges 17–18 where Micah, upon the death of his father, becomes head of a household comprising himself, his widowed mother, his sons (and possibly their families), and a Levite responsible for the family shrine.¹⁰⁸ If, as Blenkinsopp proposes, the forbidden degrees of consanguinity in Leviticus 18 are motivated by the need to preserve order within the household these prohibitions also point to the structure of the **בֵּית אָב**.¹⁰⁹ Stager uses models of birth and death rates alongside building size to calculate that each ‘joint family’ comprised 10–30 people.¹¹⁰ Meyers concludes that

¹⁰⁴ Wright, *God's People*, 1. Cf. van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 194–99.

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35. Further archaeological evidence is summarised in Ferdinand Deist, *The Material Culture of the Bible: An Introduction* (BS 70; ed. R. P. Carroll; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 195–209; Amihai Mazar, “Three Israelite Sites in the Hills of Judah and Ephraim,” *BA* 45 (1982): 167–78; Robert Miller II, *Chieftains of the Highland Clans: A History of Israel in the Twelfth and Eleventh Centuries B.C.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Jeffrey Zorn, “Estimating the Population Size of Ancient Settlements: Methods, Problems, Solutions, and a Case Study,” *BASOR* 295 (1994): 31–8.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Judg 18.22: **עַמּוֹת בֵּית מִיכָּה עַשְׂרֶה בָּתִים**. NRSV ‘the men who were in the houses near Micah’s house’, but Gottwald is to be preferred: ‘the men who were in the houses comprising the household of Micah’, *Tribes*, 291.

¹⁰⁷ This configuration of dwellings continues to exist in the more densely populated settlements of IA II, leading Bendor to conclude that the “structure absorbed the pressure of the monarchy and its machinery, and adapted to it just as it adapted to other factors that determined its struggle for existence”, Bendor, *Social Structure*, 32. Cf. Niels Lemche, “From Patronage Society to Patronage Society,” in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (JSOTSup 228; ed. V. Fritz and P. R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 106–20.

¹⁰⁸ A priest is allowed to defile himself for a similar range of kin, Lev 21.1–4.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel* (ed. L. G. Perdue et al; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 48–103, especially 59; Bendor, *Social Structure*, 57–66; Blenkinsopp also thinks economic concerns are important. Bendor suggests Lev 18 was composed during a period of settled agricultural society similar to the transition to monarchy described in 1 Samuel; for a similar view see Meyers, “Family,” 17–18. Although this is plausible, if the structure of the **בֵּית אָב** remained constant through the monarchy it is not possible to provide such a firm date. On the omission of the daughter from Lev 18 see Wenham: “it was already accepted that such a union was illicit (Gen. 19:31ff). It is expressly forbidden both in the laws of Hammurabi (LH 154) and in the Hittite laws (HL 195)”, *Leviticus*, 254. In any case simultaneous relations between a man and a *living* mother and her daughter are excluded, Lev 18.17. This rather cuts the ground from under Illona Rashkow, “Daughters and Fathers in Genesis...Or, What is Wrong with This Picture?” in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 22–36.

¹¹⁰ Stager, “Archaeology,” 18–21. Meyers estimates that average size rarely exceeded 15 people, “Family,” 18. Explicit mention of **בֵּית אָב** in Samuel indicates that it included sons and parents and could be numerous—Ziba’s included 15 sons and 20 slaves, presumably with their families, and Doeg the Edomite kills 85 priests of Nob, 2 Sam 9.10–12. Van der Toorn thinks that the 85 priests

over 80% of the Iron I population inhabited villages of less than 100 people.¹¹¹

Gerstenberger defines the family as a community in which all members shared both work and possessions.¹¹² He argues that disputes were resolved within the family according to ancestral custom, postulating that the biblical records show special cases concerning inheritance and power,¹¹³ rebellious sons,¹¹⁴ complaints about wives,¹¹⁵ sexual violence,¹¹⁶ and conversion to an alien cult.¹¹⁷ A key assumption is that families' theological horizons are restricted by the need for survival and that wider concerns are irrelevant. The dream is self-sufficiency.¹¹⁸ Internal relationships necessary for survival of families came to be viewed as protected by deities, with attendant taboos. Thus the precedence of parents over children is viewed as divinely ordained—part of the natural order.¹¹⁹

In terms of a specific family morality, Gerstenberger looks to narrative sources, wisdom, and legal prohibitions.¹²⁰ He proposes that these reveal the content of unconscious socialization. Regarding prohibitions, Exodus 21.13–17 twice forbids cursing parents,¹²¹ and restrictions on sexual activity among those who live under same roof, but who are not married, are prominent.¹²² Jokes, anecdotes and proverbial sayings reinforce conceptions of proper behaviour whose *telos* is intra-familial harmony.¹²³ For example, the need to participate in agricultural tasks essential to family wellbeing is reinforced by proverbial comments concerning the sluggard.¹²⁴ Loyalty to the family is an important value and behaviour to 'outsiders' (probably people from the same clan

comprised the entire adult male population of the settlement, and it is possible that they did not pertain to the same father's house but to the kin-group that occupied a village, cf. *Family Religion*, 191; 1 Sam 22.19, which reads נִבְּעֵיר־הַכֹּהֲנִים, although note 1 Sam 22.11: אֶת־אֲחִים־מֶלֶךְ בָּן־אֲחִיטוֹב הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת קָל־בֵּית אָבִיו הַכֹּהֲנִים אֲשֶׁר בָּנָבָן.

¹¹¹ Meyers, "Family," 12. See also Gunnar Lehmann, "Reconstructing the Social Landscape of Early Israel: Rural Marriage Alliances in the Central Hill Country," *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004): 141–93.

¹¹² Cf. Gerstenberger, *Theologies*, 19–20.

¹¹³ Gen 27; Num 27.1–11; Judg 9.1–6; 2 Sam 13.

¹¹⁴ Deut 21.18–21.

¹¹⁵ Num 5.11–13.

¹¹⁶ 2 Sam 13.

¹¹⁷ Deut 13.7–12.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Micah 4.4; 1 Kgs 5.5; Zech 3.10

¹¹⁹ Prov 15.20; 17.25; 19.26; 20.20; 23.25; 28.24; 30.17; Lev 19.3. Note also the role of the older brother in 1 Sam 20.29.

¹²⁰ Ex 20.12–17; 23.1–9; Lev 19.13–18. Cf. Elechi Amadi's view that the notion of the good in Nigeria is captured in proverbs, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1982), 50–64.

¹²¹ Verses 15, 17, cf. Deut. 27.16.

¹²² Lev 18.6–16, cf. Gerstenberger, *Theologies*, 69.

¹²³ Gerstenberger, *Theologies*, 64, 71.

¹²⁴ Prov 26.13–16.

rather than non-Israelites) has to be learnt.¹²⁵ Gerstenberger concludes that, “the core of the matter is family solidarity”.¹²⁶ It is instructive, therefore, that Micah’s vision of disaster portrays dysfunction at this foundational level.

Put no trust in a neighbour, have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom; for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against he mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his house.¹²⁷

Gerstenberger discusses other social locations, but in the ethical realm each builds upon this base.¹²⁸ Overall, he presents a cogent case for the centrality of the family for understanding Old Testament ethics.¹²⁹ Whilst Eichrodt and Hempel thought ‘popular morality’ was an infant ethic, left behind as Israel matured, Gerstenberger allows the concerns of ordinary people to have an enduring moral significance.¹³⁰ Given that the family was central to Old Testament life, alienation from it was an extreme recourse,¹³¹ and being apart from the family exposed one to danger and uncertainty.¹³² Whether this necessitates Gerstenberger’s conclusion that moral goods were restricted to those that fostered survival is moot. Such goods may have been important, but this does not require an entirely pragmatic, ‘survival of the strongest’, since the text highlights

¹²⁵ Gerstenberger, *Theologies*, 65, 74. The ‘one for all, and all for one’ attitude is apparent in Jacob’s dismay at his sons’ actions yet unwillingness to publicly distance himself from them (Gen. 34); cf. Saul’s expectation of loyalty from his son in 1 Sam 20.27–34.

¹²⁶ Gerstenberger, *Theologies*, 75.

¹²⁷ Micah 7.5–6; compare the positive vision of Ps 133.1b–3a.

¹²⁸ In the village setting, with a wider body of neighbours, issues of property come to the fore but, overall, he proposes that village morality is an extension of the family ethic. At the level of the tribal alliance Gerstenberger claims little can be said, save the possible existence of norms for fighting males for the duration of hostilities, for example, sexual abstinence and fasting. Despite an extended discussion of the history and theology of the monarchy he does not highlight novel ethical developments, although there were new ethical *issues*, e.g., hereditary succession and the status of the king. Gerstenberger argues differentiation from other nations is the key to understanding exilic and post-exilic ethics, and although family metaphors are used to describe exilic Israel moral concerns go beyond the family since the horizons of faith were survival and being an “ecumenical community under the one God Yahweh”, *Theologies*, 271.

¹²⁹ See also Wright, *God’s People*.

¹³⁰ Apart from Eichrodt, the other early distinguished work on Old Testament ethics was penned by Johannes Hempel, *Das Ethos des Alten Testaments* (BZAW 67; 2nd ed.; Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1964 [1938]); idem, “Ethics”. Like Gerstenberger, Hempel thought that ethical concerns were influenced by social and historical context. Barton levels similar criticisms at Hempel to those he directed against Eichrodt’s pretensions to discover historical Israelite ethics, “Understanding,” 15–24. Accepting these cautions, and rejecting Hempel’s evolutionary reconstruction, one notes the key contention that ethical traditions originated in particular groups. Whilst it is unnecessary to suppose they *created* particular moralities, it is true that some moral injunctions will have been more relevant to certain people or circumstances. For a recent restatement of the importance of social location see Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5–39.

¹³¹ Although 600 were said to be with David, cf. 1 Sam 23.13.

¹³² Cf. Ps 120; Meshek and Kedar were in Asia Minor and Arabia, respectively.

others.¹³³ Further, any account that requires different moral standards according to situation possesses an intrinsic instability. It is more plausible to suppose that virtues were virtues and moral acts were moral regardless of social location, and then explain why the good of ‘family solidarity’, an obviously important factor, might demand ostensibly amoral action. How this might be explained is a separate question. In terms of socialization, what needs to be learnt is not behaviour to outsiders *per se* but all moral conduct, including when *not*, for example, to be loyal or tell the truth. The normative evaluation of these decisions requires their identification within the text.

2.2.2 A ‘Familial Paradigm’

Instead of attempting a historical reconstruction of lived morality, Waldemar Janzen identifies several theological-ethical paradigms within the Old Testament, all under-girded by an overarching ‘familial paradigm’. For Janzen, a paradigm is, “a personally and holistically conceived image of a model (e.g., a wise person, good king) that imprints itself immediately and nonconceptually on the characters and actions of those who hold it”.¹³⁴ With this definition Janzen seeks both to steer a path between Old Testament ethics as law and as principle, and to appropriate stories about individual characters in ways that do not assume they are always exemplary.¹³⁵ For example, 1 Samuel 24 relates how David and Saul meet in a cave. In what sense did David act morally? Was it simply returning good for evil? Janzen suggests there is a deeper dimension. David’s men remind him of God’s promise to judge Saul, and tempt him to realise the promise himself: “David’s greatest claim to ethical modelling here...is his refusal to diminish the sovereignty of God through his own autonomous action”.¹³⁶ David, according to Janzen, models a royal paradigm. Similarly, Phinehas, Abigail and Elijah model priestly, wisdom and prophetic paradigms of ethical behaviour.¹³⁷ It is not, in the case of wisdom, that the paradigmatic figure is equal to Abigail (or Job, Joseph, or the Proverbial Woman), rather “ethical model stories flow together directly to form

¹³³ E.g., at the most basic level, ‘Do not kill’, Gen 4.15, 24; 9.5–6; Ex 20.13; 21.12; 23.7; Lev 19.18; 24.17; Deut 5.17 ; 27.24.

¹³⁴ Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 28.

¹³⁵ Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 8–9, notes that the tendency to view characters as exemplary has led in two alternative directions: on the one hand the view that real ethical models are the prophets—earlier characters were ethically ambiguous; and, on the other, the ‘Salvation History’ view—the texts deal with God’s dealings with imperfect people, none of whom are necessarily role models.

¹³⁶ Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 16.

¹³⁷ Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 9–20. Cf. Num 25; 1 Sam 25; 1 Kgs 21.

such a paradigm before the mental eye, as the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fit together to yield a picture".¹³⁸ This occurs in much the same way as people picture a 'good driver'.

Janzen maintains these four paradigms feed into and are nourished by a familial paradigm.¹³⁹ He accepts that changing social contexts will have meant the familial paradigm will not have been the same in, for example, semi-nomadic times and the late monarchy, but argues that the ANE concern for family *shalom* is given special literary-theological importance in biblical texts. Three stories exemplify the familial paradigm. Genesis 13 considers family harmony the key moral good.¹⁴⁰ The book of Ruth points to other family orientated virtues, *viz.*, care for the stranger and widow,¹⁴¹ redemption of a kin's inheritance¹⁴² and observance of levirate laws.¹⁴³ Judges 19 speaks of models (the concubine's father and old man)¹⁴⁴ and counter-models (the men of Gibeah) of hospitality. Janzen contends the differences between the stories of Abraham, Ruth and Judges do not derive from laws or general principles, but the various understandings (or lack thereof) of the kinship context. Taken together he claims that they witness to a three pronged familial paradigm which is concerned for life (understood as progeny), land and hospitality.¹⁴⁵

Janzen's paradigmatic approach is potentially fruitful. It is not afraid of narrative texts, nor of *prima facie* amoral behaviour like Phineas'. Especially important is his emphasis upon the family as the context and end of moral action. Three important criticisms, however, can be levelled. First, paradigms are a step away from the actual stories. Despite Janzen's avowed aversion to abstractions his paradigms are exactly that, being deduced from model behaviour. Second, whilst the analogy of the 'good driver' is suggestive, the idea that people piece together a mental image is problematic since we need something to guide our puzzle construction; something prior to the puzzle.

¹³⁸ Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 27.

¹³⁹ Janzen denies that the others can be subsumed into the familial paradigm, but does postulate that they complete its 'sub-structure'. If so, his criticism of Wright's scheme is misplaced, since Janzen's proposal is also based upon a single paradigm, but with a life-land-hospitality matrix instead of Wright's God-Israel-land. My main problem with the non-familial paradigms is that they seem to describe literary *form* rather than moral content, cf. Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 85–86, 100.

¹⁴⁰ The story has other functions in the context of the wider narrative, especially the promise of Gen 12.1–3.

¹⁴¹ Lev 19.9–10; Deut. 24.19–22.

¹⁴² Lev 25.25.

¹⁴³ Deut 25.5–10.

¹⁴⁴ Feminist scholars have severely criticised this interpretation, most convincingly Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984).

¹⁴⁵ Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*, 43.

Christian ethics has often appealed to rules, in the form of either revealed or natural law. Janzen demurs on this point, but at the very least a wider (meta)narrative that gives appropriate signals as to the meaning of the stories is necessary to identify the import of individual elements. Third, Janzen does not allow space for conflict between familial values. This is especially important since ultimately he includes all moral action within this paradigm.

2.3 CONCLUSION: THE PRIORITY OF KINSHIP

This chapter started with a discussion of the nature of the good, observing that it has several possible meanings, including instrumental and intrinsic. Although intrinsic goodness can be conceived as having a natural basis, what this might mean in practice is difficult to identify. On the contrary, different historical and cultural understandings of the good point to the varieties of goodness, and the need to delineate any particular definition with care. I have particularly highlighted that this process must account for the important change between ancient and modern ethics with respect to the relationship between the good and the right. This raises questions about the nature of moral rules, apparently prominent within the Old Testament, and in conversation with Martha Nussbaum I examined the relationship between moral rules, moral order, moral goods and particular situations. This analysis has demonstrated that an exclusive focus upon either rules or the particularity of individual situations is theoretically problematic. I have argued that it is better to focus upon moral goods, which must be understood with reference to their generic and teleological relations to other goods, that is, to the moral order. Whilst this order may be partly delineated by rules, such description is not exhaustive, so that studying the peculiarities of particular situations may lead to a fuller understanding of goods themselves.

The primary observation regarding moral goods is that they are legion, which means cases of conflict between them are inevitable. The ‘family’ has been identified as a key nexus of moral goods within the Old Testament. Gerstenberger observes that many rules and much moral guidance concern family activities, proposing that the family was the matrix of Old Testament morality. Janzen perceives a ‘familial paradigm’ as the foundational conception of Old Testament ethics. Notwithstanding several criticisms, I judge the focus on kin relations of these authors to be extremely suggestive and agree that the moral good of ‘family’ is fundamental for understanding

Old Testament ethics. The task of the following chapter, therefore, will be to examine kinship in more detail.

CHAPTER 3

Anthropological Approaches to Kinship

*Kinship is to anthropology
what logic is to philosophy
or the nude is to art.*

– Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*

The epigraph indicates that ‘the family’ has been a traditional focus of anthropology. For this reason the present chapter examines anthropological approaches to kinship and the ethics of kinship in order to gain a fuller understanding of this ‘institution’.

3.1 KINSHIP

From the publication of L. H. Morgan’s *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* in 1871 until the 1960s the study of kinship could be described as the basic discipline of anthropology, its “hard core”.¹ Alan Barnard eulogises Morgan’s classificatory system of relationship terminology as “the single most significant ethnographic breakthrough of all time”.² The significance of Morgan’s thesis is that he offered reasons for kinship classification: that it is a cipher for acceptable behaviour towards a particular group of relatives.³ So, for example, many societies distinguish

The epigraph is from Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (London: Penguin, 1967), 10.

¹ Edmund Leach, “Brain Teaser,” *NY Review of Books*, Oct (1967): 10; cited in Michael G. Peletz, “Kinship Studies in Late Twentieth-Century Anthropology,” *ARA* 24 (1995): 343–72, see 344. A particularly useful survey of kinship studies is Peter Schweitzer, “Introduction,” in *Dividends of Kinship: Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness* (ed. P. P. Schweitzer; London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–32.

² Alan Barnard, “Rules and Prohibitions: The Form and Content of Human Kinship,” in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (ed. T. Ingold; 2nd ed.; London: Routledge, 2002), 783–812, quote 803. The distinction is between a descriptive terminology, in which a term applies to a single individual in a genealogy, and classificatory system, in which a term applies to a number of individuals.

³ Cf. Françoise Zonabend, “An Anthropological Perspective on Kinship and the Family,” *A History of the Family: Volume One: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds* (ed. A. Burguière et al.; trans S. H. Tenison, R. Morris and A. Wilson; London: Polity Press, 1996), 8–68, especially 21; and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, “Introduction,” in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (ed. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde; Oxford: OUP, 1950), 1–85, especially 11, where he identifies three facets to kinship: affective relations, etiquette, i.e. norms for behaviour, and jural duties towards kin. He distinguishes between the ‘performance’ of a positive duty and the ‘observance’ of a negative duty.

between parallel and cross-cousins, and marriage ‘rules’ reflect this distinction. Further significant studies of how social relations structured through descent and affinity enable stable political interaction include that of Radcliffe-Brown, although within a comparative and functionalist rather than evolutionary framework, Evans-Pritchard’s enquiry into descent *groups* among the Nuer, and Meyer Fortes’ analysis of kinship *networks*.⁴

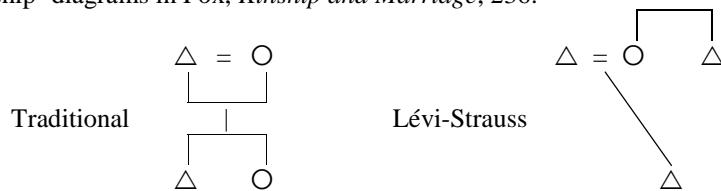
In traditional conceptions of kinship theory the “atom of kinship”⁵ is the nuclear family and descent from mother, father, or both. Claude Lévi-Strauss, however, argues that the fundamental relationships are not parent—child, but brother—sister and sister’s husband.⁶ Starting from the observation that the incest taboo is universal he contends that the “prohibition of incest is less a rule prohibiting marriage with the mother, sister or daughter, than a rule obliging the mother, sister or daughter to be given to others”.⁷ Alliance theory shifts the focus from group formation through descent to links formed by marriage:⁸

The significance of terminology has been debated from the genesis of kinship studies—for a convenient list of views see Robert Parkin, “Introduction: Terminology and Affinal Alliance,” in *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader* (ed. R. Parkin and L. Stone; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 121–35, especially 121–22.

⁴ See Radcliffe-Brown, “Introduction”; idem, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (New York: Free Press, 1952); Edward Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); Meyer Fortes, *The Web of Kinship Among the Tallensi* (Oxford: OUP, 1949). The absence of strong central government was considered to be the ‘problem’ requiring solution; a supposition now considered patently ethnocentric, so Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), 217–29, especially 218. Regarding descent, anthropologists have long recognised the distinction between genitor (biological father) and pater (social father)—illustrated by the old English proverb ‘Whoso boleth my kyne, ewere calf is mine’. The same distinction can be made on the female side; and the further distinction between *Genetrix I* (the culturally defined genetic mother) and *Genetrix II* (the bearing or carrying mother – the scientifically genetic mother) is proposed by Alan Barnard, “Rules and Prohibitions,” 790; cf. J. A. Barnes, “Physical and Social Kinship,” *PS* 28 (1961): 296–299.

⁵ Zonabend, “Anthropological Perspective,” 24.

⁶ *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969). Cf. the ‘atom of kinship’ diagrams in Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*, 236:



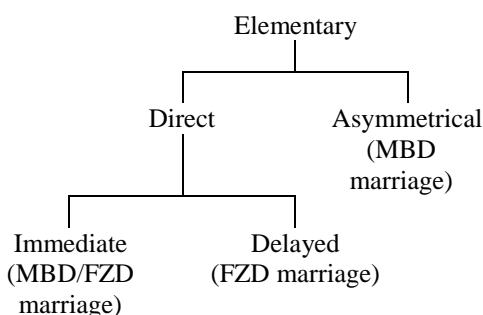
⁷ Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures*, 481, cf. 12–25.

⁸ Using illustration of European royal houses Fox expresses the distinction thus: “One sees marriage as useful in providing royal heirs: the other sees royal heirs as useful in that they can be used in dynastic marriages”, *Kinship and Marriage*, 23. Lévi-Strauss’ work refers to elementary marriage systems, i.e. those with positive marriage ‘rules’: complex systems have only negative rules prohibiting whom one can marry. Some forms of the latter encompass so many people that they appear almost elementary,

the value of exchange is not simply that of the goods exchanged. Exchange – and consequently the rule of exogamy which expresses it – has in itself a social value. It provides the means of binding men together, and of superimposing upon the natural links of kinship the henceforth artificial links...of alliance governed by rule.⁹

It is precisely the ‘natural links of kinship’ that form the target of David Schneider’s iconoclastic analysis of kinship theory, “a watershed in kinship studies”.¹⁰ He exposes anthropologists’ ethnocentric assumptions, for example, that ‘blood is thicker than water’,¹¹ and avers that ‘kinship’ is a Euro-American cultural construction: “It is a non-subject. It exists in the minds of anthropologists but not in the cultures they study”.¹² Instead, claims Schneider, it is necessary to seek the emic perspective: “One

famously the Crow-Omaha system. Within elementary systems important distinctions are made between restricted or direct exchange (wife givers and takers are the same) and generalised or asymmetrical exchange (wife givers do not take wives from the same moiety to which they give wives). A further division is made between immediate direct exchange and delayed direct exchange. The following diagram is an amalgamation of those in Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*, 222 and Barnard, “History,” 129, cf. Lévi-Strauss’ diagrams, *Elementary Structures*, 216, 464:



Further discussion of alliance theory can be found in Anthony Good, “Kinship,” *ECSA*, 311–18; Barnard, “Rules and Prohibitions,” 802; Parkin, “Introduction,” 121–35.

⁹ Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures*, 480. Louis Dumont’s work on Dravidian kinship also adopts a structuralist, alliance perspective, see *Affinity as Value: Marriage Alliance in South India, with Comparative Essays on Australia* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983) and the evaluation in Margaret Trawick, *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 128–31. Trawick’s concern is that the focus on categories eliminates the human, emotional dimension of actual relationships.

¹⁰ Janet Carsten, “Introduction: cultures of relatedness,” in *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship* (ed. J. Carsten; Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 1–36, quote 25. Schneider’s thesis is presented in: David M. Schneider, *American Kinship* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968); idem, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984); idem, “What is kinship all about?” in *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader* (ed. R. Parkin and L. Stone; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 257–74; repr. from *Kinship Studies in the Morgan Centennial Year* (ed. P. Reining; Washington D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1972), 32–63. For a summary of Schneider’s life and work see Richard Feinberg, “Introduction: Schneider’s Cultural Analysis of Kinship and Its Implications for Anthropological Relativism,” in *The Cultural Analysis of Kinship: The Legacy of David Schneider* (ed. R. Feinberg and M. Ottenheimer; Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 1–32.

¹¹ See, especially, Schneider, *Critique*, 165–77.

¹² Schneider, “What is kinship all about?,” 269. On problems with ‘Euro-American’ as a term of reference see Linda Stone, “Introduction: The Demise and Revival of Kinship,” in *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader* (ed. R. Parkin and L. Stone; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 241–56, especially 253. Rodney Needham states that “there is no such thing as kinship” because ethnographic

must take the native's own categories, the native's units, the native's organization, and articulation of those categories and follow their definitions, their symbolic and meaningful divisions wherever they may lead".¹³ Schneider's culturalist approach has been widely criticised for assuming that any given 'culture' is bounded and homogeneous, and for divorcing 'culture' from actual social relations.¹⁴ Two interrelated aspects of Schneider's thesis have prompted important debates concerning the relationship between nature and culture, and kinship as a construction.

In *American Kinship* Schneider states there "are biological facts...There is also a system of constructs in American culture about those biological facts",¹⁵ and in *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* he argues that "culture, even were it to do no more than recognize biological facts, still adds something to those facts".¹⁶ As Carsten observes, Schneider actually maintains the very distinction he argues against, *viz.*, the existence of natural facts apart from cultural constructions of them.¹⁷ The more thoroughgoing work of feminist anthropologists, particularly Sylvia Yanagisako and Janet Collier, on the other hand, posits no universal biological given called 'sex', which is interpreted in culturally distinct ways as 'gender'.¹⁸ Instead, 'sex' itself is viewed as a construction formulated in the context of competing hierarchies of power. This enables them to shut the door more firmly on biological determinism in relation to gender.¹⁹ However, the

variation means kinship cannot be reified as a 'thing', not that kin relations do not exist. He thus argues for more rigorous cross-cultural comparison rather than abandonment of kinship studies, cf. "Remarks on the Analysis of Kinship and Marriage," in *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage* (ed. R. Needham; London, Tavistock Press, 1971), 1–34, quote 5.

¹³ Schneider, "What is kinship all about?", 270.

¹⁴ Cf. Trawick's comment that culturalist ethnographers "tend to escape the muddle that a plurality of perspectives poses by being highly selective as to which 'native point of view' they listen to", *Notes on Love*, 132. This is the basis for Yanagisako's criticism of *American Kinship* since she demonstrates that even the grounds for comparison, i.e. individuals (in contradistinction to families), are affected by which point of view is preferred, see Sylvia Yanagisako, "Variance in American Kinship: Implications for Cultural Analysis," *AE* 5 (1978): 15–29.

¹⁵ Schneider, *American Kinship*, 80.

¹⁶ Schneider, *Critique*, 199.

¹⁷ Carsten, "Introduction," 5.

¹⁸ Sylvia Yanagisako and Janet Collier, "Towards a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship," in *Gender and Kinship: Essays towards a Unified Analysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 14–50. See also Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney, "Naturalizing Power," in *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis* (ed. S. Yanagisako & C. Delany. London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 1–22; Sarah Franklin, "Re-thinking Nature-Culture: Anthropology and the New Genetics," *AT* 3 (2003): 65–85.

¹⁹ Cf. Carsten, "Introduction," 22. The anthropology of non-traditional family structures and New Reproductive Technologies have also been used to destabilise the natural basis for gender and kinship, with the thesis is that biology is *used* to justify *choices*. Cf. Linda Stone, *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship* (ed. L. Stone; Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Carsten, "Introduction," 11; Corinne Hayden, "Gender, Genetics, and Generation: Reformulating Biology in Lesbian Kinship," *CA* 10 (1995): 41–63.

view that not only cultural symbols but also their referents are arbitrary and culturally constructed has been criticised as too relativistic, handicapping cross-cultural comparison.²⁰ Carsten proposes enlarging the category of ‘kinship’ to ‘relatedness’ in an attempt to recover comparative possibilities.²¹ This, however, does not solve the cultural specificity of the nomenclature, and it is better to take her more recent suggestion that instead of abandoning the nature—culture distinction

it is precisely the ways in which people in different cultures distinguish between what is given and what is made, what might be called biological and what might be called social, and the points at which they make such distinctions, that, without preconceptions, should be at the center of the comparative anthropological analysis of kinship.²²

This is entirely compatible with Helle Rydstrøm’s observation that although there is indubitably a natural basis for human existence, the irreducible element is not sex but the human body; sex is merely one facet of embodied existence.²³ Rydstrøm proposes that anthropology should focus upon the whole person, which will include, but not be limited to, sex and gender. In doing so she advocates taking into account the fourth major movement in kinship theory, which examines how kinship is constructed thorough everyday practice, rather than definitions.²⁴

Bourdieu’s view of kinship as “an open-ended set of practices employed by individuals seeking to satisfy their material and symbolic interests” is susceptible to the

²⁰ A different criticism of Yangisako and Collier is advanced by Harold Scheffler, who argues that the kinship universal is not biology but genealogy. Biology does play a part—it is women who have children and form primary bonds with them—but it is the various uses of these givens to construct genealogical relations that is important, regardless of any biological link between persons, see Harold Scheffler, “Sexism and Naturalism in the Study of Kinship,” in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era* (ed. M. di Leonardo; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 361–82. A strong biological base for kinship has not been abandoned by all anthropologists, e.g. Maurice Bloch and Dan Sperber, “Kinship and Evolved Psychological Dispositions: the Mother’s Brother Controversy Reconsidered,” *Curr Anthropol* 43 (2002): 723–48.

²¹ “‘Relatedness’ makes possible comparisons between Inupiat and English or Nuer ways of being related without relying on an arbitrary distinction between biology and culture, and without presupposing what constitutes kinship”, Carsten, “Introduction,” 5.

²² Janet Carsten, *After Kinship* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 189. The title and thesis of her book reflect a conversation with Marilyn Strathern, *After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992). See also Carsten’s comment that there are “good reasons why, rather than abandoning biology, we need to subject its *uses* in different cultures to closer scrutiny”, “Introduction,” 33. My emphasis—ignoring an apparent reification of ‘culture’.

²³ Helle Rydstrøm, *Embodying Morality: Growing Up in Rural Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003).

²⁴ See also Rapport and Overing, *Anthropology*, 227–28; Janet Carsten, “The Substance of Kinship and the Heat of the Hearth: Feeding, Personhood, and Relatedness among Malyans in Pulau Langkawi,” *AE* 22 (1995): 223–42. Trawick further proposes practice should be considered in the light of depth psychology—an invitation I do not pursue here, see *Notes on Love*, 142–48.

charge that he considers people rational economic actors.²⁵ If one accounts for this weakness, his work on kinship details the social *uses* of kinship and highlights the fact that kinship requires *work*. Regarding affinal relationships, for example, Bourdieu comments that “it is only when one records them as a *fait accompli*, as the anthropologist does when he establishes a genealogy, that one can forget that they are the product of strategies oriented towards the satisfaction of material and symbolic interests”.²⁶ In this process it is important to remember that not all kinship relations are the same. Bourdieu refers to a “privileged network of practical relationships”,²⁷ including both genealogical and non-genealogical relationships, in contradistinction to official kin. The respective roles of each sort of relationship are especially clear in marriages: “Practical kin make marriages; official kin celebrate them”.²⁸ A similar emphasis upon the importance of non-biological kin is found in the work of Janet Carsten and Steven Hugh-Jones, who take forward Lévi-Strauss’ work on ‘house societies’: groupings of corporate estates or ‘houses’ perpetuated through property, names, and real or fictive descent.²⁹ “People of house societies have an emic understanding of their houses in this sense and perceive their own identity and their relationship with others in terms of their houses”.³⁰ Such closeness does not signify harmony but tension, for example, between brothers, and relationships require constant work to maintain solidarity.³¹ This concern with agency takes us a long way from the “bastard algebra”³² of early kinship studies with its preoccupation with terminology, to the practice of becoming and staying ‘related’.

3.2 THE ETHICS OF KINSHIP

James Laidlaw claims that ‘the anthropology of ethics’ is non-existent. “There is

²⁵ Good, “Kinship,” 316.

²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. R. Nice; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 167. These strategies do not have to follow any ‘rules’ of kinship. Note also the distinction between prescription (formal relations between idealised categories of kin), preference (recognised jural rules) and practice (actual social behaviour) in Rodney Needham, “Prescription,” *Oceania* 42 (1973): 166–81.

²⁷ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 168.

²⁸ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 168, cf. the case study 168–69.

²⁹ Janet Carsten and Steven Hugh-Jones, “About the House – Lévi-Strauss and Beyond,” in *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond* (ed. J. Carsten and S. Hugh-Jones; Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 1–46; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of Masks* (trans. S. Modelska; London: Jonathan Cape, 1983).

³⁰ Stone, “Introduction,” 247.

³¹ Cf. also the view that constructing relatedness is ‘hard work’ in Carsten, “Introduction,” 26; Isabella Lepri, “The Meanings of Kinship among the Ese Ejja of Northern Bolivia,” *JRAI* 11 (2005): 703–724.

³² Bronislaw Malinowski, “Kinship,” *Man* 30 (1939): 19–29, quote 19.

no connected history we can tell ourselves about the study of morality in anthropology, as we do for a range of topics such as kinship".³³ He laments that a Durkheimian view holding morality is the product of social interaction is so pervasive that it has tended to exclude work on 'morals' *per se*.³⁴ Laidlaw's judgment, however, is overly pessimistic: although relatively limited, there *is* a corpus of anthropological reflection about ethics.³⁵ There are two main foci. One concerns the morality of the anthropological endeavour itself. Issues include the discipline's colonial heritage, power relations between anthropological observer and the people studied, and matters of confidentiality and disclosure.³⁶ In these debates anthropologists have wrestled with how to reconcile the discipline's key assumption of cultural relativity and substantive issues of human dignity.³⁷

³³ James Laidlaw, "For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom," *JRAI* 8 (2002): 311–32, quote 311. Note D. Pocock's quip: " 'Morals', 'morality', 'ethics' are not words commonly found in the indices of anthropological monographs and, if they are found, they are not commonly followed by many page references", D. F. Pocock, "The Ethnography of Morals," *IJMSS* 1 (1986): 3–20, quote 7. This despite some of the anthropological 'classics' attending to ethical issues, e.g. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer*, 257–66; Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934. Repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989).

³⁴ See the critical exposition of Durkheim in Sybil Wolfram, "Anthropology and Morality," *JASO* 13 (1982): 262–74, especially 266–73. A similar caution about conflating the social and moral is made by David Parkin, "Introduction," in *The Anthropology of Evil* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 1–25, especially 3–5. Most anthropological studies refrain from defining 'morality'; the situation has not changed much since Edel and Edel affirmed that anthropology "has no established definitions of the moral, nor even any body of common ascriptions", May Edel and Abraham Edel, *Anthropology & Ethics: The Quest for Moral Understanding* (1968; repr. New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 2000), 7. Indeed, seeking a definition is probably a fruitless task since, in the words of Rasanayagam and Heintz, "morality is always in a *dynamic state of negotiation and flux* as people relate to wider societal norms in the context of everyday practical action", Johan Rasanayagam and Monica Heintz, "An anthropology of morality," in *Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology Report 2004–2005* (Halle: Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology, 2005), 51–60, quote 53. My emphasis. Parkin considers the wide scope of the word 'evil' an advantage: "It is precisely because the term has been so loose analytically that it has been able to reveal so much empirically", "Introduction," 2.

³⁵ For surveys of 'the anthropology of ethics' see Pocock, "Ethnography of Morals"; Klaus Hoeyer, "Ethics Wars: Reflections on the Antagonism between Bioethicists and Social Science Observers of Biomedicine," *HumStud* 29 (2006): 203–27; Signe Howell, "Introduction," in *The Ethnography of Moralities* (ed. S. Howell; London: Routledge, 1997), 1–22; Jarrett Zigon, "Moral Breakdown and the Ethical Demand: A Theoretical Framework for an Anthropology of Moralities," *AT* 7 (2007): 131–50, especially 131–34. For discussion of the relationship between philosophical ethics and anthropological studies see Edel and Edel, *Anthropology and Ethics*; Wolfram, "Anthropology and Morality"; Hoeyer, "Ethics Wars," who identifies deficit, replacement and dismissive models.

³⁶ For a survey of anthropologists' moral questioning of their task and the development of professional ethical standards see Pat Caplan, "Introduction: Anthropology and Ethics," in *Ethics and Anthropology: Debates and Dilemmas* (ed. P. Caplan; London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 1–33; David Mills, "'Like a Horse in Blinkers'? A Political History of Anthropology's Research Ethics," in *Ethics and Anthropology: Debates and Dilemmas* (ed. P. Caplan; London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 35–55.

³⁷ Note the rejection of ethical relativity as an inappropriate response to injustice, and the call for a politically committed and morally engaged anthropology of the 'other' in Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Curr Anthropol* 36 (1995): 409–40. Nigel Rapport develops a liberal ethic by maintaining a focus upon the individual human agent, *Transcendent Individual: Towards a Literary and Liberal Anthropology* (London and New

Whilst these concerns are important, it is the second focus, the study of the ‘moralities’ of others, that is of direct interest to this study. Several distinct emphases may be discerned. Early research, as in kinship studies, examined the vocabulary of moral appraisal, an approach that has not been entirely abandoned.³⁸ A more holistic approach is represented by the first monograph on the anthropology of ethics, which defined the task as seeking to identify patterns or systems of moral behaviour.³⁹ Another tack is taken by those who study aspects of cultural life. Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana’s ethnography of the ethics of inheritance, for example, highlights conflicts of moral and other goods, the variety of ways in which they can be configured, and the various justifications for these arrangements.⁴⁰ It is notable that no single construction is free of problems or fails to create other conflicts. Nevertheless, some arrangements may be defended as more ‘natural’ than others; indeed, it is the natural basis of the family that leads Pitt-Rivers to state that it is a *moral unit*.⁴¹

A key theoretical issue in the ‘anthropology of ethics’ concerns the working assumption of cultural, and hence ethical, relativity, and the possibility of cross-cultural comparison, and thus universal ethical standards.⁴² Bradd Shore observes that the terms of this discussion have tended to hide complexity within both societies and individuals. On the one hand, homogenising generalisations of a particular society’s morality, exemplified in work directed at identifying ‘moral systems’, can point only to different emphases vis-à-vis other societies; it cannot explain how particular people behave. On the other, if people are merely vehicles for “the simple mobilization of values” there is no theoretical space for those who, sometimes, at least, view ethics in terms of moral

³⁸ York: Routledge, 1997), 180–201.

³⁹ E.g. Clyde Kluckhohn, “Some Navaho Value Terms in Behavioural Context,” *Language* 32 (1956): 140–45. Christopher Boehm contends that the advantage of semantic analyses is that they are anchored to observable data, “Exposing the Moral Self in Montenegro: The Use of Natural Definitions to Keep Ethnography Descriptive,” *AE* 7 (1980): 1–26.

⁴⁰ Edel and Edel, *Anthropology and Ethics*, 9, 108–147; cf. Rasanayagam and Heintz, “An anthropology of morality,” 51–53.

⁴¹ Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana, “The Ethics of Inheritance,” in *Mediterranean Family Structures* (CSSA 13; ed. Peristiany; Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 305–15.

⁴² See “The Moral Foundations of the Family,” in *The Fate of Shechem, or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (CSSA 19; Cambridge: CUP, 1977), 71–93. Note, however, that Pitt-Rivers supposes that relations between the sexes are the basis for family organisation.

⁴³ Cf. Edel and Edel, *Anthropology and Ethics*, 19–33; Clyde Kluckhohn, “Ethical Relativity: Sic et Non,” *JP* 52 (1955): 663–77; Bradd Shore, “Human Ambivalence and the Structuring of Moral Values,” *Ethos* 18 (1990): 165–79, especially 166–67; Richard Shweder, “Ethical Relativism: Is There a Defensible Version?,” *Ethos* 18 (1990): 205–18. Pocock provocatively suggests that claims for ethical relativity hide a proposal for the normativity of subjectivism, “Ethnography of Morals,” 9.

dilemmas.⁴³ Shore goes further, arguing that ethical discourse is a means of justifying action in the light of conflicting moral imperatives. He contends, therefore, that generalisations “squeeze life out of...reality...by treating human action as if it proceeds from a simple activation of cultural values rather than from the problematical and always partial resolution of dilemmas”.⁴⁴

It is instructive to note the specifically ethical categories (as practised in Western ethics) used by anthropologists. Pitt-Rivers argues that “[m]oral values are best examined through the sanctions that operate against their violation”.⁴⁵ He attends to the ‘norms’ of honour and shame, observing that sanctions are often informal, for example, gossip about infractions of socially expected behaviour. Although much Western ethical discourse conceives of moral norms as universal, K. E. Read observes that among the Gahuku-Gama of New Guinea compliance is not even expected of everyone within society, for a person’s moral obligations depend upon relationships with particular individuals.⁴⁶ An awareness of the duties established by personal relationships enables Daniel Smith, in a study of ‘corruption’ in Nigeria, to appreciate that the public and private are not discrete domains, and that “much of what critics might floss as ‘corruption’ can look like moral behavior from local perspectives”.⁴⁷ Paulo Sousa suggests that a reason for such misunderstandings can be that what is discretionary in one society, for example, caring for an elderly parent in one’s own house, might be considered normative in another.⁴⁸ The very idea of ‘norms’, however, may itself be culturally specific. In her ethnography of Mongolia, Caroline Humphrey proposes that

⁴³ Shore, “Human Ambivalence,” 168.

⁴⁴ Shore, “Human Ambivalence,” 172. Without original emphasis. Shore argues that it is the contradictions inherent to the human condition that enable one to transcend ethical relativism. In this context I concur that “cultural systems do not invent values so much as they orchestrate rhetorical strategies, organizing the perception of value-laden situations with standardized and culturally acceptable formulations”, cf. Shore, “Human Ambivalence,” 174–76, quote 175. Without original emphasis.

⁴⁵ Pitt-Rivers, “Moral Basis,” 83.

⁴⁶ K. E. Read, “Morality and the Concept of the Person Among the Gahuku-Gama,” *Oceania* 25 (1955): 233–82, especially 260: “Stated as sharply as possible, moral obligations are primarily contingent on the social positioning of individuals”. These ‘norms’ might be expressed in proverbs, e.g. “Instead of saying it is ‘good’ or ‘right’ to help others, they state quite simply that ‘if you don’t help others, others won’t help you’”, “Gahuku-Gama,” 255. Note that Read, as might be expected from the date of his study, seeks to uncover ‘moral systems’. A ‘person orientated’ morality is also identified by Dan Rosengren, “Matsigenka Myth and Morality: Notions of the Social and the Asocial,” *Ethnos* 63 (1998): 249–72.

⁴⁷ Daniel Smith, “Kinship and Corruption in Contemporary Nigeria,” *Ethnos* 66 (2001): 344–64, quote 345. He also notes, in line with the argument of this thesis, that people often recognise a conflict of moral goods and are ambivalent about the practices in which they feel (morally) obliged to engage.

⁴⁸ Paulo Sousa, “On Folk Conceptions of Mind, Agency and Morality,” *JCC* 6 (2006): 1–25, especially 7–8. Compliance, of course, is separate matter.

an ‘ethics of exemplars’ is a better description of Mongolian morality.⁴⁹ Yet another challenge to assuming the applicability of Western notions of moral reasoning comes from Signe Howell, who questions whether choices are inevitably reflexive, advocating comparative study of the processes of moral choice.⁵⁰ In contrast to a focus upon norms, sanctions, or even exemplars, Thomas Widlock advocates concentrating upon moral virtue, asserting that ‘ethos’ “in the anthropological sense relates above all to everyday customs and to practical needs, and not to aloof concepts of right or wrong and good or bad”.⁵¹ The anthropology of ethics, says Widlock, should attend to how basic human goods feature in moral practices, claiming that a focus on how societies conceive of ‘virtuous agency’ would enable anthropologists both to account for the particularity of moral practices and to engage in cross-cultural comparison.⁵² Like Shore, Widlock highlights the multiplicity of goods and goals: moral decisions take place in a complex environment.⁵³

A growing awareness of the limitations of Western categories of ethical reflection, in particular of the emphasis upon rules, has led the recent major monographs on the anthropology of ethics to focus upon the *practice* of morality. Although few authors describe their work as ‘the anthropology of the ethics of kinship’, their focus upon individuals in family contexts means that this is, *de facto*, what they produce.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Caroline Humphrey, “Exemplars and rules: Aspects of the discourse of moralities in Mongolia,” in *The Ethnography of Moralities* (ed. S. Howell; London: Routledge, 1997), 25–47, especially 34–38. Note that although “[f]inding exemplars is part of discovering and cultivating oneself”, that is, potentially individualistic, there are commonalities in different people’s chosen exemplars because they tend to originate from the same societies: Genghis Khan is a popular exemplar, Humphrey, “Exemplars,” 36.

⁵⁰ Howell, “Introduction,” 14–15. In this respect David Crandall observes that neither self-absorbed reflection nor experiential testing of convictions produce moral certainty but ‘epiphany’, that is, “a deeply subjective conviction” that the moral tenets one holds are universally true, “Knowing Human Moral Knowledge to be True: An Essay on Intellectual Conviction,” *JRAI* 10 (2004): 307–26, quote 314. Jarrett Zigon is to be commended for explicitly delineating the philosophical underpinnings of his proposal that “a distinction must be made between the unreflective moral dispositions or everyday life and the conscious ethical tactics performed in the ethical moment”, “Moral Breakdown,” 148. He claims that an anthropology of morality is only possible to the extent to which attention is paid to the latter, the moment of ‘moral breakdown’. However, this seems unnecessarily restrictive; and in the following section it will become clear why I think it is important to attend to both un-reflexive and reflexive moral action.

⁵¹ Thomas Widlock, “Sharing by Default?: Outline of an Anthropology of Virtue,” *AT* 4 (2004): 53–70, quote 57. James Faubion also proposes that the anthropology of ethics should focus upon virtue, although, following Foucault, his scheme pays more attention to the unmasking of power relations, cf. “Toward an Anthropology of Ethics: Foucault and the Pedagogies of Autopoiesis,” *Representations* 74 (2001): 83–104, especially 90–92.

⁵² Widlock, “Sharing by default?,” 57–59.

⁵³ Cf. Widlock, “Sharing by default?,” 64.

⁵⁴ Although Faubion’s subtitle, ‘Toward an Anthropology of the Ethics of Kinship’, entitles a section of his article, he simply summarises the methodology he proposes in “Introduction: Toward an

Each, naturally, has its own emphasis. Margaret Trawick writes a ‘thick description’ of the dynamics of a single Tamil family.⁵⁵ Unni Wikan describes in fine detail the life and choices of a single individual, ‘Suriati’.⁵⁶ Laura Ahearn’s longitudinal study of love letters tells how this innovative practice affects selected couples in Nepal.⁵⁷ Italo Pardo investigates how people negotiate paths through conflicting obligations and desires in the context of multiple relationships with family and friends in inner city Naples.⁵⁸ Steven Parish illuminates moral formation through both everyday and ritual practices in the Kathmandu Valley.⁵⁹ And Helle Rydstrøm examines practices of moral socialisation, highlighting gender differences in socially acceptable behaviour.⁶⁰ In all these writings the authors seek to avoid assuming both that ‘culture’ is equivalent to ‘morality’ and that social context is irrelevant for personal action. It is noteworthy that they achieve this objective only by focusing upon individuals in concrete social contexts: rather than seeking generalisations these anthropologists are highly responsive to both patterns and idiosyncrasies.⁶¹

The survey of the anthropology of kinship with which I commenced this chapter outlined how anthropologists have theorised kinship relations, concluding that ‘the family’ was not essentially a matter of descent, nor marriage alliance, nor even cultural

Anthropology of the Ethics of Kinship,” in *The Ethics of Kinship: Ethnographic Inquiries* (ed. J. D. Faubion; Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 1–28. Other authors actually produce ethnographies of family morality.

⁵⁵ Trawick, *Notes on Love*.

⁵⁶ Unni Wikan, *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living* (Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁵⁷ Laura M. Ahearn, *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, & Social Change in Nepal* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

⁵⁸ Italo Pardo, *Managing Existence in Naples: Morality, action and structure* (CSSCA 104; Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

⁵⁹ Steven M. Parish, *Moral Knowing in a Hindu Sacred City: An Exploration of Mind, Emotion, and Self* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁶⁰ Helle Rydstrøm, “Like a White Piece of Paper. Embodiment and the Moral Upbringing of Vietnamese Children,” *Ethnos* 66 (2001): 394–413; idem, *Embodying Morality*. It is notable that the majority of this learning occurs within family, and that the traditions children learn to embody are frequently opposed to official rhetoric. Heidi Fung examines the socialisation of shame, paying particular attention to ‘opportunity education’ by means of story-telling, so that young children develop a heightened sense of shame ‘naturally’, “Becoming a Moral Child: The Socialization of Shame among Young Chinese Children,” *Ethos* 27 (1999): 180–209. Fung argues that parents teach ‘discretion shame’ so children learn to avoid situations in which they experience ‘disgrace shame’, “Moral Child,” 202–3.

⁶¹ See also Rasanayagam and Heintz’s observation that an individual’s personal freedom is constrained by the power relations in the context of which they act (or choose not to act), “An anthropology of morality,” 56. Andrew Walsh puts the matter more positively arguing that people operate within ‘systems of responsibilities’, “Responsibility, Taboos and ‘The Freedom to do otherwise’ in Ankarana, Northern Madagascar,” *JRAI* 8 (2002): 451–68, especially 465. Walsh avers that actors make choices in the context of multiple responsibilities, which, he argues, stimulates creativity.

understandings of gender, but rather a constellation of practices. Similarly, this review of the anthropology of ethics finds that scholars have most profitably analysed morality in terms of practice. But what is ‘practice’? How does one person’s practice relate to that of others? And how can patterns of practice be explained alongside the observation that people do new things? These are the questions I will address in the following section.

3.3 THE PRACTICE OF THE ETHICS OF KINSHIP

In the anthropological and sociological literature the debate about practice is usually framed in terms of ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. Indeed, the tension between them has been called “a leitmotiv in the history of the social sciences”.⁶² What is at issue is the nature of the source or prompt for action. Is it social structure, that is, the ‘context’ of action? Or is it agency, that is, the acting subject, the individual who decides to act? Or is it a mixture of the two?

3.3.1 ‘Practice Theory’

One school of thought that attempts to hold structure and agency together is ‘practice theory’.⁶³ Sherry Ortner notes that this is not really a theory, since it lacks an underlying conception of the social order. “There is only as it were an argument—that human action is made by ‘structure’, and at the same time always makes and potentially unmakes it”.⁶⁴

The best known advocate of practice theory is Pierre Bourdieu. In *Outline of the*

⁶² Caroline B. Brettell, “The Individual/Agent and Culture/Structure in the History of the Social Sciences,” *SSH* 26 (2002): 429–45, quote 442.

⁶³ One cannot strictly speak of ‘practice theory’, for there are various versions. The foundational texts are Bourdieu, *Logic*; idem, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 1977); Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of Los Angeles Press, 1979); Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (ASAOSP 1; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Trans. S. Rendall; Berkley: University of California Press, 1984); and Sherry Ortner, *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). Andreas Reckwitz explains that they have in common a dismissal of the ‘blind spot’ of both rational choice and norm-orientated theories of social action, *viz.* the implicit knowledge “which enables symbolic organization of reality”, “Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing,” *EJST* 5 (2005): 243–63, quote 246.

⁶⁴ Sherry Ortner, *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 2. Chris Shilling explains that practice theory avoids giving either structure or agency “explanatory priority” since this fails to examine the interplay between them, “Towards an embodied understanding of the structure / agency relationship,” *BJS* 50 (1999): 543–62, quote 544.

Theory of Practice and *The Logic of Practice* he seeks to bridge the ‘ruinous divide’ between objectivism and subjectivism.⁶⁵ Objectivism argues social practices derive from social structure. It cannot, however, account adequately for different acting subjects making distinct choices in identical situations: the charge is that objectivism is too deterministic. Subjectivism explains social practices as the aggregate of individual choice. But it cannot account adequately for regularity of behaviour: the charge is that subjectivism is too voluntaristic. Attempting to overcome the dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism Bourdieu argues that *both* acting subjects, themselves the product of past practices, *and* social structure, which is (re)produced by actors, are necessary to explain practice. A key concept is *habitus*:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.⁶⁶

The *habitus* is the product of history, that is, the consequence of subjects’ actions, and yet, because it is interiorised, it constrains (in both senses of the word) their actions. Although there may be a strategic response to *habitus*, even this is defined with reference to the possibilities inherent in the *habitus* itself.⁶⁷ Bourdieu claims he avoids both a mechanistic derivation of practice from *habitus*, and the inertia-less, free subject of voluntarism.⁶⁸

The orchestration provided by the *habitus* produces an objective commonsense world, *doxa*. Bourdieu remarks that “[b]ecause the subjective necessity and self-

⁶⁵ See Bourdieu, *Outline*, 1–22; idem, *Logic*, 25–51; cf. Enrique Martín Criado, “Habitus,” DCCS n.p.

⁶⁶ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 53. Cf. another of Bourdieu’s definitions: “the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus”, *Outline*, 78. For a summary of Bourdieu’s *habitus* see Derek Robbins, *Bourdieu and Culture* (London: SAGE, 2000), 26–29. On the etymology of the term from Aristolian *hexis*, through Thomistic *habitus*, to Bourdieu’s usage see Loïc Wacquant, “Habitus,” *IEES* 315–19.

⁶⁷ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 53.

⁶⁸ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 56. Bourdieu notes that if “agents are possessed by their habitus more than they possess it, this is because it acts within them as the organizing principle of their actions, and because this *modus operandi* informing all thought and action (including thought of action) reveals itself only in the *opus operatum*”, *Outline*, 18.

evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*".⁶⁹ And those who share a *habitus*, for example those of the same class, understand each other's practices. None of this disposes with acting subjects, but the *habitus* provides the basis for actors' "*intentionless invention* of regulated improvisation".⁷⁰ Wacquant proposes that the *habitus* is analogous to 'generative grammar', which enables proficient speakers to use a language unthinkingly "in inventive yet predictable ways".⁷¹

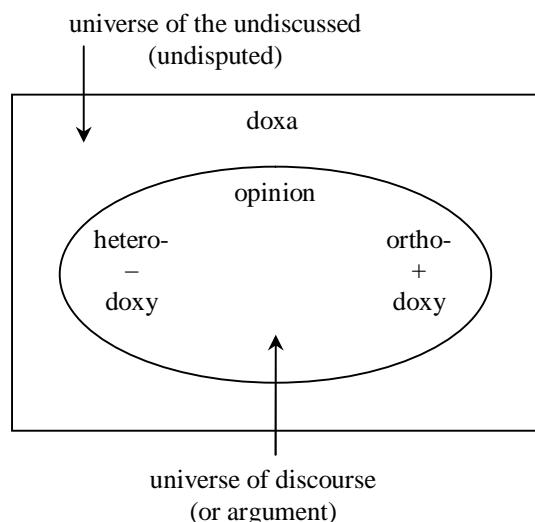
Bourdieu's work has been thoroughly analysed. In the following sections I discuss some major criticisms in order to highlight issues pertinent to this study.

3.3.2 Agency

One objection to Bourdieu's thesis comes from phenomenologists like Jason Throop and Keith Murphy, who argue practice theory fails to account for an individual's consciously perceived goals.

[W]hile it may often be the case that a number of our personally, socially and culturally patterned responses to perceptual, sensory and conceptual stimuli are habitual, it is also the case that these habitual responses can often be immediately available to conscious reflection in their real-time occurrence. In other words, just because a particular response, behavior, thought pattern, evoked emotion, feeling or sensation is habitual or

⁶⁹ Bourdieu, *Outline*, 167. Emphasis original. See Bourdieu, *Outline*, 80, where he presents the relationship between *doxa* and opinion diagrammatically:



⁷⁰ Bourdieu, *Outline*, 79. Emphasis original. Cf. Bourdieu's assertion that it is not possible to work back from practice (*opus operatum*) to motive (*modus operandi*), *Logic*, 59.

⁷¹ Wacquant, "Habitus," 316. Cf. Jazz improvisation, an observation I owe to Nathan MacDonald.

automatic, this does not in itself perforce entail that individuals are not to some degree aware of these habitual responses as they occur.”⁷²

If people are aware of what they are doing the potential consciously to manipulate or manage responses is real. Nigel Rapport is especially critical of Bourdieu’s *habitus*.

Durable, transposable, cognitive, and behavioural, *habituses* [sic] function to generate an homogenous social conventionality, while subjects remain unconscious of the consequences of the actions and ‘misrecognize’ the objectivity of the social relations that these reproduce.⁷³

His argument is that socialization does not lead to patterns of behaviour becoming ‘things-in-themselves’. The *habitus*, therefore, can never become a verbal subject; it has no agency. Interpretation remains the task of individuals, and although people may use learned conventions, these “will be animated by purposes that are individual and ultimately indeterminate”.⁷⁴ Given his insistence that social relations are an aggregation of individuals’ purposes Rapport objects to the analytical separation of intention and action.⁷⁵ He asserts that simply because “the consequences of individual’s actions are not always (or even not often) as intended does not make those consequences any less personal or individual in their nature”.⁷⁶ To illustrate his thesis Rapport compares the art and letters of Stanley Spencer. He opines it is not possible to understand Spencer’s relations with others without appreciating Stanley’s own, at times contradictory, understanding of those same relationships.⁷⁷ Rapport conceives an elevated role for individual creativity, which he defines as “the novel individual use of collective cultural forms”.⁷⁸ This is because

⁷² Jason Throop and Keith Murphy. “Bourdieu and Phenomenology,” *AT* 2 (2002): 185–207, quote 199.

⁷³ Nigel Rapport, “Envisioned, Intentioned: A Painter Informs an Anthropologist about Social Relations,” *JRAI* 10 (2004): 861–81, quote 862.

⁷⁴ Rapport, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 864.

⁷⁵ Cf. Rapport, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 863–64. Note his summary of Bourdieu’s position: “In regard to their social significance, their social role, individuals’ actions do not belong to them, for social-scientific generalization comes to apprehend the socially caused reproductions of institutional relations by way of individual actions’ *unintended consequences*”, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 865. My emphasis.

⁷⁶ Rapport, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 877.

⁷⁷ Rapport, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 877–78. See Rapport’s citation of Spencer’s explanation of his art: “all I am wishing to do is to enable anyone to stand on the exact spot in my mind and see what I see”, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 871.

⁷⁸ Nigel Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion: Anthropology, Literature and the Writing of E. M. Forster* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 260. The novel use could be novel combinations, novel constitution of forms or novel meanings. His vision of creative agency is “breaking the teacup of conventional experience”, which can be done in five ways: composition and decomposition – division and re-building of old forms; weighting – accentuating certain elements of culture; reordering; deletion and supplementation – exclusion of some elements; and deformation – distorting

the world is not organized into neat pieces of information merely waiting for human retrieval, what the brain is doing in interacting with an environment is actually structuring its life-world. The environments in which human beings find themselves are open-ended and ambiguous, and their order, their codification into distinct, bounded and labelled things and relations, derives from human organisms engaged in acts of perceiving.⁷⁹

Rapport's concern is to rescue individual agency and avoid an image of people as passive victims of historical, social and cultural vicissitudes.

The thesis that conscious individual action is the source of all practice, however, is too bold.⁸⁰ First, since “agency is merely a potential (capacity) which must be developed through social intercourse into a specific form”,⁸¹ its shape will depend upon an agent’s position in a particular society, including her power. Declan Quigley astutely remarks that “not all individuals live in historical conditions where their opportunities to express their individuality bear much resemblance to each other...no individual lives in a society where s/he can express his or her individuality in any way s/he pleases”.⁸² This is not necessarily a negative thing, for social constraint is not always wrong: it can prevent or stop evil as well as curtail legitimate individuality. Second, it may be impossible to know about an individual’s intentions. Indeed this knowledge may be unavailable even to the acting subject. What is observable, however, is socialised behaviour. This means that an account of practice must include social context, even if it is not a personal subject in itself. Third, individualistic approaches over-emphasise

⁷⁹ or elaborating certain cultural elements, *Prose*, 261.

⁸⁰ Nigel Rapport, “Random Mind: Towards an Appreciation of Openness in Individual, Society and Anthropology,” *AJA* 12 (2001): 190–208, quote 194. Whilst Rapport considers that the source of creativity is the mind’s random generation of ideas and images of the world, this has political consequences: “It is the anthropological responsibility to explain that individuals make communities and create traditions: also to champion those social environments in which such individuality is recognised and respected, and to declaim against those which bury individual worth under a weight of so-called traditional or revelational or institutional knowledge and practice”, “Random Mind,” 203–4.

⁸¹ Although there is truth in the assertions of Carl Ratner and Philip Esler that the emphasis upon individual agency is itself a cultural phenomenon, I maintain that individual agency is an essential analytical category, if only because human beings are singularly embodied. I do not, therefore, consider Rapport’s concern with agency an inherent weakness of his argument, Carl Ratner, “Agency and Culture,” *JTSB* 30 (2000): 413–34, especially 424–27; Philip Esler, “Models in New Testament Interpretation: A Reply to David Horrell,” *JSNT* 78 (2000): 107–113, especially 110.

⁸² Ratner, “Agency and Culture,” 424.

⁸³ Cf. Declan Quigley, “Anthropology in Disneyworld: Rapport, Gardner, and the ‘Discipline’ of Social Anthropology,” *AJA* 12 (2001): 182–89, especially 184–85. Cf. Bourdieu, *Logic*, 64: “Only in imaginary experience (in the folk tale, for example), which neutralizes the sense of social realities, does the social world take the form of a universe of possibilities equally possible for any possible subject”. Quigley observes, therefore, that individuals’ creativities are only formally, not substantially, the same.

individuals' predilection for change whilst downplaying how personal psychology is organised by culture.⁸³

To summarise, it seems that one should follow Ortner in supposing that it is important “to articulate a position in which there is some distance between actor and culture, and yet which does not postulate a culturally unconstrained actor rationally manipulating cultural imagery and options”.⁸⁴ She proposes a ‘loosely structured’ actor

who is prepared—but not more than that—to find most of his or her culture intelligible and meaningful, but who does not necessarily find all parts of it equally meaningful in all times and places. The distance between culture and actor is there, but so too is the capacity to find meaning, in more than a manipulative way, in one's own cultural repertoire.⁸⁵

3.3.3 Structure

Omar Lizardo argues Bourdieu's *habitus* is used in two ways, *viz.*, a “perpetual and classifying structure” and “a generative structure of practical action”.⁸⁶ The latter occurs because the external *habitus* is internalized, which means the stimulus for action “lies neither in structures nor in consciousness, but rather in the relation of immediate proximity between objective structures and embodied structures-in-habitus”.⁸⁷ This careful reading, however, does not return to Bourdieu's theory an adequate view of agency. Ortner notes the internalized *habitus* is “a virtual mirror of external limits and possibilities”.⁸⁸ In other words, it is the combination of things *received* that produces action, not individual intentions. At the point of decision the structuring aspect of *habitus* determines action; it is too static, too objective. Whilst Bourdieu and Giddens emphasise structural reproduction, conceiving practice as a loop, Ortner maintains this neglects slippage, where agents do not reproduce but change patterns, or rebel.⁸⁹ These

⁸³ Cf. Gannath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁸⁴ Ortner, *High Religion*, 198.

⁸⁵ Ortner, *High Religion*, 198.

⁸⁶ Omar Lizardo, “The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's *Habitus*,” *JTSB* 34 (2004): 375–401, quote 379. Without original emphasis.

⁸⁷ Bourdieu, *The State Nobility* (trans. L. C. Clough; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 38. Andrew Rawnsley finds in Bourdieu's later work a similar openness to change and individual reflexivity, see “From Roots to Rites: Practice Logics and the ‘Heir’ to Metaphysics” (Ph.D. diss., St Andrews University, 2006), 122–35; Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (trans. R. Nice; Cambridge: Polity, 2000), especially 145–54; idem, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998); idem, *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

⁸⁸ Ortner, *Making Gender*, 11. De Certeau makes a similar charge, *Everyday Life*, 59.

⁸⁹ Ortner, *Making Gender*, 17.

slippages may be intentional or unintentional. It is a “version of practice theory, with everything slightly—but not completely—tilted toward incompleteness, instability, and change”.⁹⁰

Ortner makes this proposal because of a fundamental insight. She observes that structures, *habitus*, and ‘cultures’ are not monolithic but contain many elements, some of which contradict each other. This forces actors to choose between cultural goods or aspects of the *habitus*. “The point here is that structure does not just sit there, constraining actors by its formal characteristics, but recurrently poses problems to actors, to which they must respond”.⁹¹ Ortner complements this observation with a second concept of structure, that of a ‘cultural schema’, a standard, socially acceptable, even laudable, way of resolving the structure’s inherent contradictions.⁹² These moves provide Ortner with the theoretical space to account for subversions of the dominant paradigm from within, and thus to explain why individual actors sometimes choose to act outside the schema, for example, by eloping to marry for love, or forgiving a slight to honour. Thus “structure is practiced, it is lived, it is enacted, but it is also challenged, defended, renewed, changed”.⁹³ Ortner develops the resultant possibilities into a typology of practice, each with a different relation to ‘structure’. ‘Ordinary practice’ is repetitive or everyday action, which leads to internalization of structure. ‘Intentional action’ concerns the pursuit of individual goals and desires; an important question is how structure constitutes these desires—in her study of Sherpa Buddhist monasteries Ortner argues that various historical factors pushed individuals in certain directions because of their extant cultural structures and that, concurrently, actors used historical circumstances in ways that made sense given their cultural milieu. ‘Extraordinary praxis’ is sustained activity based upon a culturally alternative logic.

Changes to dominant schemata may arise not only from extraordinary praxis, but also unintentionally when ordinary practice does not lead to reproduction of cultural structure. A classic study is Marshal Sahlins’ evaluation of how selected practices among Hawaiian society changed as distinct classes engaged differently with

⁹⁰ Ortner, *Making Gender*, 18. Ortner labels her vision a ‘subaltern practice theory’. On changes to the *habitus* in Bourdieu’s theory see *Pascalian Meditations*, 159–63.

⁹¹ Ortner, *High Religion*, 196.

⁹² These answers are the fruit of Foucaultian power plays between agents over time, and thus amenable to ideological criticism.

⁹³ Ortner, *High Religion*, 196.

Europeans.⁹⁴ Lower class women, with the support of their husbands and acting according to cultural presuppositions, sought to conceive children with superior *mana* through sexual relations with British sailors. The consequences went beyond ‘blessed’ offspring. Ortner argues the women became “agents of the spirit of capitalism in their society”,⁹⁵ since in return for their services the women received iron nails and other ‘trinkets’. The iron, in particular, was highly valued, and chiefs manipulated ritual tabu in order to purloin the women’s ‘payments’ and to restrict access to trade with Europeans. The result of this abuse of tabu was both its denigration and eventual abrogation, and the advent of a freer ‘capitalistic’ form of exchange distinct from ‘communion’.⁹⁶ The chiefs instigated another example of unexpected change by attempting to preserve social structure by killing the god *Lono*, Captain Cook, which precipitated the overthrow of both their deities and themselves as chiefs. Although Ortner is polemical, her observations are apposite: “To say that society and history are products of human action is true, but only in a certain ironic sense. They are rarely the products the actors themselves set out to make.”⁹⁷

3.3.4 Ambiguity

The differences of perception between Cook’s sailors and the Sandwich Islanders might be expected, but Nigel Rapport argues they occur not only between people from very different backgrounds, but also among those who share cultural understandings. His ethnographic research in the English village of ‘Wanet’ highlights the ubiquity of varying interpretations, and, consequently, the ambiguity of all social interaction. Reflecting upon his fieldwork experience Rapport submits that social life could not be neatly classified. Rather, it was “farcical, chaotic, multiple, contradictory; it was a muddling-through, which turned on the paradoxical distinction between appearance and actuality”.⁹⁸ Rapport contends the picture of Wanet as ‘rural idyll’ represents the town as a single culture, “consensually shared, homogeneous and

⁹⁴ Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors*. For a summary and bibliography of the ensuing debate between Sahlins and Obeyesekere see Geertz, *Available Light*, 98–107.

⁹⁵ Sheryl Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties,” in *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (eds. N. B. Dirks, G. Eley and S. B. Ortner; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 372–411, quote 401.

⁹⁶ Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors*, 37–66.

⁹⁷ Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology,” 401.

⁹⁸ Nigel Rapport, *Diverse World-Views in an English Village* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), ix. Contrast Rapport’s use of ‘chaos’ and Malinowski’s *imposition* of an ordered functional scheme, Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge, 1922); idem, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (New York: Harcourt, 1967).

uniform".⁹⁹ This conception obscures diversity. In fact, he argues, whatever social structure there may have been was manifest in various ways; hence the necessity of examining particular examples.¹⁰⁰

Rapport observed the relationships between two farming families, the Rowlands and Whitehouses. A number of considerations affected their interaction, including familial, occupational, neighbourly, economic and spiritual, but none of these was of consistently overriding importance.¹⁰¹ It was "individual interpretation of the relations of the moment which determine[d] which consideration [was] pertinent, and which construction [was] salient, when".¹⁰² A further observation complicates matters even more: individual interpretation is contradictory, changing according to the moment. Rapport claims that some anthropological thought represents contradiction as a problem and equates social order to the eradication of "symbolic contrarieties".¹⁰³ In contrast, he avers that social order "is predicated not upon the absence of contradiction but upon its co-presence: *the cognitive co-presence of the contradictory, of both/and, together with the classificatory order of either/or*".¹⁰⁴ Rapport asserts that 'both/and', as well as being a cognitive norm, is the cognitive reality behind the social reality of either/or classifications.¹⁰⁵ Although he errs in placing all his eggs in the cognitive basket, one can concur that Rapport correctly highlights the inherent contradictions ordered (and ordering) cultural schemata seek to resolve in either/or terms.

Rapport uses three informants to investigate *when* contradictions surface: Rachel, in Mitzpe Ramon, Israel, and Sid and Doris, in Wanet. Rachel admitted and even celebrated contradiction within moments, describing herself as 'a bit schizo'.¹⁰⁶ Doris and Sid, though, experienced no contradiction *within* any *one* moment, just between moments.

⁹⁹ Rapport, *Diverse*, 32.

¹⁰⁰ Rapport, *Diverse*, 40. "In a compendium of such cases, moreover, one should not expect a gluey coherence or neat integration (any more than an assemblage of unique isolates). Rather, from case to case there will be an overlapping of behavioural samenesses and differences...In short, far from simple dichotomies and continua, from generalisable categories of behaviour in village community or town, a compendium of cases of social life in Britain will consist of an aggregation of partially (polythetically) connected behaviours." Rapport, *Diverse*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Rapport, *Diverse*, 50.

¹⁰² Rapport, *Diverse*, 51.

¹⁰³ Nigel Rapport, "The 'Contrarieties' of Israel: An Essay on the Cognitive Importance and the Creative Promise of Both/And," *JRAI* 3 (1997): 653–72, quote 657.

¹⁰⁴ Rapport, "Contrarieties," 657–58. Emphasis original.

¹⁰⁵ Rapport, "Contrarieties," 654.

¹⁰⁶ Rapport, "Contrarieties," 665.

Being for Doris, Sid, *et al.*, turned on momentary thoughts, feelings, apprehensions, emotions, on discrete experiential units of time and place, of self, of individuality. And while the momentariness of their lives formed a constant, while their moments were ‘for ever’, between moments there was need for no consistent cognitive connexion.¹⁰⁷

It is important to assess these distinct observations of when contradiction occurs. Although I do not wish to re-evaluate Rapport’s field notes it is significant that Rachel recognised her experience of simultaneous “contradictory cognitions”¹⁰⁸ as problematic: schizophrenia is not culturally ‘normal’. Thus although people’s ability to generate multifaceted perspectives is part and parcel of life, the inability to select or perceive as dominant a single perspective at any one time is not, and the observation does not advance our discussion significantly.¹⁰⁹ Rapport’s observations regarding Doris and Sid are more pertinent for social-scientific study of biblical characters’ interactions. They underscore the potential for actors to behave differently according to the person with whom they are interacting, not just some amorphous ‘cultural context’.

In his article comparing the art and letters of Stanley Spencer, Rapport asks how and why an actor’s conception of his or her social relations affects those relations.¹¹⁰ He asserts that a “routine and shared form to social life, an apparent patterning to social-relational habitude, actually disguises depths and diversities of articulate consciousness”,¹¹¹ and his analysis of Spencer evinces that individuals both participate in and manipulate routine discourse for their own ends.¹¹² Although a radical voluntarism is untenable, Rapport does demonstrate there may be a gulf between shared discourse and shared understanding. The point is that different people do not inhabit the same ‘world-views’, and even when there are shared views they only partially overlap. Rapport suggests that people construct identities in relation to a range of other people, objects and events.¹¹³ Doris and Sid assumed different *personae* according to the

¹⁰⁷ Rapport, “Contrarieties,” 667.

¹⁰⁸ Rapport, “Contrarieties,” 665.

¹⁰⁹ Rapport advocates Rachel’s, schizophrenic, sort of contrariety as an anthropological project, but I think it falls foul of Quigley’s objections noted above.

¹¹⁰ In contrast to Rapport I am not concerned about why different perceptions arise, only how they affect relations.

¹¹¹ Rapport, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 865.

¹¹² Rapport claims that “discursive exchange is never unmediated by a creative individual improvisation of its forms and conventions”, “Envisioned, Intentioned,” 865. I would question the categorical ‘never’.

¹¹³ Rapport, *Diverse*, 152. See also his “Context as an Act of Personal Externalisation: Gregory Bateson and the Harvey Family in the English Village of Wanet,” in *The Problem of Context* (ed R. Dilley; New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 187–211, especially 207.

various social interactions in which they were involved.¹¹⁴ Nine *personae* are enumerated for Doris: farmer, English, wife, villager, middle class, a neighbour, a friend, as aggrieved, as a mother. Sid has seven *personae*: craftsman, a local, husband, pal, father, a man, and English. The views expressed by each different *persona* were both contradictory and predictable. Thus “diversity and inconstancy of opinion was swallowed up by the regularity of moving from one habitual interactional routine to another, and the habituality once one was ensconced in each”.¹¹⁵ The different *personae* derive, “from individuals defining their own stimuli in a social situation and constructing their own responses”.¹¹⁶ In each discourse the actor affirms some identities and negates other potential *personae*. Although people seek “the security of habitual meanings”,¹¹⁷ this does not mean that when two people converse they use the same conventions. “The words they exchange prove ambiguous enough for each to impart to them their own meanings, for each to aggregate them together as part of different associational sets to form different cognitive contexts”.¹¹⁸ Thus although individuals do acquire an ability to read others’ behaviour this is not by learning a communal cognitive map of the world, but by coming to appreciate that under certain circumstances others’ actions are predictable, and thus able to be correlated with one’s own.¹¹⁹

3.4 CONCLUSION: CHOOSING KIN

So far this study has examined whether the Old Testament contains resources necessary to address moral dilemmas, proposing a focus upon moral goods. Given ‘the family’ is a central moral good within the Old Testament it proceeded to examine

¹¹⁴ Cf. Rapport, *Diverse*, 81.

¹¹⁵ Rapport, *Diverse*, 123. It is significant that only strangers have to deal with “the incoherence, partiality and contradictoriness inherent in the assumptions of people’s everyday commonsensical knowledge”, *Diverse*, 123. Rapport further argues that by representing themselves as different *personae* they thereby *realise* these identities, cf. *Diverse*, 152. In the light of the discussion of structure and agency, above, one can accept that this will be partially true.

¹¹⁶ Rapport, *Diverse*, 152.

¹¹⁷ Rapport, *Diverse*, 153.

¹¹⁸ Rapport, *Diverse*, 155. Rapport recognises that he highlights the differences in perspective between Sid and Doris, not their shared grammar, but, he argues, the latter is mere form, not meaning. Rapport further notes that standardized communication on acceptable topics can limit personal and uncommon information, cf. *Diverse*, 164.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Rapport, *Diverse*, 184. I would dispute whether these constructions are random, as proposed by Rapport, “Random Mind,” 198. In reducing *all* perception and the *entirety* of justification for action to the cognitive he minimises the role of both cultural structure (the existence of which he denies) and (culturally, not merely personally, perceived) physical constraints and stimuli. Thus his astute observation that Doris construes situations in ways that relate more to her perceptions and preoccupations than any ‘objective’ reading of life in Wanet does not necessitate his assertion that these conceptions are random.

anthropological perspectives upon the family and the ethics of kinship. Because both have been approached using the categories provided by practice theory I have briefly analysed important aspects of the theorising of practice. Two observations are now required. First, my aim has not been to present a definitive genealogy of practice, nor to defend all versions of practice theory from the gamut of possible criticisms, only to commend it as a way of understanding social action with sufficient subtlety that it does not ride roughshod over the essential components of situated individual agency. In addition, I have highlighted a frequently overlooked feature of social interaction, its ambiguity. Second, I have not proposed that practice theory is more ‘true’ than other potential ways of explaining human action. Andreas Reckwitz explains that social theories are underdetermined by empirical data; and that the key questions are ones of utility.¹²⁰ This does not mean that important consequences do not follow from choosing one sort of social theory rather than another; or that my choice has been arbitrary. Practice theory invites interpretations of embodied practices rather than mental maps or spheres of discourse.¹²¹ Just as anthropologists have found it to be a profitable means of understanding their data about ‘others’ in more nuanced and compelling ways than a focus upon forms of thought or patterns of behaviour only occasionally reproduced on the ground, so I propose that it will aid this investigation by maintaining open the possibility of a variety of possible reactions to particular stimuli. Having made these observations it is now possible to enumerate three features of how goods and practices may be related as the basis for entering the world of my chosen text.

First, the context for practice includes *the existence of multiple, contradicting and potentially mutually exclusive moral goods*. Following Rapport’s lead we may suppose that clashes and contradictions are ‘normal’ and that order is as much constructed as observed. In terms of moral goods I have already insisted upon actors continually facing a plurality of moral goods, and upon the inevitability of value clashes. But alongside this observation one can follow Ortner in proposing that there are also culturally acceptable ways of resolving putative dilemmas so that moral choices in favour of some goods seem natural or commonsensical. Note, however, that “[c]ommon sense is the world-classifying face of power; the social dramas of everyday life forever

¹²⁰ Reckwitz, “Toward,” 257.

¹²¹ Reckwitz, “Toward,” 258.

oscillate between reproducing and disputing its authority".¹²² There is no *automatic* preference for cultural schemata: the possibility remains that *another* choice of moral goods be realised.

Second, ***the variety of perception of any particular situation or action in which moral goods are in play.*** One consequence is that stimuli can be variously interpreted, producing idiosyncratic responses, thus even though there may be culturally informed norms, including moral standards, it cannot be assumed that these are perceived in the same way by all actors. Bourdieu noted different perceptions and justifications of the same event in relation to parallel cousin marriage among the Kabyle.¹²³ He observed that it could be viewed *simultaneously* as an ideal, rarely achieved, an ethical norm (derived from a duty of honour), which can be broken, and a pragmatic move.¹²⁴ The polysemous nature of this particular type of union means it is a good example of how interpretation of practice is open to manipulation despite being constrained. Constraints in general include both physical limitations and social expectations which place limits upon the attainability of moral goods.¹²⁵ In cases of value conflict, therefore, not all choices are equally possible, although variety of perception may mean that people view constraints differently—some might even fail to see a problem that vexes another: David and Michal themselves would be a good example.

A related issue is the perception of action that does not fit the cultural schema. Signe Howell, concludes her ethnography of Lio ritual with two important observations. First, “it is possible to identify certain general patterns of maleness and femaleness without thereby applying these to all men and to all women, to the corresponding sexes,

¹²² Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology: Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 72.

¹²³ I.e. a cousin related through a same-sex sibling: the child of either the father's brother or mother's sister, cf. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, *Encyclopedia of Cultural and Social Anthropology* (3rd ed.; ed. J. Spencer and A. Barnard; London / New York: Routledge, 2002), 616.

¹²⁴ Bourdieu, *Outline*, 43. Note that there is nothing mutually exclusive about these interpretations; I am not contradicting my observations regarding Rachel's ‘schizophrenia’, above.

¹²⁵ The very fact of face-to-face interaction has been proposed as a limiting factor, see Erving Goffman, “The Interaction Order,” *ASR* 48 (1983): 1–17; cf. Shilling, “Embodied;” Marshall Sahlins’ proposal that action has its own structure, the ‘structure of the conjuncture’, *Historical Metaphors*, 35. Against structuralist approaches, the interaction order explains how the presence of others may limit the efficacy of institutional norms. Unlike individualist theories it explains why agents’ creativity is restricted by the need to maintain relationships. Shilling lists five characteristics of the interaction order: (1) it is grounded in ‘universal preconditions of social life’, e.g. need to care for infants; (2) it has its own prerequisites, e.g. face saving, taking turns; (3) it makes demands upon society, e.g. personal interaction is still required in business meetings; (4) the meanings produced by interaction are not reducible to a society’s ideologies, nor merely to the activities of individuals; and (5) “this order makes moral, not structurally coercive, demands on people”, Shilling, “Embodied,” 546.

to all contexts and to all socialities".¹²⁶ Second, the "fact that kin, affinal or ritual status may, in some instances, overshadow the simple duality of men and women does not necessarily mean that maleness and femaleness are not conceptualized".¹²⁷ In other words, there are both general norms and individual acts, yet from the fact that norms are not always followed one cannot deduce they fail to influence behaviour. I submit that although acts may not cohere with the norms, for example, of maleness or femaleness, the *interpretation* of them by other actors *will* be guided by the socially accepted standards. We shall see that this has important implications for the interpretation of biblical characters' actions.

Third, *the necessarily personal, and thus open, nature of practice, which nevertheless can exhibit regularity*. Because the acts of practice are personal the selection of moral goods can be variously classified. It could be quasi reflexive, for example, the removal of one's hand from a flame to avoid pain. Or it could simply cohere with learnt behaviour, for example, someone offers a handshake simply because he 'always' does. Or, because one person finds another odious, he consciously decides not to offer a handshake in order to offend by slight. The point is that not all acts of practice are the same. Because practice is personal and people can act and react in a great variety of ways there is a similarly wide range of possible actions involving moral goods. Yet because people learn which selections of moral goods are acceptable within the society within which they find themselves practice can also exhibit regularity.

I have related Ortner's typology of practice to the ideas of multiple cultural goods and dominant cultural schemata in conversation with Louise Lawrence.¹²⁸ She discusses shame and desire in the Song of Songs, arguing that the 'shameful' behaviour envisaged by the lyricist reinforces the honour paradigm.¹²⁹ It is unnecessary to say cultural values negate their opposites, since the goods of romantic love and duty, modesty and desire are perceived simultaneously.¹³⁰ The dominant cultural schema

¹²⁶ Signe Howell, "Many Contexts, Many Meanings? Gendered Values Among the Northern Lio of Flores, Indonesia," *JRAI* 2 (1996): 253–69, quote 256.

¹²⁷ Howell, "Many Contexts," 261.

¹²⁸ My correspondence is cited in Louise Lawrence, *Reading with Anthropology: Exhibiting Aspects of New Testament Religion* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), 182.

¹²⁹ Lawrence, *Reading*, 181: "The patriarchal order is not physically overthrown; indeed the status quo's power to regulate love bonds and its aim to preserve agnatic power is actually enforced".

¹³⁰ And are in conflict, both in the story world of the Bible (e.g. 1 Sam 18.20, 28) and societies studied by anthropologists. I ignore the issue of whether binary opposition is always the best way to present these conflicts—the relationships between goods are probably more complex.

encapsulated in the modesty code provides *one* way of ordering these goods that ‘works’. Ordinary practice, routine responses to situations, would include adherence to this schema. This is not much in evidence in the Song of Songs, which is better considered as envisaged extraordinary praxis, action that changes the ordering of these cultural goods: a vision of love unencumbered by duty.¹³¹ Returning to the importance of kinship, ordinary practice in this context means habitually ‘choosing kin’, that is, prioritising their interests over that of others, including, at times, one’s own desires. Yet the frequency of this ‘pattern’ of practice, which gives an aura of normality and naturalness to, for example, family loyalty as a moral good, should not hide the fact that this ordering of goods is a personal *choice*. Thus although people habitually choose kin, it is their status as *choosing* subjects that leaves open the possibility they may not, a prospect that means cold draughts of ambiguity continually threaten family cosiness.

The Old Testament text I have chosen to examine concerns Saul’s daughter, who chooses in the context, one may suppose, of others who often choose kin. Understanding kinship and the ethics of kinship as the practice of choosing moral goods, including kinship itself, enables new interpretations of her choice. Yet Michal is a literary character in a narrative that makes theological assertions. Before turning to an interpretation of the stories it is necessary to examine *how* one might understand the account of her practice contained in 1 Samuel. This is the task of the next chapter.

¹³¹ It is noteworthy *who* subverts the cultural schema. Although older women will not have had comparable status to men, they would normally have attained an interest in the cultural schema, i.e. support from appropriately married sons. I maintained, therefore, that it would be the young who would be more likely to envisage an alternative world, one in which their concerns take precedence, Lawrence, *Reading*, 182.

CHAPTER 4

Understanding Moral Choice in 1 Samuel

*Good general diagnosticians are rare,
not because most doctors lack medical knowledge,
but because most are incapable of taking in all the possible relevant facts—
emotional, historical, environmental as well as physical.
They are searching for specific conditions
instead of the truth about a man
which may then suggest various conditions*

– John Berger, *A Fortunate Man*

Since Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* many scholars have used literary theory to elucidate how biblical narratives can be understood, and to expose the theoretical issues behind the reading strategies they propose.¹ However, despite its preponderance the relevance of narrative for ethics has received surprisingly little attention until recent years.² In this chapter I will explain how I will approach the interpretation of Old Testament narrative with respect to how it presents its author's

The epigraph is from John Berger, *A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country Doctor* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 72.

¹ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). Some of the ‘classic’ texts are: Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup 70; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989); David Gunn and Danna Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: OUP, 1993); and Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). For convenient summaries of the issues see, e.g., Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); Mark Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (FCI 3; Leicester: Apollos, 1987); Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (trans. I. Smit; Louisville: Westminster John Knox / Leiderdorp: Deo, 1999); and D. Marguerat and Y. Bourquin, *Cómo leer los relatos bíblicos: Iniciación al análisis narrativo* (trans. J. P. Tosaus Abadía; Santander: Sal Terrae, 2000). Works discussing 1 Samuel in particular will be cited later.

² I take as axiomatic that narrative *can* contribute to moral understanding. This is because human existence has a narrative quality, Stephen Crites, “The Narrative Quality of Experience,” *JAAR* 39 (1971): 291–319. And because it is situated in an ongoing communal narrative. Alasdair MacIntyre asserts that “I can only answer the question, ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question, ‘Of what story or stories do I find my self a part?’”, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (3rd ed.; London: Duckworth, 2007), 216. Of course, any particular narrative can function ideologically to reinforce or subvert the original community narrative: I will argue that Old Testament texts do just that, cf. Houston, *Contending*. For a detailed discussion of how Paul Ricoeur’s work can provide the foundations for a narrative hermeneutic see Parry, *Old Testament Story*, 4–27.

vision of ethics.

The most obvious way in which stories, inevitably bound to particular characters, settings and moments, provide a guide to behaviour is by exemplifying virtues or general principles. Lawrence Blum's discussion of moral exemplars enables exegetes to avoid a superficial evaluation of the merits of 'model morality'.³ Blum identifies two sorts of moral models, the moral hero, who acts rightly in a specific, risky situation, and the moral 'saint', who exhibits a virtuous character over time. At times these categories may be mutually exclusive.⁴ Even if this is not normally the case, only three of the five criteria for a moral hero are shared by the moral 'saint'.⁵ Blum argues it "is the greater absence of unworthy or suspect elements of consciousness, not a greater remoteness from the world, which distinguishes the saint from the hero".⁶ Within each of these categories agents may be idealists or responders. An idealist has a prior ideal to which he aspires and that guides his actions; a successful idealist can be a moral exemplar. A responder does not choose an ideal that she wishes to actualize, but responds to situations as they present themselves to her.⁷ Blum asserts that to be "morally excellent, both idealists and responders must act from dispositions, sentiments, and [character] traits".⁸ Looking at moral exemplars in this way means that interpreters need not be fazed by what Birch terms "the ambiguities of righteousness".⁹ It does not

³ Parry's phrase. Blum, *Moral Perception*, 65–97.

⁴ Referring to Oskar Schindler: "Although all would agree that even paragons of honesty ought to lie to Nazis if this is necessary to save lives, only certain kinds of personalities could have pulled off the sort of vast and intimately maintained deception that Schindler did; and a person considered to be devoted to truthfulness would probably not have been such a one", Blum, *Moral Perception*, 72.

⁵ The criteria are: (1) bringing a great good (or preventing a great evil); (2) acting to a great extent from morally worthy motives; (3) substantial embeddedness of those motives in the agent's psychology; (4) carrying out one's moral project in the face of risk or danger; and (5) relative "faultlessness," or absence of unworthy desires, dispositions, sentiments, attitudes. Of which the saint shares attributes 2, 3 and 5. Blum, *Moral Perception*, 75–77.

⁶ Blum, *Moral Perception*, 77.

⁷ The gender of the pronouns in the last two sentences has been chosen to reflect a further debate about whether there are peculiarly male and female modes of moral reasoning. Part 3 of Blum's book explores these issues; for a critical evaluation see Byrne, *Foundations*, 163–90.

⁸ Blum, *Moral Perception*, 85. Emphasis original.

⁹ Bruce Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 64. Parry, for example, finds the following difficulties with biblical 'model morality', *Story*, 32–33: (1) it only works well with clear-cut goodness or evil, but many biblical characters are ambiguous; (2) models do not comprise the totality of biblical ethical behaviour, and concentrating solely on them is reductionist, oversimplifying the complexity of moral living; (3) there is a danger of extracting too strong a principle from a story, since "[a]bsolute rules cannot be inferred from particular narratives even if general principles can", *Story*, 33; and (4) a reader may identify with the 'wrong' character traits, or only partially, in some of his roles but not others. I sense that the problem lies in Parry's conception of model. He posits that to "function well as a prescriptive model an act must be fairly clear-cut as far as its morality is concerned. The more ambiguous acts complicate the judgment of the reader and make simple imitation or avoidance

take a reader long to appreciate that the Bible describes “a world where there are few perfect saints and few unredeemable sinners: most of its heroes and heroines have both virtues and vices, they mix obedience and unbelief”.¹⁰ In fact, this might be part of their pedagogical value. “Their stories reflect all the ambiguities and complexities of human experience and the struggle to find and live out faith relationships to God in the midst of life”.¹¹ Readers *have* to think and reflect upon the stories, rather than consume the ‘moral lesson’ and dispose with the narrative wrapper.¹² In this way stories come to have “an existential force”.¹³

Wenham argues that despite the ostensive didactic handicap of morally ambiguous characters, biblical narratives, like all literary works, possess an ethical point of view, and that authors attempt, explicitly or implicitly, to convince readers of its merits.¹⁴ Although a narrative may not appear to moralise, for readers to understand the implied author’s tale they have to share her perspectives and values; to use Booth’s metaphor, the author and reader must be ‘friends’.¹⁵ Characters’ complexities are then a challenge to avoid arbitrary or mundane readings. Wenham seeks to acknowledge both diversity and unity of presentation by proposing biblical narrative is ‘scenic’, dramatising the action like a film and thus allowing presentation of different points of

impossible.” *Story*, 32. Parry is looking for a clear cut exemplar. However, assertion (1) is only true if moral exemplars *must* be ‘clear cut’ and patently either wholly good or bad in order to be understood: Blum’s typology shows that such simplification is not necessary, and I would argue that moral ambiguity can be a means of drawing readers into a narrative so that the moral lessons it wishes to impart are more completely appropriated by readers. Assertions (2) and (3) are uncontroversial, but hardly problematic for those who would engage with the whole Old Testament corpus. Assertion (4) has to do with readerly competence rather than any problem with the model as such. Nevertheless, I concur with Parry that the value for moral instruction of any individual narrative calls for attention to its particularity.

¹⁰ Wenham, *Story*, 15. On the character of David, for example, see Richard Bowman, “The Complexity of Character and the Ethics of Complexity: The Case of King David,” in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. W. P. Brown; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 73–97.

¹¹ Birch, *Justice*, 53.

¹² Cf. Barton, *Ethics*, 20. Cultural distance may mean that stories are more obtuse to modern Western readers than to the implied readers—hence the value of social-scientific criticism.

¹³ Barton, *Ethics*, 32. Barton argues that the genre of tragedy portrays how protagonists are overcome by an admixture of their own errors, others’ malice, and chance. “It is through analysing all these factors that the commentator can articulate the way in which the tragedy can be fruitful for us, as we seek to discover how we ought to live in a world where the same three factors will always operate”, Barton, *Ethics*, 24. For discussion of definitions of the ‘tragic vision’ see Cheryl Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 1–15.

¹⁴ Cf. Wenham, *Story*, 11–13 following Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). See also R. Hare’s quip (recorded in Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 166), “What are novels anyway but universal prescriptions?”

¹⁵ Booth, *Company*, 169–224.

view.¹⁶ This is different from the dialogical perspective of Michal Bakhtin, the 20th century Russian literary philosopher whose ideas have enjoyed considerable currency in biblical and theological studies since the 1980s, having been appropriated for Old Testament studies, in the field of ethics and by one scholar who combines both a literary and social-scientific approach to the text.¹⁷ Moreover, two recent monographs by Barbara Green read 1 Samuel through the lens of Bakhtin's ideas concerning dialogism.¹⁸ It is necessary to consider his approach in more detail.

4.1 UNDERSTANDING DIALOGICAL VOICES

Clark and Holquist offer a helpful characterisation of Bakhtin's view of the location of meaning.¹⁹ In contradistinction to both personalists, who hold that *I* hold meaning, and to deconstructionists, who hold that *no one* owns meaning, Bakhtin argued *we* possess meaning. The underlying philosophical justification for his position is the denial of absolute truth.²⁰ Even if one is unprepared, for example, on theological grounds, to accept this starting point it is possible, on the same grounds, to maintain that knowledge of truth is partial and, therefore, that Bakhtin's argument concerning dialogism has potential merit.²¹

¹⁶ Wenham, *Story*, 15, cf. Genesis 27. Bruckner argues that although the terms 'ought' and 'ought not' are rarely used for references to right or wrong behaviour, narratives use such devices as dialogue and plot development, to indicate ethical requirements, *Implied Law*, 11. Bruckner overemphasises law (he looks for judicial language and contexts in the Abraham narrative), which is not the only sort of ought, although as a project within a wider examination of narrative and ethics his study is extremely valuable.

¹⁷ See, respectively, Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 20–24; Esther Reed, *The Genesis of Ethics: On the Authority of God as the Origin of Christian Ethics* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000); Louise Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in New Testament Studies* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

¹⁸ Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2000); idem, *How Are the Mighty Fallen?: A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel* (JSOTSup 365; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass. / London: Belknap, 1984), 11–12, 348. See the critical introductions for full bibliographies of Bakhtin's work. The essay that deals most directly with my concerns is "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays* (ed. M. Holquist; trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist; Austin: Texas University Press, 1981), 259–401.

²⁰ Importantly, this observation was made in the totalitarian political context of Stalinist Russia, cf. Clark and Holquist, *Bakhtin*, 348.

²¹ Since the translation of Bakhtin into English the secondary literature on Bakhtin has burgeoned and all sorts of text critical, translation, historical and interpretative issues have been raised. On the one hand the initial sympathetic appropriation of Clark and Holquist has been strongly challenged by Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 3–49. On the other, Ruth Coates argues that Orthodox theology permeates Bakhtin's thought, see *Christianity in Bakhtin: God and the Exiled Author* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998).

There are three key components to Bakhtin's thesis: heteroglossia, dialogism and polyphony. Bakhtin identifies several elements of language, the most basic of which are words and utterances. An utterance pertains to a peculiar 'language', a form of discourse shaped by the social reality of the speaker at that moment, for example, a male peasant dealing with a state bureaucrat.²² Given the fact of social stratification various socially positioned 'languages' exist simultaneously, even though there is only one national language. This is heteroglossia.²³ Heteroglot 'languages' take different perspectives on the world, abut and clash, interact and, affirms Bakhtin, 'dialogue'. He asserts that

all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words...As such they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically.²⁴

The environment into which a particular utterance is projected is thus "dialogized heteroglossia".²⁵ The meaning of the utterance is not objectively fixed, but evolves in dialogue with its heteroglossic context, 'negotiating' its meaning. Without this process words "will not sound".²⁶ Bakhtin offers a suggestive metaphor for such dialogism.

If we imagine the *intention* of such a word, that is, its *directionality toward the object*, in the form of a ray of light, then the living and unrepeatable play of colors and light on the facets of the image that it constructs can be explained as the spectral dispersion of the ray-word, not within the object itself...but rather as its spectral dispersion in an atmosphere filled with alien words, value judgments and accents through which the ray passes on its way toward the object; the social atmosphere of the word, the atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle.²⁷

Bakhtin further contends that words are directed towards an answer, that is, the involvement of the interlocutor. "Understanding and response are dialectically merged

²² Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 295–96.

²³ Polyglossia is the obverse of heteroglossia, i.e. two or more national languages interacting in a single cultural system, see the glossary prepared by Michael Holquist in Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* (ed. M. Holquist; trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist; Austin: Texas University Press, 1981), 428.

²⁴ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 291–92.

²⁵ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 272. Bakhtin asserts: "With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia, it must move in and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a 'language' ", "Discourse in the Novel," 295.

²⁶ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 278.

²⁷ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 277. Emphasis original.

and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other".²⁸ Dialogism is thus an essential process in a world of heteroglossia, and dialogue, conceived as an exchange between simultaneous differences, is the context of all socially derived 'languages'.

Bakhtin theorised about the novel employing these insights, positing two sorts of novelistic works, the sophistic and dialogic.²⁹ The former is essentially monologic. Although it may reflect heteroglossia the voices are not equally significant. Instead, the non-authorial 'language' "appears, in essence, as a *thing*, it does not lie on the *same* plane with the real language of the work: it is the depicted gesture of one of the characters and does not appear as an aspect of the word doing the depicting".³⁰ This is the case, for example, with the rhetorical genre, which instead of accepting dialogism intents "to outwit possible retorts to itself".³¹ The dialogic novel, in contrast, lets all voices be heard not solely the author's. The plot, for example, "serves to represent speaking persons and their ideological worlds. What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language".³² It is fallacious to suppose that this variety of literature is

just chaotically multi-voiced; it is art, and its special artistic province is *dialogized* heteroglossia: different points of view embodied in "voice zones" and intentional hybridizations that test one another and question each other's boundaries and authority.³³

Bakhtin labelled this authorial strategy 'polyphony'.³⁴ Polyphony is not heteroglossia,

²⁸ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 282.

²⁹ Bakhtin used the terms First Line and Second Line. He used the epithet 'sophistic' of the former, I supply 'dialogic' for the latter. Bakhtin enquires after the sociological preconditions for the dialogic novel, observing that its advent occurred at the same time as the monologic shackles of medievalism were being challenged by the Renaissance and Protestantism, Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 414–15.

³⁰ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 287. Emphasis original.

³¹ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 353.

³² Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 365.

³³ Caryl Emerson, "Theory" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Classic Russian Novel* (ed. M. V. Jones and R. F. Miller; Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 271–92, quote 286–87. Emphasis original.

³⁴ Bakhtin's imprecision concerning nomenclature has generated debate around this issue. Polyphony and heteroglossia are treated as synonyms by Clark and Holquist who declare that the "phenomenon that Bakhtin calls "polyphony" is simply another name for dialogism", *Bakhtin*, 242, cf. 129, citing in support *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (trans. C. Emerson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 32: "Every thought of Dostoevsky's heroes...senses itself to be from the very beginning a *rejoinder* in an unfinalized dialogue...It lives a tense life on the borders of someone else's thought, someone else's consciousness." Yet at another point they assert that "Dostoevsky's polyphony must be conceived against the larger meaning of dialogue in human existence" seeming to indicate that the two are not synonyms, cf. *Bakhtin*, 251. Although the words are different in the Russian, not all translators render them consistently. James Zappen sounds a realistic note arguing that polyphony,

rather

polyphony is a way of realizing heteroglossia in the novel, without being identical to heteroglossia. ‘Polyphony’ means ‘multi-voicedness’, while ‘heteroglossia’ means ‘multi-languaged-ness’, and this apparently small difference in meaning is very significant. Polyphony refers to the arrangement of heteroglot variety into an aesthetic pattern. One of the principal ways of ensuring the presence of the different voices of heteroglossia in the novel is the creation of fictional characters.³⁵

Thus polyphony concerns the relationship of the author to the text. In the polyphonic novel she does not have the final word, but is a participant who lets herself be guided by dialogues that emerge from her characters. Bakhtin does not thereby negate authorial activity for the

authorial emphasis is present, of course, in all these orchestrating and distanced elements of language, and in the final analysis all these elements are determined by the author’s artistic will—they are totally the author’s responsibility—but they do not belong to the author’s *language*.³⁶

It is necessary to consider several criticisms of Bakhtin’s thesis before concluding what he can contribute to this study. First, he restricts himself to spoken discourse. Only thus can he assert that Adam alone, who “approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object”.³⁷ Even allowing that Bakhtin uses the creation accounts rhetorically, a pertinent observation is that both Genesis 1.28 and 2.18–20 conceive human action as a response to God’s prior communication, which includes both word (‘be fruitful and multiply’) and act (creation, bringing the animals to Adam), and are not necessarily limited to the verbal. Emerson argues this has implications for Bakhtin’s interpretation of Dostoevsky. “The possibility that verbal dialogue might actually drain away value or flatten out a subtlety or be so subject to terror and constraint that it depreciates into outright fraud is

heteroglossia and carnival are all “dialogic interrelations”, but that Bakhtin uses each in different places. “Each of these terms captures, though each with a different emphasis, the dialogic interrelationship of utterances as a complex unity of differences”, “Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975)” in *Twentieth-Century Rhetoric and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources* (ed. M. G. Moran and M. Ballif; Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 7–20, quote 11. In any case it is clear that polyphony can be linked to the polyphonic novel.

³⁵ Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 113.

³⁶ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 416. Emphasis original.

³⁷ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 279.

not for Bakhtin a theoretically serious issue".³⁸ Second, it is not certain that polyphony is an adequate description of Dostoevsky's authorial strategy because he patently intended to transmit Christian truth.³⁹ Third, dialogue may be 'unnatural', not the way utterances actually work in practice, since it usually takes a considerable effort to effect real dialogue. Fourth, Natalia Reed argues dialogism is inherently hostile to others. "It might welcome them for a moment, as a temporary stimulus or trigger, but it rarely has the patience to orient outwardly toward another person's words and acts *over time*".⁴⁰ The charge is that dialogism is attractive because it resonates with the values of Western liberalism rather than being derived from the 'fact' of social heteroglossia.⁴¹ Fifth, the language of characters, especially major characters, has an effect upon other actors in the narrative. In other words, the space surrounding them is dialogized, but not neutrally. And it is plain that dialogue can be coercive, not only by itself but also in tandem with forms of non-verbal communication. Finally, it is intuitively true that a single person can create a novel with two or more voices, but not that she can possess two consciousnesses.⁴²

If his thesis must be modified, how far can Bakhtin be appropriated for a study of Old Testament ethics? One issue is whether the Bible is polyphonic literature. Green answers in the negative, opining that "polyphony as Bakhtin develops it does not really function substantially in 1 Samuel and that Saul cannot accurately or fairly be called a polyphonic hero".⁴³ But the two issues are separate. Even if biblical heroes are not polyphonic, they are multifaceted, complicated moral agents. And the biblical text could well juxtapose differing perspectives 'pseudo-polyphonically' and without explicit evaluation, which readers then invited to appraise for themselves in the light of other biblical texts and cultural expectations. In such a case it will be profitable to read with an eye for multi-voicedness, not merely the narrator's tune.⁴⁴

³⁸ Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 132–33.

³⁹ Emerson, *First Hundred Years*, 133–34.

⁴⁰ Emerson, *First Hundred Years*, 139. Emphasis original. Emerson summarises the unpublished work of Reed, which she discusses on pages 132–52.

⁴¹ Heteroglossia in the novel is actually dependent upon a specific historical situation, *viz.* the printed work. Note Ken Hirschkop's caustic comment: "To stumble upon a theorist who claims that language itself is inherently 'dialogical' and that 'a living utterance cannot avoid becoming a participant in social dialogue' is therefore an irresistible windfall for the liberal consciousness", *Aesthetic*, 9.

⁴² Ken Hirschkop, "Bakhtin, discourse and democracy," *NLR* 160 (1986): 92–111.

⁴³ Green, *Mighty*, 273.

⁴⁴ Bakhtin argues in the first chapter of *Dostoevsky's Poetics* that a polyphonic narrative can be misread as monologic. Green helpfully suggests that inverting the concept may mean "a monologic work may

Esther Reed has drawn upon Bakhtin to expound a particular view of authority in ethics. She argues that (Christian) ethics is not monologic, but is a polyphonic, free response to God's Word that avoids ready-made answers.⁴⁵ She cautions that one should “[b]eware of identifying authority with monologism and polyphony with relativism”.⁴⁶ This coheres with my argument above that there are many ways of responding morally well to situations, including moral dilemmas. In this regard Bakhtin's observations concerning the hero of a novel may have particular relevance for my investigation. He claims that the testing of a character is a fundamental means of organising the narrative, because it provides an arena in which to examine that actor's discourse.⁴⁷

To conclude, although 1 Samuel is probably not polyphonic literature in Bakhtin's sense, it is quite possible that the author employs different voices as vehicles for presenting different perspectives upon the moral conflicts presented in the text. An important step in my exegesis, therefore, is the identification of these voices, the discernment of what they are saying—both verbally and in their actions—, and the evaluation of them found in the text itself, in order to ascertain how action by the narrative's ‘heroes’ is viewed.

Discerning what voices say is complicated by the cultural distance between text and modern day readers. Proponents of social-scientific criticism in biblical studies argue that the breach entailed by temporal distance can be traversed by studying contemporary, spatially separate, pre-industrial societies.⁴⁸ Before advancing to

flower a bit if we read it with some awareness of polyphonic strategies”, *Mighty*, 275. Compare Carol Newsom's more definite claim that Job and Genesis—2 Kings are polyphonic literature, “Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth,” *JR* 76 (1996): 290–306, especially 297–304.

⁴⁵ Cf. Reed, *Genesis*, 58–118.

⁴⁶ Reed, *Genesis*, 133. She proceeds to contrast an ethic of polyphony and an ethic of heteroglossia, asserting that the former relates to the truth of a person and the latter to individualism: the Tower of Babel depicts the punishment upon sin as forced mutation of polyphony into heteroglossia, cf. Reed, *Genesis*, 152–53. It seems to me, however, that the equations ‘polyphony = acceptable difference = good’ and ‘heteroglossia = relativism = bad’, although decidedly more elegant and heuristically helpful than Bakhtin himself, are rhetorical. Although Bakhtin thought that all Dostoevsky's polyphonic voices were valid (cf. *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 6) the fact that characters hailed from distinct social milieu meant that they spoke different ‘languages’: polyphonic voices within the novel are also heteroglossic voices. Thus the neat distinction she offers cannot be derived from Bakhtin. Reed may acknowledge this in her qualification of the definition of polyphony: “Polyphony – in the particular sense of different voices speaking a single language and using the same words”, *Genesis*, 152. A separate, although fundamental issue, is whether *all* (polyphonic) voices are of equal moral value, which could be implied from Bakhtin, but not Dostoevsky.

⁴⁷ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 388–96.

⁴⁸ Social-scientific study of the Old Testament has a long pedigree. Stephen Carter and Carol Meyers date its *terminus a quo* to W. Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, published in 1889, cf. *Community, Identity and Ideology: Social Science Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (SBTS

summarise my exegetical methodology, I defend an anthropologically informed interpretative understanding of the text.

4.2 INTERPRETATIVE UNDERSTANDING

The discussion from Chapter 2 onwards has not only served to present the material I believe is necessary to perform an adequate exegesis of my chosen texts, but also to situate my approach vis-à-vis that of other commentators. This section will make patent what until now has been only implicit. The epigraph alludes to two ways in which the interpretative task can be undertaken. The first is to have in mind a model of behaviour, then seek to confirm the presence of this particular pathology. The second is to appreciate the whole, which might then suggest a particular interpretation. They could be termed, respectively, ‘scientific’ and ‘interpretative’ approaches.

A prominent advocate of social-scientific criticism, John Elliot, defines it as “that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models and research of the social sciences”.⁴⁹ Starting from the observation that all knowledge is culturally conditioned he argues that exegetes must clarify differences between the social locations of authors and contemporary readers. This is because

the meanings communicated by the author(s) of these texts to their intended hearers or readers and the texts’ persuasive power are determined by the social and cultural systems that author(s) and audiences inhabited and that enabled meaningful communication in the first place.⁵⁰

Several critics, however, argue it is anachronistic to assume models developed during

6; ed. S. Carter and C. Meyers; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), xiii. For an up-to-date survey of social-scientific study of the Old Testament see Philip Esler and Anselm Hagedorn, “Social-Scientific Analysis of the Old Testament: A Brief History and Overview,” in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context* (ed. P. F. Esler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 15–32. It is important to note that most social-scientific work has focused on the society of ‘Ancient Israel’ rather than its culture. That is, scholars have investigated social structure and institutions, and their historical development, or the roles of prophets and priests, for example, rather than how individuals might have reacted to everyday situations. ‘Culture’ has been investigated from relatively early on, but it is only recently that a concern with behaviour has gained prominence, cf. Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (4 vols.; Oxford: OUP, 1926); Betchel, “Shame as Sanction”; Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). Works of this type have generated some reflection concerning methodology in ‘culture’ orientated social-scientific criticism of the Old Testament, e.g. Johanna Stiebert, *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution* (JSOTSup 346 Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

⁴⁹ John Elliot, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 7.

⁵⁰ Elliot, *Social-Scientific Criticism*, 50.

the twentieth century can be applied to the social world of people living millennia previously. There is a danger that “the data from antiquity, while they are becoming intelligible and accessible to the modern reader, are also becoming fundamentally distorted into just another instance of what we know about already”.⁵¹ In similar vein, Edmund Leach argues that there is “no case for reading biblical texts as if they were a record of remote history which, by some happy accident, becomes more intelligible if referred to the present!”⁵² A straightforward response to the charge of anachronism, as one manifestation of incommensurability, is to admit its potential ubiquity, yet observe that it is not a problem with social-scientific criticism *per se* but all historical investigation. Furthermore, the danger of anachronism should not delude interpreters into thinking that they themselves possess some neutral vantage point—a historical version of cross-cultural superiority. For this reason I concur with Esler that explicit assumptions are to be preferred to implicit suppositions, for they enable other interpreters to assess the fruits of one’s exegetical labours more accurately.⁵³

The impossibility of an impartial perspective means that *all* exegesis comprises interpretative, rather than ‘scientific’, understanding of the text. The latter—like Berger’s doctor seeking a specific condition—purports to make an explicit attempt to verify that behaviour suggested by modern social-scientific resources is also exhibited in the Bible. An interpretative approach, however, supposes both ancient and modern texts describe an ‘ethnographic present’,⁵⁴ and maintains that the interpretative objective is not verification but plausible suggestion. In the words of Mario Aguilar “there are no

⁵¹ Stephen Barton, “Historical Criticism and Social-Scientific Perspectives in New Testament Study,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (ed. J. B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 74.

⁵² Edmund Leach, “Anthropological approaches to the study of the Bible during the twentieth century,” in *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth*. (ed. E. Leach and D. A. Aycock; Cambridge: CUP, 1983), 20.

⁵³ Cf. Philip Esler, “Review of D.G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*” *JTS* 49 (1998), 253–60, especially 254. Another general criticism of social-scientific criticism of the Bible is that more context is read back into the biblical texts than is justified by them. According to one sceptic there is “too much theory chasing too little data”, R. P. Carroll, “Prophecy and society,” in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*. (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 219; cf. Cyril Rodd, “On Applying a Sociological Theory to Biblical Studies,” in *Social-Scientific Old Testament Criticism. A Sheffield Reader*. (ed. D. J. Chalcraft; BS 47; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1997; repr. from *JSOT* 19 (1981): 95–106), 22–33. By justifying their readings with detailed appeals to theory exegetes can certainly give the impression that explicit conceptual schemes dominate texts, but this may be a necessary corrective to the use of unrecognised, implicit perspectives. Whether the theory coheres with the data is a separate matter, which must be tested empirically.

⁵⁴ “A hypothetical time frame, characterized by the use of the present tense, employed in ethnographic writing. Normally it coincides with the time of fieldwork, which is not necessarily the time of writing, or indeed of reading.” Barnard and Spencer, *Encyclopedia*, 604.

discoveries but insights, no explanations but interpretations, and an absence of hypotheses but the presence of argumentations".⁵⁵

By adopting this position I have plunged into a sometimes vitriolic debate about the use of anthropology in biblical studies and, in particular, whether ‘models’ of behaviour are appropriate exegetical tools. Although it is unnecessary to rehearse the arguments in detail I do need to justify my methodology. The advantage of having already outlined an understanding of social practices is that I can do so positively by affirming my stance in relation to those of others.

My first affirmation is that human practice often exhibits a regularity amenable to summary in models of typical action. Bruce Malina, the foremost advocate of the use of models in biblical interpretation, offers the following definition:

A model is an abstract, simplified representation of some real world object, event, or interaction constructed for the purpose of understanding, control, or prediction. A model is a scheme or pattern that derives from the process of abstracting similarities from a range of instances in order to comprehend.⁵⁶

In ethnographic research a model comprises “a researcher’s attempt to simplify, generalise or abstract their *findings*”.⁵⁷ It looks backwards, offering, for example, a statistical summary of behaviour patterns or a descriptive framework. This is different from the proactive use of models envisaged by Malina. He contends that people “cannot make sense of their experiences and their world without making models of it, without thinking in terms of abstract representations of it”.⁵⁸ In Malina’s view, therefore, the task of biblical scholars is to offer potential domains of reference, that is, models of the biblical social world.⁵⁹ The difference between the two sorts of models has been the

⁵⁵ Mario Aguilar, “Changing Models and the Death of Culture,” in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach* (ed. L. J. Lawrence and M. I. Aguilar; Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2004), 299–313, quote 307.

⁵⁶ Bruce J. Malina, “The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation,” *Interpretation* 36 (1981): 229–42, quote 231.

⁵⁷ David Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 11. My emphasis. See also Stanley Barrett, *Anthropology: A Student’s Guide to Theory and Method* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 216: “The model is neither valid nor invalid; it is useful or not, in the sense of providing an overall picture of the central features of a research project”.

⁵⁸ Malina, “Social Sciences,” 232.

⁵⁹ Malina lists six characteristics of a good social-science model for biblical studies: it should be a cross-cultural model accounting for both interpreter and interpreted; it should be at a level of abstraction that allows for similarities to surface; it should cohere with a sociolinguistic approach; it should match what we already know of ‘biblical culture’; it should generate meanings that are “irrelevant but

subject of a debate concerning terminology; but in my view which meaning of ‘model’ is intended is usually clear from the context of its use.⁶⁰ The key question is *what* models are assumed to describe when they are employed in exegesis. There are several possibilities: models could purport to be predictions of actors’ behaviour, they could describe a necessary action in a given situation, or they could outline typical behaviour. I perceive no difficulty with models as a description of typical observed behaviour, and thus an explication of the social context of any particular action. However, they can only ‘predict’ actors’ choices in a statistical sense, and given that the Old Testament does not provide sufficient information to develop such mathematical constructs ‘predictive’ modelling is inappropriate.⁶¹

The second affirmation is that models of typical action can be compared. The paucity of biblical ethnographic data leads Esler to contend that the comparative use of models is essential to highlight the different assumptions of modern readers and ancient authors and their implied audiences.⁶² Although there is a risk that models will lead researchers to assume patterns of conduct are present even when they are not, once assumptions are made explicit whether this has occurred can become a matter of debate.⁶³ Crucially, however, one must be cognisant that comparison of models does *not* mean ‘cultures’ are being compared. Aguilar is correctly unequivocal: “Cultures do not exist. Instead, groups of human beings that share some common understanding, but also fight for their own identity...interact within larger contested worlds”.⁶⁴ When an exegete employs a model, therefore, she does not utilise a proxy for ‘culture’ but merely a summary description of typical behaviour.⁶⁵ Whether any particular model is adequate

understandable to us and our twentieth century United States society”, “Social Sciences,” 241; and the application of the model should be acceptable to the social sciences.

⁶⁰ Esler, “Review of Horrell,” 254; David Horrell, “Models and Methods in Social-Scientific Interpretation: A Response to Philip Esler.” *JNTS* 78 (2000), 85–105; Esler, “Reply to Horrell,” 108–12. For a recent defence of ‘modelling’ see Philip Esler, “Social-Scientific Models in Biblical Interpretation,” in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context* (ed. P. F. Esler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 3–14. Despite their differences both Horrell and Esler seek a corrective to ethnocentric theological or ecclesiastical readings centred upon ideas unconnected to social context.

⁶¹ Cf. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 21. All one can say is whether the behaviour ‘predicted’ by the model is found, or not. But this tells us nothing about the *text*, which already contains the ‘results’ of actions.

⁶² Esler, “Review,” 254.

⁶³ Cf. this objection to ‘modelling’ in Horrell, “Models and Methods,” 91.

⁶⁴ Aguilar, “Changing Models,” 307

⁶⁵ There is no need for the model to be ‘true’. Esler remarks that they are “heuristic tools, not ontological statements. Accordingly, they are either useful or not, and it is meaningless to ask whether they are ‘true’ or ‘false’.”, “Introduction: Models, context and kerygma in New Testament interpretation.” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific studies of the New Testament in its context* (ed. P. F. Esler; London / New York: Routledge, 1995), 1–20, quote 4. Although this pragmatic test might

even for this purpose is an empirical matter; but it can never be a description of ‘culture’.

Third, human action is personal and open, that is, it does not *have* to cohere with that summarised in a model. According to Herzfeld’s ethnography, any one society, village or family possesses “[e]mbarrassments of ambiguity”⁶⁶ so that even between conventional interpretations there is “an expressive play of opposition”.⁶⁷ Herzfeld labels this ‘disemia’, claiming it speaks not of contradiction but tension. He offers the example of the diabolical and virginal aspects of women’s sexuality in Greek and Indian contexts where “the sweetness of domestic intimacy and the fear men have of their wives’ and daughters’ defilement by other men” are simultaneous concerns.⁶⁸ As I have already affirmed, the plurality of moral goods is a fundamental social reality, and any adequate interpretive method must be able to account for this variety, in part because agency will never completely mirror generalised abstractions; it may have very little to do with them.⁶⁹

Fourth, human action is ambiguous. Bourdieu shows why this affirmation is important. Highlighting the distinction between observer and observed, he argues that observers, lacking *emic* mastery of situations, “provide themselves with an explicit and at least semi-formalized substitute for it in the form of a *repertoire of rules*”.⁷⁰ The problem is that observers frequently forget this is an *etic*, summary, view of behaviour.

To slip from *regularity*, i.e. from what recurs with a certain statistically measurable frequency and from the formula which describes, to a consciously laid down and consciously respected *ruling* (*règlement*), or to unconscious *regulating* by a mysterious cerebral or social mechanism, are the two commonest ways of sliding from the model of reality to the reality of the model.⁷¹

Thus, even when a series of actions and reactions are predictable *from outside*, the

appear to beg certain questions (see Horrell, “Models and Methods,” 88 n.13), there is no way of avoiding this situation—that is why one can only achieve interpretative, not scientific, understandings.

⁶⁶ Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the looking-glass: Critical ethnography in the margins of Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), 104.

⁶⁷ Herzfeld, *Looking Glass*, 114.

⁶⁸ Herzfeld, *Looking Glass*, 99. Both of which, of course, are ‘models’. See also Michael Herzfeld, “Disemia,” in *Semiotics* (ed. M. Herzfeld and M. D. Lenhart; New York: Plenum, 1980), 205–15.

⁶⁹ Cf. Lawrence, *Ethnography*, 3. Note the differences between Malinowski’s neat (functionalist) anthropological assessment of the Trobrianders and the ignoble morass of human life revealed in his diaries, *Argonauts; Diary*.

⁷⁰ Bourdieu, *Outline*, 2. Emphasis original.

⁷¹ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 39. Emphasis original.

subjective view remains uncertain. Bourdieu claims reification of practice by ignoring temporality “is never more pernicious than when exerted on practices defined by the fact that their temporal structure, direction, and rhythm are *constitutive* of their meaning”.⁷² Illustrating this contention by reference to gift-giving he notes that what from the outside, and *post factum*, might appear to be an ordered cycle of reciprocity, can be interrupted at any stage, and thus lose its intended meaning.⁷³ In fact, the difference between the observed and subjective appreciation of gift giving is essential to the essence of this practice:

even if reciprocity is the ‘objective’ truth of the discrete acts that ordinary experience knows in discrete form and associates with the idea of a gift, it is perhaps not the whole truth of a practice that could not exist if its subjective truth coincided perfectly with its ‘objective’ truth.⁷⁴

‘Objective’ models, by turning observers’ *de facto* exclusion into a methodological preference, can mask both the reality of practice and interpreters’ assumptions.

My final affirmation is that dominant constructions of power relations can be both contested and accepted. Herzfeld explains that the ‘honour-shame’ model of male-female relations suppresses alternative views, “not simply *of the women*, but *of most villagers when discussing intimate situations with those whom they regard as intimate friends*”.⁷⁵ That is, the situation affects behaviour. If dirt, in this case inappropriate deportment, is ‘matter out of place’, then what changes is not the matter but the place: what is acceptable in one situation is not in another, and *vice versa*. Thus

in speaking of *the symbolism* of a given community, we too easily play into the hands of the dominant groups, those who *define* propriety. What we are then discussing is an official praxis; we ignore interpretations that may reverse the system by redefining, not matter, but place.⁷⁶

It is necessary, therefore, to attend to the distribution of power and resources and the manipulation of symbolic meanings by individuals as they seek their own advantage.⁷⁷

⁷² Bourdieu, *Outline*, 9. Emphasis original.

⁷³ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 105.

⁷⁴ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 105.

⁷⁵ Herzfeld, *Looking Glass*, 99. Emphasis original.

⁷⁶ Herzfeld, *Looking Glass*, 99. Emphasis original.

⁷⁷ Cf. Horrell, “Models and Methods,” 96, following Giddens. Esler agrees that power relations are important, “Reply to Horrell,” 107. Horrell also contends that the implicit assumptions entailed in using models comprise a second important issue relating to power because models are not merely heuristic, but shape observers’ perceptions; they do not simply make explicit interpreters’ perspectives, but reflect and contain their own implicit suppositions. This means that ‘goodness of fit’

These five affirmations summarise the theoretical underpinnings of my approach to the use of anthropology in exegesis. They enable use of ethnographic and anthropological resources in creative ways to suggest understandings of the context of biblical characters' practices whilst allowing theoretical space for consideration of idiosyncratic acts that do not cohere with cultural schemata, acts which may contest dominant relations of power yet remain ambiguous. It is now possible to summarise my interpretative methodology.

4.3 CONCLUSION: INTERPRETING VOICES

I commenced this dissertation by examining the Old Testament's own resources for resolving value conflicts, arguing that moral goods are more foundational than laws or their motivations. Within the biblical text the 'family' is prominent both as the matrix and end of moral action. An investigation of kinship as variously understood by anthropologists revealed that it is most appropriately considered a field of practices. Within anthropological theorising, indeed the social-sciences in general, 'practice' has been conceived as arising from structure and/or agency. Rather than elucidate a genealogy of practice I sought to expose important questions of interpretation, identifying three key issues. Given that the ambiguity of social interaction is reflected in the Old Testament, especially its characterisation of 'heroes', I have proposed that reading narrative with an ear to a text's 'voices' might reveal how the author uses value conflicts to establish a debate between different perspectives; and that by affirming some voices whilst undermining others the biblical writers present a view of moral goods and their prioritisation for consideration by readers.

The following chapter contains an interpretation of the voices in 1 Samuel 19.10–18a.⁷⁸ The first step, naturally, is to identify the voices. There appear to be two: those of Michal and Saul. The next move is to identify the moral goods in view and the perspective upon them presented by each voice. To do this I identify themes that feature prominently in the narrative, *viz.* violence, marriage and lying. My method then comprises three elements. First, I highlight how the Old Testament exhibits a variety of

of data is an insufficient test of a model's validity. It is also necessary to enquire "how the model has shaped, prioritised and interpreted the evidence", Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 15–16. Emphasis original.

⁷⁸ Although I intend to work with the final form of the narrative important text critical issues will be discussed in the footnotes. Key historical-critical themes that have interested previous commentators will be discussed in detail only where issues of interpretation are at stake.

perspectives upon the theme to alert interpreters to the complexities facing them in this particular narrative. Second I present anthropological perspectives upon the theme. Rather than simply describing models, which would ignore the fact that anthropology (the supposed source of such models) is itself an arena of contested meanings, I follow Aguilar who suggests that “the use of a social author within a biblical paper needs always to be supported by some discussion on the author’s context of writing”, that is, the wider anthropological work relating to a particular theme.⁷⁹ Third, I employ these materials to suggest new interpretations of relevant aspects of the passage. Having interpreted the voices I then assess how they are either subverted or approved. This is important in order to be able to identify the theological import of the chosen texts and their value for readers’ ethical reflection. For the present it is sufficient to say that the complexity of the narrative points to the author’s desire that readers should become involved with its characters. This is an essential didactic move, since he wishes to propose novel solutions to the moral dilemma he describes, one that implied readers would have found counterintuitive, even shocking.

⁷⁹ Aguilar, “Changing models,” 310. A problem with model use occurs when the model substitutes for anthropological or sociological data: cognisance of first hand studies, not merely secondary level theorising, is required. This is one difficulty with the ‘abductive’ use of models proposed by Elliot, *Social-Scientific Criticism*, 48–49. Whilst it is true that there must be movement between text and anthropological resource, confining the latter to ‘models’ is inadequate.

CHAPTER 5

Michal: Lying Through Her *Teraphim*

*I wished to tell the truth,
for truth always conveys its own moral
to those who are able to receive it.*

— Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

At first blush the pericope in 1 Samuel 19.10–18a is a straightforward account of how Michal aided David’s flight from a spear-wielding maniac and his henchmen. The moral questions touched upon by the text, though, are more complex. The *prima facie* problem concerns Michal’s lie to facilitate David’s escape. A number of commentators suggest that Michal ought to have had the strength of character exhibited by her brother Jonathan who, they maintain, unflinchingly declared the truth to Saul instead of dissembling.¹ However, given that the passage’s quest is David’s escape from Saul’s unambiguously murderous intentions most commentators excuse Michal’s lie as the lesser of two evils.² I propose that such conclusions are precipitate and that ancient (implied) readers would not have considered her untruth intrinsically problematic. Instead, I suggest that the moral dilemma presented by the author is to whom she should be loyal, and that once the decision had been made this would naturally have involved lying. Familiarity with the David tradition leads many modern readers to assume Michal’s decision was straightforward. I shall argue that it was not, and that her choice was startlingly unexpected, a fact replete with theological import.

A close analysis of the passage’s structure reveals it comprises three sections plus an introduction and conclusion.³ The scene is set by the narrator describing Saul’s

The epigraph is from Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (2nd ed.; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979 [1848]), 29.

¹ Cf. 1 Sam 20.32. So David Eerdman, *The Books of Samuel* (LC 5; trans. C. H. Toy and J. A. Broadus; New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1877), 255; Huguenberger, “Michal,” *ISBE* 3.348.

² For discussion of narrative ‘quest’, in this passage highlighted in the *inclusio*, verses 10 and 18, and verses 12 and 17, see Fokkelman, *Reading*, 73–96.

³ Verses 10 and 18 clearly indicate the limits of the passage by the phrases וְרוֹד נָס וַיִּמְלֹט and וְרוֹד נָס וַיִּמְלֹט

cording of David's dwelling. In the first section Michal orchestrates David's escape then, in the second, she executes a ploy to deceive Saul's messengers. In the final section Saul confronts Michal, demanding a reason for her deception, in response to which she blames David. The conclusion re-emphasises that David escaped Saul's clutches. The whole displays a chiastic structure:

FIGURE 2 – Structure of 1 Samuel 19.10–18a

Introduction

A David flees, but Saul corners him (10c–11a)

First Section

B Michal tells David he will be killed if he doesn't save himself (11b)

C David escapes (12)

D Michal disguises *teraphim* (13)

Second Section

E Saul sends messengers (14a)

F Michal says 'David is sick' (14b)

E' Saul sends the messengers (15a)

F' Saul says 'bring him to me in order to kill him' (15b)

Third Section

D' Teraphim's disguise is discovered (16)

C' Saul demands to know why Michal let his enemy escape (17a)

B' Michal says David threatened to kill her; she had to save herself (17b)

Conclusion

A' David flees, and escapes (18a)

If this structure is considered in terms of characters' moral choices a pattern contrasting truth and lying, loyalty and deception is observed:

^a בְּרָח וַיִּמְלֹט, cf. H. Rouillard and J. Tropper, "TRPYM, Rituels de Guérison et Culte des Ancêtres d'après 1 Samuel XIX 11-17 et les Textes Parallèles d'Assur et de Nuzi," VT 37 (1987): 340–61, especially 342–43. On the importance of section limits see Amit, *Reading*, 14–21. LXX^B starts verse 11 with καὶ ἐγενήθη ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἐκείνῃ = וַיַּדֵּי בְּלִילָה הַחֹוֹא (also at Gen 19.33; 32.23) to the end of verse 10, cf. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel: A new translation with introduction, notes and commentary* (AB 8 ; Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 325; Anthony Campbell, *1 Samuel* (FOTL 7; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 203. Frank Moore Cross contends that one cannot argue from space requirements in 4QSam^b for either reading, "The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran," *JBL* 74 (1955): 147–172, especially 167. Each of the panels contains a self contained narrative in which Michal interacts with different characters. Few commentators suggest detailed structures. Fokkelman is the only other exegete to suggest 1 Sam 19.11–17 is structured chiastically, dividing it into two sequences, deception (11–14) and discovery (15–17), cf. J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books for Samuel. A full interpretation based on stylistic and structural analyses. Vol. II: The Crossing Fates (1 Sam. 13-31 and II Sam 1)* (SSN 23; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986), 266. Campbell proposes a twofold framework: problem (11a) and solution (11b–17); the latter comprising three sections: the escape (11b–12), delaying tactics (13–16) and confrontation (17), cf. *1 Samuel*, 203.

- B True words to David: the situation as it is
- C Loyalty to David: aiding his escape
- F A lie: ‘he is sick’
- F’ The truth: ‘in order to kill him’
- C’ Deception of Saul: the reverse of her loyalty to David
- B’ Lying words to Saul: dissembling to portray her disloyalty as a last resort

It is clear that ethical behaviour is central to the interpretation of this text. There seem to be two voices offering distinct moral perspectives: Michal lies, but to save a life; Saul tells the truth, but with murderous intent. Thinking in Bakhtinian terms I suggest each voice offers a vision of the world that readers are invited to assess. Although there is no explicit evaluation of these voices one cannot talk of polyphony, for the writer leaves plenty of clues as to which voice he prefers. Instead, readers hear heteroglot voices, one of which receives the author’s approbation.

5.1 THE VOICES: MICHAL AND SAUL

The first ‘voice’ is Saul’s. I argued above that it is necessary to go beyond Bakhtin’s restriction to the spoken word and include behaviour when considering a character’s ‘voice’. Thus although Saul only speaks in verse 17, he is also heard in verses 11, 14 and 15, where his actions, which truly speak louder than words, are revealed by the narrator. His first deed responds to David’s successful evasion and return to his house.⁴ Saul sends, **שְׁלַח**, messengers to watch the house, presumably to ensure that David does not evade him again, and to kill him the following morning.

The scene set, readers hear Michal’s voice, which warns David of mortal danger and urges him to flee. David remains mute throughout this passage, an object acted

⁴ Which night **בְּלִילָה** **הַוֹּא** refers to has been the subject of some speculation. According to George Caird ‘that night’ cannot be the night of the spear throwing in verse 8–10 “since there David is said to have fled and escaped, which must mean more than that he went home to his wife”, “The First and Second Books of Samuel,” in *IB* 2.986–87. He concludes (858, 986) that this text speaks of the wedding night and follows directly from 1 Sam 18.27. So also Roland de Vaux, *Les Livres de Samuel* (2nd ed.; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1961), 102; R. W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 194; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 325; S. R. Driver, *Notes of the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (2nd ed.; Oxford: OUP, 1913), 156; Henry Smith, *Samuel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 178–79. However, ‘from that time’ in 1 Sam 18.29 is against such an interpretation and Campbell calls the assumption that the reference is to the wedding night “unsupported”, *1 Samuel*, 203. Robert Gordon notes it “has the curious side-effect of making Michal pretend that David is ill on his wedding night!”, *1 and 2 Samuel* (Exeter: IVP, 1986), 164. Gino Bressan thinks that David could well have returned home thinking that Saul’s anger would blow over, as on previous occasions, *Samuele* (Rome: Marietti, 1960), 317. See also 1 Sam 20.33, where there is no indication Jonathan left court; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, (trans. J. Martin; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980), 195. I concur that the night in question follows the spear throwing incident.

upon by Michal and whose escapades are noted by the narrator; his only role is acquiescence. Michal, however, speaks loudly and clearly, not only facilitating his descent through the window but confectioning a dummy using *teraphim* to replace David's prone frame.⁵

In verse 14 Saul's voice is heard in refrain: he sends, **שָׁלַח**,⁶ messengers, this time to take David prisoner. Michal's lie⁷ delays the action for a single line before Saul is heard once more: he sends, **שָׁלַח**,⁸ so that his emissaries can verify Michal's excuse for themselves.⁹ Not satisfied with a mere report he continues by instructing they bring

⁵ There is unanimity among commentators that the plural represents a single image, cf. de Vaux, *Samuel*, 102, who compares the plural with אֲוִירִים and תְּמִימִים, and more cautiously, אֲלֹהִים אֶלְיָהָוָה. As to size Keil and Delitzsch argue their dimensions must have been appropriate to serve as a human dummy, cf. *Samuel*, 195; although apart from the lack of archaeological evidence for objects of this size, the *teraphim* in Judg 18 are associated with the *ephod* and could be carried by priests, and those of Gen 31.34 were hidden in a camel saddle. Gordon cautions that they "were not invariably large", *Samuel*, 164. Regarding use McCarter suggests *teraphim* had a role in divination "and can perhaps be identified with the "gods" which adjudicate in clan or household law", *1 Samuel*, 326; cf. Ezek 21.21[26]; Zech 10.2. Gordon proposes they were possibly figurines venerated in the manner of Roman *lares* and *penates*, cf. *1 Samuel*, 164. Rouillard and Tropper, however, contend that *teraphim* were used in ancestor worship and in magical healing rituals. Kirkpatrick speculates that healing properties explain their surreptitious use by the barren Michal, *The First Book of Samuel with Map, Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge Bible. Cambridge: CUP, 1890), 172; also Keil and Delitzsch, *Samuel*, 195. Finally, although this does not exhaust the suggestions, von Rad thinks *teraphim* could have been a cultic mask, cf. *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper & Row, 1962–65), 1.216. Obviously, translation of *teraphim* is problematic. Smith suggests that the LXX's κενοτάφια implies ancestral images, cf. *Samuel*, 180; "a contemptuous designation of the vanity of the idols", Eerdman, *Samuel*, 249. NRSV has 'household gods' in Gen 31, but opts for transliteration in Judg 17.5; 18; Kgs 23.24; Ezk 21.21[26]; Hos 3.4, Zech 10.2, and 'idol'/idolatry' in 1 Samuel. Given the difficulties of defining *teraphim* and that they are described both positively (Hos 3.4) and negatively, the more neutral rendering 'image' would appear most satisfactory, although I have chosen to transliterate.

⁶ In fact, the whole phrase is identical: **שָׁאֹול מְלָאכִים** וַיִּשְׁלַח

⁷ Julius Wellhausen follows LXX, which states that when Saul sent messengers to take David, λέγουσιν ἐνοχλεῖσθαι αὐτόν, and reads וַיֹּאמֶר for the MT's וְתֹאמֶר. He concludes that "Die Worte „er ist krank“ sind nicht Worte der Michal — die sagt nichts, sondern zeigt den Boten ihre Puppe —, sondern sie sind der Bescheid", *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1871), 113. Cross et al. posit that the *lectio difficilior* fits the space in 4QSam^b well and that Jerome may refer to a correct Old Latin understanding (*et responsum est*), *Qumran Cave 4.XII: 1–2 Samuel* (DJD 17; Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 229. Accepting this reading would create a problem for my interpretation of this passage—although not an insuperable one given the wider issues of deception I will discuss. However, apart from Cross and Smith (*Samuel*, 180—on the basis that otherwise the dummy is unnecessary, a claim I will refute below) I have found no other commentator or Bible version that follows Wellhausen on this point, probably for the good reason that the majority of authorities support the MT, see Cross for a comprehensive list. Indeed, the parallelism of verses 14 and 15, 'Saul sent...she said' // 'Saul sent...he said', counts against such an emendation.

⁸ This time **שָׁאֹול אֲתָה-הַמְלָאכִים** וַיִּשְׁלַח, which may indicate a different sort of messenger.

⁹ There is no need to follow LXX^B here since by omitting לְרִאוֹת **אֲתָה-הַמְלָאכִים** there is no need to follow LXX^B here since by omitting לְרִאוֹת. Cross argues the Greek text exhibits "a transparent haplography by *homoioarkton* (חָרָא...חָרָא)", and that space requirements in 4QSam^b are evidence for the originality of the longer reading, "Oldest Manuscripts," 167. 'He' would replace 'Saul' if one preferred LXX^B on text critical grounds as the shorter reading, despite the overwhelming majority reading, cf. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 325; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 193; DJD 17.229.

David to him from his bed.¹⁰ On discovering Michal's ploy Saul confronts her with a question, to which Michal, uttering the passage's final word, responds with a counter question.

One can imagine that characters in a situation like that of this passage would question each other extensively. This text, however, contains only two questions, both in verse 17. Each is introduced by **הַמֵּה**. ‘Why?’ is an ethical interrogative enquiring after motive and reason. It is important for my argument to observe that Michal's **הַמֵּה** is different from Saul's. Michal's is a rhetorical question justifying her action.¹¹ Saul's question, however, arises from a perceived slight. I propose that studying it *as a question* allows us to delve behind Saul's protest to the nature of the ethical dilemma facing Michal. The text is clear that Saul considered Michal's wrong her preference of David, believing himself to have been deceived. At this point modern readers, perhaps over-familiar with hoary conundrums about whether one should lie when a would-be murderer knocks on the door, are prone to skate over the *moral* significance of Saul's protest. That is, what grounds could Saul have had for supposing Michal should *not* deceive him? Why should she *not* have ‘let his enemy go’? Given that both Saul *and* Michal seem to accept that she should not have acted as she did—Michal lies again to defend her action—what ethical mores might lie behind their supposition? To answer these questions requires investigation of the practice of violence against enemies, the relationship between Michal and Saul as father and daughter, and the ethics of truth-telling. Only then will it be possible to discern what each voice is actually saying, and thus perceive how the author of Samuel simultaneously approves one and undermines the other.

5.2 VIOLENCE AGAINST ENEMIES

Neil Whitehead observes that “[v]iolent actions, no less than any other kind of

¹⁰ McCarter argues English idiom requires ‘from’ for **בְּ** with verbs of motion, thus ‘from the bed’, *I Samuel*, 326.

¹¹ For discussion and classification of interrogative clauses see also WO'C 315–16; James Barr, “Why? in Biblical Hebrew,” *JTS* 36 (1985): 1–33. Not all questions require interrogative markers, see GKC 150 for examples in Samuel. On whether Michal's **הַמֵּה** does in fact indicate a question see Driver who argues the “use of **הַמֵּה** is thoroughly idiomatic”, meaning ‘lest’, *Notes*, 158. He is followed by van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze who provide Michal's riposte as an example of when **הַמֵּה** “[f]unctions as an introduction to an alternative posed with a negative tenor: otherwise, or else”, MNK 325. Without original emphasis. Regardless of the translation the point here is that Michal attempts to justify her behaviour.

behavioral expression, are deeply infused with cultural meaning and are the moment for individual agency within historically embedded patterns of behavior".¹² Throughout 1 Samuel 19.10–18a Saul attempts to kill David; and in the climatic confrontation with Michal, angry that his machinations had come to naught, he wants to know why she has ‘let my enemy go’. In this section I use these textual data as clues to start investigating Saul’s stance, particularly asking how his actions might relate to a dominant cultural schema regarding violence towards enemies.

5.2.1 Enemies in the Books of Samuel

Enemies play a significant role in the Samuel narrative, not merely in terms of lexical occurrences but their theological importance.¹³ Fokkelman argues that the songs of Hannah and David are key structural devices with thematic links. Their preoccupation with enemies is noteworthy: Hannah commences her praise with an affirmation that because of YHWH’s intervention she can deride her enemies, and the theme of YHWH’s deliverance from enemies echoes through David’s hymns.¹⁴

Both national and personal enemies are identified. Throughout Samuel the Philistines are the national foe,¹⁵ although the author occasionally adds others including Moab, Ammonites, Edom, kings of Zobah,¹⁶ and the Amalekites.¹⁷ Matters are more pointed, however, when individuals’ enemies are identified. In the midst of battle Saul rashly curses all those who eat food before he has been avenged on his enemies, in this case the Philistines.¹⁸ They are also the enemy when Saul stipulates a bride price of a hundred foreskins.¹⁹ As the narrative progresses one particular individual replaces this amorphous mass of foreigners as Saul’s *bête noire*: David. He is called Saul’s enemy,

¹² Neil L. Whitehead, “Introduction,” in *Violence* (SARASS; ed. N. L. Whitehead; Oxford: James Curry, 2004), 3–24, quote 10–11.

¹³ Of the 283 occurrences of the root בָּנִי in the MT, 36 are found in Samuel; only the Psalms, with 74, have more.

¹⁴ Cf. Fokkelman, *Reading*, 160; 1 Sam 2. 1–10; 2 Sam 1.19–27; 22.2–51. For a compelling social-scientific reading of Hannah’s story see Philip Esler, “The Role of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:1–2:21: Understanding a Biblical Narrative in Its Ancient Context,” in *Kontexte der Schrift. Band II: Kultur, Politik, Religion, Sprache. Festschrift für Wolfgang Stegemann* (ed. C. Strecker; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 15–36.

¹⁵ 1 Sam 4.3; 2 Sam 3.18; 5.19–20; 19.9. Note also the prayer for rescue from those enemies whose gods are the Baals and Astartes (1 Sam 12.10) and the recapitulation of how God sent judges to rescue Israel from their enemies (1 Sam 12.11).

¹⁶ 1 Sam 14.47.

¹⁷ 1 Sam 30.26, who are at least enemies of David having plundered his camp at Zillag, although he describes them as אֶלְמָנִים יְהוָה, cf. 1 Sam 15.2.

¹⁸ 1 Sam 14.24, cf. Jonathan’s evaluation 1 Sam 14.30.

¹⁹ 1 Sam 18.25.

בְּרִאָה, for the first time in 1 Samuel 18.29. The author makes it clear that David has done nothing to provoke Saul's evaluation, since it is that fact that *God* is with him and that *Michal* loves him that causes Saul's reaction. Although the narrative avoids attributing the blame for his condition to David himself it does not follow that Saul's actions towards him as his enemy are incoherent. In fact, the books' account of attitudes towards *David's* enemies reveals that Saul behaves according to shared assumptions.

David's enemies are sometimes unspecified,²⁰ but in two cases their referent is unambiguous. When Jonathan makes a covenant with David he asks that 'the LORD seek out the enemies of David', cutting them off from the face of the earth, but pleads that David should not show enmity towards Jonathan's descendants, since he is aware that this will mean their elimination.²¹ The books of Samuel present David as (un)scrupulously compliant to this covenant, to the 'benefit' of Mephibosheth and detriment of the unfortunate sons of Rizpah and Merab.²² Saul is David's other enemy. Whilst the text carefully evades portraying David himself describing Saul as such, other characters do so vicariously. David's men describe Saul as David's enemy, and provide evidence of the expectation that enemies should be killed.²³ Indeed, Saul's own incredulity that David should not do so points in the same direction: 'For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the enemy safely away?'.²⁴ David justifies his magnanimity by arguing Saul continued to be YHWH's anointed.²⁵ Abishai also describes Saul as David's enemy.²⁶ Contrary to Abishai's expectations, David refuses to countenance Saul's death—with the very spear he threw at David?—on the basis that no one can 'raise a hand' against the Lord's anointed and remain guiltless. Obviously, this text wishes to make a political point regarding the inviolability of the Davidic dynasty, but for that very reason it evinces the 'normality' of killing one's enemies. This is the perspective of Rechab and Baanah, sons of Rimmon and erstwhile lieutenants to Saul's son, Ishbaal. Wishing to curry favour with the new regime they decapitate Ishbaal while he reposes in his house. Arriving at David's court they say 'Here is the head of Ishbaal,

²⁰ 2 Sam 18.19, 32.

²¹ 1 Sam 20.15–16.

²² 2 Sam 21.7–8. Following LXX^L; most MS read Michal, a *lapsus calami* for Merab according to Driver, *Notes*, 352; cf. Smith, *Samuel*, 376; Arnold Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 247.

²³ 1 Sam 24.4.

²⁴ 1 Sam 24.19.

²⁵ 1 Sam 24.6.

²⁶ 1 Sam 26.8.

son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life'.²⁷ It is inconceivable that they foresaw David's violent response,²⁸ yet again confirming the logic of Saul's protest to Michal in 1 Samuel 19.17.

Despite the indubitably mundane means by which enemies are deposed throughout Samuel, the books' theology is clear: it is God who vindicates, or does not vindicate, people in confrontations with their foes. This is the force of Abigail's invocation that David's enemies be like Nabal, and her contrast between God protecting David and 'slinging out' the lives of his enemies.²⁹ Indeed, rest from enemies forms part of God's promise to David.³⁰ In this connection Pedersen's observations concerning **שָׁלוֹם** are pertinent. "In the olden time peace is not in itself the opposite of war. There are friends and there are enemies; peace consists in complete harmony between friends and victory in war against enemies."³¹ Thus peace does not follow war, for then the losers would also have peace, but victory. Niditch correctly summarises Pedersen's view of peace *with enemies* as "virtually equivalent to domination".³² Thus it is possible to assert that **שָׁלוֹם** "expresses every form of happiness and free expansion, but the kernel in it is the community with others, the foundation of life",³³ because it is precisely who forms a part of that community that is at stake: the classification of 'the other' has practical relevance for behaviour.

Most contemporary readers of 1 Samuel do not think that receiving favour from God and love from Michal justify Saul's extreme measures. Above, I defended the use

²⁷ 2 Sam 4.8.

²⁸ 2 Sam 4.9–12. David's actions can be interpreted as both principled and pragmatic: killing Rechab and Baanah both served as punishment for their assassination of Saul, thus demonstrating *his* virtue in this respect, and eliminated his opponent's potential military leaders in the case that they decided to turncoat once again.

²⁹ 1 Sam 25.26, 29.

³⁰ 2 Sam 7.1, 9, 11. Note that this comes immediately after the report that Michal remained childless until her death and may well allude to the house of Saul as David's adversary.

³¹ Pedersen, *Ancient Israel I-II*, 311. On war in the Old Testament see Peter Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); T. R. Hobbs, *A Time for War: A Study of Warfare in the Old Testament* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989); Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989); Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (Oxford: OUP, 1993); Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961). A useful summary of recent debates can be found in Rodd, *Glimpses*, 185–206. I concur with Hobbs and Rodd that war did not pose the *same* difficulties to ancients as to modern readers.

³² Niditch, *War*, 135. She tries to argue against this, but all her counter examples are from within Israel, cf. Rodd, *Glimpses*, 197.

³³ Pedersen, *Ancient Israel I-II*, 313.

of social-scientific resources to aid interpretation and I now consider whether the anthropology of war and violence can offer clues for biblical exegetes.

5.2.2 Enemies and Violence—Anthropological perspectives

The definitions of violence and war are disputed; but the focus of anthropological study of these topics has centred on their social reality rather than semantics.³⁴ Early studies were unambiguously functionalist. Max Gluckman, for example, highlighted the integrating and differentiating function of conflict.³⁵ His thesis was that conflicts between a person's cross-cutting loyalties are the basis for societal stability. So, for example, whilst members of a family who find themselves in different tribes may be estranged, their kinship ties, although stretched, can ameliorate clan violence as women, who reside with their husband's family following marriage, pressurise men to resolve conflict through compensation rather than warfare.³⁶ Structuralists have contrasted war and exchange. For Lévi-Strauss war was the opposite of exchange, a means of establishing peaceful sociality; each was mutually exclusive.³⁷ Klaus -F. Koch attributed war to the belligerence inculcated into children who, when grown, encounter no political institutions to restrain them.³⁸ Based on this premise Napoleon Chagnon argues that war is the natural state for tribal groups.³⁹ Brian Ferguson points out, however, that there is a logical error in this proposition: "it equates the lack of *formal* institutions of conflict resolution with the absence of *any* means of regulating conflicts other than the unstable ties of reciprocal exchange".⁴⁰ Chagnon's study of the Yanomamo portrays men striving to dominate females for reproductive

³⁴ For a survey of definitions see Giuliano Pontara, "Violencia," *DEFM* 2.1659–64; for reviews of the anthropological literature on war see Anna Simons, "War: Back to the Future," *ARA* 28 (1999): 73–108; Jonathan Spencer, "Violence," *ESCA* 559–60; Simon Harrison, "Warfare," *ESCA* 561–62; Ingo Schröder and Bettina Schmidt, "Introduction: Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices," in *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (ed. B. Schmidt and I. Schröder; London / New York: Routledge, 2001), 1–24.

³⁵ Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959).

³⁶ Cf. Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict*, 20–22.

³⁷ Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Guerre et commerce chez les Indiens de l'Amérique du Sud," *Renaissance* 1 (1943): 122–39. Brian Ferguson summarises Lévi-Straus thus: "war is the other side of exchange within a structure of relations—war is an exchange gone bad, and exchange is a war averted", "Introduction: Studying War," in *Warfare, Culture and Environment* (ed. B. Ferguson; London: Academic Press, 1984), 1–79, quote 17.

³⁸ Klaus -F. Koch, *War and Peace in Jalemo* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

³⁹ Napoleon Chagnon, "Life Histories, Blood Revenge, and Warfare in a Tribal Population," *Science* 239 (1988): 985–92.

⁴⁰ Ferguson, "Studying War," 20. In addition, this explains only the potential for war, not its actual occurrence.

purposes.⁴¹ Socio-biological interpretations of war as the product of innate drives, however, are peculiarly culture specific. William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, for example, presents people as merely animals, whose innate proclivity for violence must be contained by external authority.⁴² Signe Howell and Roy Willis remark that it is a "particular view of human nature...not one shared by many other societies. They may attribute unattractive and negatively valued characteristics to their enemies or neighbours, but most certainly not to themselves."⁴³ Furthermore, the assumption that conflict is the 'natural' state has been challenged by Simon Harrison. Writing about the Avatip of the Sepik River, he contends that the natural state of social relations is peaceful.⁴⁴ Ferguson adopts an ecological approach to communal violence, explaining conflict as competition for scarce resources such as land and food.⁴⁵ Howell and Willis, however, argue that none of the above approaches account sufficiently for context. "Violent behaviour, in the most general sense, can only be understood in association with other behaviour within the same society. Behaviour is never culturally neutral, but always embedded within a shared set of meanings."⁴⁶ Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing concur that "violence must be seen in the context of socio-cultural interaction, and defined in terms of all the complexities of particular situations".⁴⁷ The need, therefore, is to examine violence in the context of everyday practice rather than as a discrete type of activity.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Napoleon Chagnon, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People* (New York: Holt, Reinhardt and Winston, 1977).

⁴² William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954).

⁴³ Signe Howell and Roy Willis, "Introduction," in *Societies at Peace: Anthropological Perspectives* (ed. S. Howell and R. Willis; London: Routledge, 1989), 1–28, quote 10.

⁴⁴ Simon Harrison, "The Symbolic Construction of Aggression and War in a Sepik River Society," *Man* NS 24 (1989): 583–99. One consequence is that violence has to be created and sustained by ritual action. See also Howell and Willis, "Introduction".

⁴⁵ Brian Ferguson, *Warfare, Culture and Environment* (New York: Academic Press, 1984). In more recent work he attempts a synthesis of various materialist factors, cf. Ferguson, "Explaining War" in *The Anthropology of War* (ed. J. Haas; Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 26–55.

⁴⁶ Howell and Willis, "Introduction," 7. Paul Richards is also sceptical about ecological factors, cultural or political explanations for war, because they cannot explain 'peaceful' wars, e.g. Gandhi's resistance to the British Empire. "In other words, war does not break out because conditions happen to be 'right', but because it is organised" Paul Richards, "New War: An Ethnographic Approach," in *No Peace No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts* (ed. P. Richards; Oxford: James Curry / Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 1–21, quote 4.

⁴⁷ Rapport and Overing, *Anthropology*, 382.

⁴⁸ David Riches distinguishes between operational and representational models of violence, cf. "Aggression, War, Violence: Space/Time and Paradigm," *Man* NS 26 (1991): 281–97. Operational models refer to the tacit meaning of violence at the moment it occurs, where responsibility for the violent act lies with the acting agent. Representational models refer to judgements or commentaries about violence; they are removed in space and time from the event, and responsibility is attributed to others. Riches posits a universal experience of 'contestably rendering physical hurt' at the operational level, but highlights multiple, distinct interpretations of war, aggression and so on at representational

This brief survey of anthropological perspectives upon violence enables us to situate a debate that is particularly pertinent to Saul's actions, *viz.*, the grounds upon which boundaries between enemies and friends are drawn. Gluckman argued that violent conflict is a factor of greater social distance. "Feud is waged and vengeance taken when the parties live sufficiently far apart, or are too weakly related by diverse ties".⁴⁹ Evans-Pritchard, *pace* Gluckman, argued that the logic of segmentation means conflict increases with proximity.⁵⁰ Harrison agrees, but contends social distance is not a scale of 'peace, amity and security' versus 'war, hostility and danger', but rather one of 'alternating extremes of amity and enmity' versus 'uninvolvement, neutrality or dissociation'.⁵¹ Harrison questions not that feuds are rare in societies with cross-cutting ties, but that they are lower than would be the case in their absence. "[I]n arguing that the interpersonal ties between groups serve to limit conflict, Gluckman is of course assuming that the fundamental structures of tribal society are groups, and that these groups *could imaginably exist without their interrelations*".⁵² Harrison observes that in Melanesian societies the *a priori* is interrelationships, upon which groups are contingent.

A group is a provisional entity, its existence having constantly to be accomplished against the claims which outsiders exercise upon its members and which threaten perpetually to dissolve it. The interrelations between groups, on the other hand, can never be abrogated. They are the very conditions upon which it is possible for groups to come into existence.⁵³

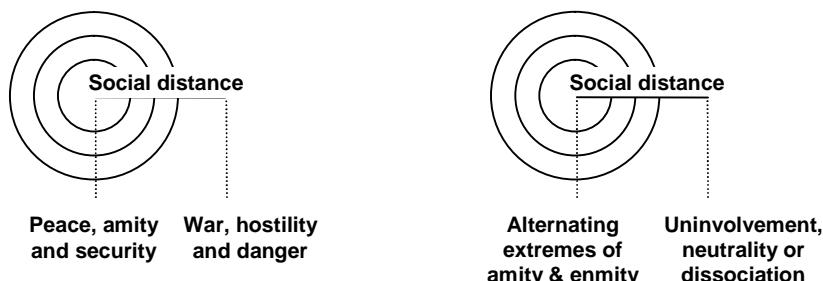
That is, the fundamental problem is not ties between people but boundaries. Sociality is

levels. I find Riches exclusion of so called symbolic and structural violence as violence problematic because these forms can be as prejudicial at a representational level as physical hurt. Riches' concern is to *define* violence; my focus is the role of violence in relations with enemies.

⁴⁹ Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict*, 18.

⁵⁰ Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer*, 150. Segmentation is "a tendency to segment into opposed segments, and also for these segments to fuse in relation to other units" cf. 139–91, quote 190.

⁵¹ Simon Harrison, *The Mask of War: Violence, Ritual and Self in Melanesia* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 20:



⁵² Harrison, *Mask*, 13–14. Emphasis original.

⁵³ Harrison, *Mask*, 9.

given, but division into groups needs to be accomplished by prioritisation of particular ties over the claims of others: “groups of men acting *as if* the only social relationships they had were those that link them to each other”.⁵⁴ Thus, in contrast to Gluckman’s argument that violence reflects the existence of extant boundaries, Harrison maintains that “violence is one of a range of symbolic practices by means of which groups act to constitute themselves within the system of relationships encompassing them”.⁵⁵ The Gebusi tribe, for example, kills a suspected witch to redraw the community’s moral boundaries as part of a continuous identification and expulsion of ‘the evil other’ in their midst.⁵⁶

Herzfeld proposes that the definition of ‘the other’ fluctuates according to situation. That is, the “terms ‘outsider’ and ‘one of us,’ are signs whose meaning depends both on the perspective of the speaker and on that of the people whose actions are described”.⁵⁷ Herzfeld points to the importance of defining ‘outsider’ and how perspective affects this definition disemically. He claims it is characteristic of state authority to fix the definition of ‘the other’, in Canutian defiance of the reality of segmentation in which people constantly construct both ‘togetherness’ and ‘otherness’ not just at the level of national boundaries but in everyday interaction.

In his study of genocide Alex Hinton proposes that the construction of ‘the other’ is the first ‘grammatical rule’ of genocidal practice. This entails “local construction of group boundaries, a marking off of similarity from difference, of an ‘us’ from a ‘them’ ”.⁵⁸

To facilitate violence against such newly marked enemies, perpetrator regimes usually initiate a series of institutional, legal, social, and political changes that transform the conditions under which the target victim groups live and, ultimately, perish. The structural changes that underlie

⁵⁴ Harrison, *Mask*, 10. Emphasis original. Harrison concludes that in Melanesian war “[w]hat a group is fighting for is not the biological survival of its members but the survival of its socio-political identity”, Harrison, *Mask*, 12.

⁵⁵ Harrison, *Mask*, 14.

⁵⁶ Cf. Harrison, *Mask*, 17; B. M. Knauft, “Reconsidering violence in simple human societies: homicide among the Gebusi of New Guinea,” *CA* 28 (1987): 457–82. The practices of identity maintenance are the focus of Kenneth George’s analysis of headhunting rituals, *Showing Signs of Violence: The Cultural Politics of a Twentieth-Century Headhunting Ritual* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996). George responds to the classic studies of Indonesian headhunting by Michelle Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980); idem, “The Shame of Headhunters and the Autonomy of Self,” *Ethos* 11 (1983): 135–51.

⁵⁷ Herzfeld, *Looking Glass*, 154.

⁵⁸ Alex Hinton, “The Poetics of Genocidal Practice: Violence under the Khmer Rouge,” in *Violence* (ed. N. L. Whitehead; SARASS; Oxford: James Curry, 2004), 157–84, quote 162.

this “organization of difference” create mechanisms, disciplines, and social spaces for distinguishing, dividing, confining, and regulating the target group...[although] [e]ven as they are asserted with conviction, the categories that perpetrators manufacture are arbitrary constructions imposed from above that never fully accord with the more fluid and less rigid realities existing on the ground.⁵⁹

If life is ‘chaotic and contradictory’, as Rapport suggests, these constructions can never correspond with some ontological essence possessed by ‘the other’,⁶⁰ which leads to the second grammatical rule, *viz.*, the bodily inscription of signs in order to overcome the uncertainty that “threatens to shatter the crystallization of difference”.⁶¹ Thus “perpetrator regimes organize difference in ways that create mechanisms for sorting and institutions for confining people in spaces that demarcate and affirm (by “their” very location in a place like a ghetto or concentration camp) alleged identities”.⁶² The bodily inscription of difference is especially important when other markers are absent: one must look for clues for who is ‘one of us’ from actions or opinions. A third grammatical rule of genocidal violence is that “violence always contains an immediate, experiential component that even the most powerful poetry, memoir, or analysis cannot convey”⁶³. That is, it is a concrete, physical action causing harm to others, which at the same time possesses a performative aspect in the creation of ‘the other’.⁶⁴

The performative element of violence has been observed in non-genocide studies. Laurie Taylor’s ethnography of the London underworld linked the moral assessment that something or someone was ‘out of order’ with consequent violence to enforce ‘proper respect’. Being ‘out of order’ described diverse anti-social acts, as defined by the criminal ‘micro-society’ that employed the phrase. “The violent acts themselves, matter-of-fact and routine, were simply the instrumental means by which departures-from-order were socio-culturally inscribed and overcome”.⁶⁵ Note that the

⁵⁹ Hinton, “Genocidal Practice,” 162–63.

⁶⁰ Cf. Mario Aguilar, *The Rwanda Genocide and the Call to Deepen Christianity in Africa* (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications Spearhead, 1998), 24.

⁶¹ Hinton, “Genocidal Practice,” 163. Simon Harrison observes that the construction of the Japanese enemy as sub-human meant their body parts were ‘traded’ in ways that would have been deemed inappropriate with European enemies, “Skull trophies of the Pacific War: transgressive objects of remembrance,” *JRAI* 12 (2006): 817–36, especially 826.

⁶² Hinton, “Genocidal Practice,” 163.

⁶³ Hinton, “Genocidal Practice,” 172.

⁶⁴ Hinton, “Genocidal Practice,” 166–68.

⁶⁵ Rapport and Overing, *Anthropology*, 382–83; cf. Laurie Taylor, *In the Underworld* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

norms were also inscribed upon the enforcer as he embodied the socially acceptable values.

The values to be embodied and inscribed in any given situation will be local products, highlighting the importance of context. Maria Olujic observes that “war rapes in the former Yugoslavia would not be such an effective weapon of torture and terror if it were not for concepts of honor, shame, and sexuality that are attached to women’s bodies in peacetime”.⁶⁶ Thus the meaning of this sort of violence is predictable; it is not simply explosive rage, but a strategy for human relationships of domination. Rapport and Overing label this ‘democratic violence’, in contrast to ‘nihilistic violence’ that “negates common forms of exchange”.⁶⁷ In his ethnography of the Lebanese province of Akkar Michael Gilsenan notes that cultural practice may often demand violence.⁶⁸ In Rapport and Overing’s terms the actions he discusses are clearly ‘democratic’, and largely understood in terms of ordinary practice as responses to challenges to a man’s honour. Bourdieu observes that the

point of honour is the ethic appropriate to an individual who always sees himself through the eyes of others, who has need of others in order to exist, because his self-image is inseparable from the image of himself that he receives back from others. Respectability...is essentially defined by its social dimension, and so must be won and defended in the face of everyone.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Maria B. Olujic, “Embodiment of Terror: Gendered Violence in Peacetime and Wartime in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *MAQ* NS 12 (1998): 31–50, quote 31–32.

⁶⁷ Rapport and Overing, *Anthropology*, 383–86, quote 386.

⁶⁸ Michael Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence & Narrative in an Arab Society* (London / New York: Tauris, 1996).

⁶⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Algeria 1960: Essays by Pierre Bourdieu* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), 113. One of the most well known anthropological resources employed in biblical studies is the ‘model’ of ‘honour and shame’. The relevant scholarly literature is substantial, which precludes a detailed discussion here, although I think it is important to make the following six observations. (1) Honour and shame are not a dyad; and shame may be more important than honour in everyday relations, see Unni Wikan, “Shame and Honour: A Contestable Pair.” *Man* NS 19 (1984): 635–52; idem, “More on honour and shame,” *Man* 23 NS (1988): 170; Gideon Kressel, “More on honour and shame,” *Man* NS 23 (1988): 167–70; idem, “Shame and Gender,” *AQ* 65 (1992): 34–46; Michael Herzfeld, “Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems,” *Man* 15 NS (1980): 339–51, especially 343–48; Carmelo Lison-Tolosana, *Belmonte de los Caballeros: A Sociological Study of a Spanish Town* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 314–16. (2) The materialist and non-materialist dimensions of ‘honour’ are often related, see Elvin Hatch, “Theories of Social Honor,” *AA* 91 NS (1989): 341–353; John Davies, *People of the Mediterranean: An essay in comparative social anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), especially 90–92; Anton Blok, “Rams and Billy Goats: A Key to the Mediterranean Code of Honour,” *Man* NS 16 (1981): 427–40; Peter Schneider, “Honor and Conflict in a Sicilian Town,” *AQ* 42 (1969): 130–54; Jane Schneider, “On Violence and Virgins: Honor, Shame, and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies,” *Ethnology* 10 (1971): 1–24; Alice Schlegel, “Status, Property, and the Value on Virginity,” *AE* 18 (1991): 719–34. (3) ‘Limited good’ is an insufficient theoretical justification of agonistic competition for honour; ‘honour based’ antagonism does *sometimes* occur, see George Foster, “Peasant Society and the Image of Limited

Defence of honour is something that a man must prosecute himself, since appeal to a higher authority would be a sign of weakness. Julian Pitt-Rivers notes that the “ultimate vindication of honour lies in physical violence”.⁷⁰ While the *act* of fighting is deprecated as signifying lack of self control the *potential* for violence is frequently communicated, because, as in the Spanish bullfight, it is important that a man “confront, withstand and direct the physical force of his opponent”.⁷¹ The extreme form of violence is killing another. Campbell contends that “[a]lthough aimless violence is dishonourable there is no missing the pleasure it gives when a man is forced to kill; nor the prestige which it brings him. For there is no more conclusive way of showing that

Good,” *AA NS* 167 (1965): 293–315; idem, “A Second Look at Limited Good.” *AQ* 45 (1972): 57–4; idem, “Reply,” *Curr Anthropol* 17 (1976): 710–13; idem, “Foster’s Reply to Kaplan, Saler, and Bennett,” *AA* 68 (1966): 210–14; David Kaplan and Benson Saler, “Foster’s ‘Image of Limited Good’: An Example of Anthropological Explanation,” *AA* 68 (1966): 202–206; Frans Schryer, “A Reinterpretation of Treasure Tales and the Image of Limited Good,” *Curr Anthropol* 17 (1976): 708–10; John Kennedy, “Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good: A Critique,” *AA* 68 (1966): 1212–25; James Gregory, “Image of Limited Good, or Expectation of Reciprocity?,” *CA* 16 (1975): 73–84; Steven Piker, “‘The Image of Limited Good’: Comments on an Exercise in Description and Interpretation,” *AA* 68 (1966): 1202–11; Juliet du Boulay and Rory Williams, “Amoral Familism and the Image of Limited Good: A Critique from a European Perspective,” *AQ* 60 (1987): 12–24; James Acheson, “Limited Good or Limited Goods? Response to Economic Opportunity in a Tarascan Pueblo,” *AA NS* 74 (1972): 1152–69. (4) The gendering of honour (and shame) is problematic since it is a moral good for both sexes; whether it is the most important good at any particular moment is an empirical question, see John Peristiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Introduction,” *Honor and grace in Anthropology* (ed. J. G. Peristiany and J. Pitt-Rivers; Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 1–17; Wikan, “Contestable Pair”; Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 110–112; du Boulay, *Portrait*, 104–5; Amanda Weidman, “Beyond Honor and Shame: Performing Gender in the Mediterranean,” *AQ* 76 (2003): 519–30; Alison Lever, “Honour as a Red Herring,” *CA* 6 (1986): 86–106. (5) Honour precedence is distinct from honour virtue; maintaining the appearance of attaining *both* may be important, see David Gilmore, “Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area,” *ARA* 11 (1982): 175–205, especially 191; idem, “Honor, Honesty, Shame: Male Status in Contemporary Andalusia,” in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (ed. D. D. Gilmore; AAASP 22; Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 90–103, especially 92; Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers, “Introduction,” 4–5; Lison-Tolosana, *Belmonte*, 336–37; Charles Stewart, “Honour and sanctity: two levels of ideology in Greece.” *SA* 2 (1994): 205–28; Michael Meeker, “Meaning and Society in the near East: Examples from the Black Sea Turks and the Levantine Arabs (I),” *IJMES* 7 (1976): 243–70, especially 261–64; Louise Lawrence, “‘For truly, I tell you, they have received their reward’ (Matt 6:2): Investigating Honor Precedence and Honor Virtue,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 687–702. (6) The key interpretative questions concern the *uses* of honour (and shame), which are often *felt*, see Wikan, *Managing*, 66; Christian Giordano, “Mediterranean Honour Reconsidered: Anthropological Fiction or Actual Action Strategy?,” *AJEC* 10 (2001): 39–58, especially 55; Mark Jamieson, “It’s Shame That Makes Men and Women Enemies: The Politics of Intimacy among the Miskitu of Kakabila,” *JRAI NS* 6 (2000): 311–24; Roger Just, “On the ontological status of honour,” in *An anthropology of indirect communication* (ed. J. Hendry and C. W. Watson; London / New York: Routledge, 2001), 34–50; Rosemary Coombe, “Barren Ground: Re-Conceiving Honour and Shame in the Field of Mediterranean Ethnography,” *Anthropologica* 32 (1990): 221–38.

⁷⁰ Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Honour and social status,” in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (ed. J. G. Peristiany; London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 19–77, quote 29.

⁷¹ Cf. Garry Marvin, “Honour, Integrity and the Problem of Violence in the Spanish Bullfight,” in *The Anthropology of Violence* (ed. D. Riches; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 118–35, quote 127. Marvin contends that the bull is in a similar structural position as other males and that the “fact that one of the contestants is an animal allows for the incorporation of acts of violence which would be intolerable in a contest between men”, “Spanish Bullfight,” 129. It is the matador’s performance rather than the death of the animal that is the focus of attention.

you are stronger than by taking away the other man's life.”⁷² Gilsenan, however, presents a more nuanced picture of the consequences of murder and the very long-term difficulties it brings in its wake. In some cases status is gained. In others the killer may be lauded for a time, perhaps because the murder was almost akin to an initiation rite into manhood, but then becomes increasingly sidelined. By virtue of having shed blood he becomes dangerous to others. Most obviously, he and his family are now a potential target for retaliation. But the killer, having stepped outside the normal means of defending honour at a less definitive level of violence, is also considered less predictable and controllable by his own family. In Gilsenan's narrative this frequently leads to social marginalisation and an exclusion of the individual from the demands of the honour code, in particular the demand for kin to respond to a slight to his honour, or even his killing, with violence.

The avoidance of violence is an important theme in anthropological studies of honour, although often overlooked by biblical scholars. That is, the application of violent measures *and* the avoidance of violence are *both* properly considered as part of the honour code.⁷³ This ambiguity means that ‘challenge-riposte’ is not a mechanistic scheme that can be used to interpret all practice; attention must be paid to individual agency. At a fundamental level the reason for avoidance is that there are multiple cultural goods—honour is *not* the only desirable object of existence; life itself is another, for example—and these goods frequently conflict. But even at the level of the honour code the avoidance of violence is a sign of honourable self control, and a desire to present oneself appropriately is a curb upon violent excess.⁷⁴ Instead, alternative strategies, for example, joking and other ostensibly positive social activities, are laced with an undercurrent of competition.⁷⁵ This antagonism occurs between rivals, which points to another key restraint upon violence: it is opponents who are the audience for displays of honour as affirmations of self identity. “[S]ince social prestige requires the favourable response of the community to a man's qualities and actions after these have been evaluated in terms of the accepted system of values, it depends overwhelmingly on

⁷² J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1964), 318.

⁷³ Cf. Michael Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 76.

⁷⁴ E. C. Banfield labels this ‘vanity’, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958), 137. Abstaining from violence can also allow the stronger side to demonstrate moral superiority, cf. Herzfeld, *Looking Glass*, 159.

⁷⁵ Cf. Gilsenan, *Lords*, 206–30.

the opinions of *enemies*".⁷⁶ According to Campbell, there is a symbiotic relationship with enemies in all areas of life.

The position [any family] is able to occupy in public life, the quality of the marriage alliances it establishes, depend entirely on its social prestige, that is, they depend on the favourable response of enemies; or more accurately, on the inability of enemies effectively to denigrate a family's reputation.⁷⁷

In his ethnography Campbell observes that competitive behaviour such as reciprocal trespass for grazing sheep is preferred to outright violence. Thus "in grazing disputes shepherds are careful to fight with weapons which may cause unpleasant wounds but are unlikely to kill. Wanton murders are discouraged through removal of the killer by imprisonment, voluntary exile, or vengeance".⁷⁸

Gilsenan also observes that individuals' violent acts are often part of wider competition for control. So a powerful *bey* may oblige his client *aghás* and *fellahín* to violate others' property or persons as part of his claim to honour and power. And, of course, other *bey*s may respond not by direct personal retaliation but by ordering their clients to perpetrate violent acts. The ability to order and control violence by others is a sign of high social status. In 1 Samuel 19, the fact that Saul sends messengers is significant. He is king and he acts accordingly—as another biblical text said he would—ordering others to execute violent acts on his behalf, not for their own ends but those of their patron.⁷⁹

All these sorts of violence are 'democratic' in that they are understood by people as part of the flow of ordinary practice. Nihilistic violence, on the other hand, is unpredictable: it does not conform to established patterns of violent behaviour so disturbs social relations by disorientating others. In general, it is not tolerated by authority figures when practiced by inferiors, for it threatens the established order in which they have a vested interest. Thus when individuals engage in non-democratic nihilistic violence it is necessarily conceived as extraordinary praxis, that is, based upon a culturally alternative logic not shared by others. Whilst nihilistic violence is usually

⁷⁶ Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, 264. My emphasis.

⁷⁷ Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, 265.

⁷⁸ Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, 264.

⁷⁹ Cf. 1 Samuel 8.11–16; 25.5. On the matter of recruitment for warfare see the summary of models in Mario Aguilar, "Maccabees—Symbolic Wars and Age Sets," in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in its Social Context* (ed. Philip Esler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 240–54.

perceived as (undesirable) extraordinary praxis, if it is executed by the *very* powerful or old it *can* be construed as intentional action. This is because by engaging in unpredictable violence they affirm their personal transcendence of the ordinary code, which is acceptable because their negation of democratic violence affirms their ability to impose accepted norms upon others. For this reason it is only those who are clearly superior because of age or acquired status that are allowed to act thus: pretension to this status by those who are perceived as still needing to compete for honour and power will receive a rapid riposte.⁸⁰

5.2.3 Understanding David as ‘My enemy’

It is now possible to consider Saul’s actions towards David as his enemy. I reiterate that I do not seek an essentialist understanding of ‘biblical culture’ with respect to enemies, for the plurality of social and moral goods, and the complex, sometimes contradictory and contested, nature of social life militates against such homogenising conceptions. For this reason I have followed Aguilar’s injunction to consider the context of particular interpretations, that is, wider anthropological work relating to enemies and violence.⁸¹ Instead of seeking confirmation of a particular model of violent acts I use the resources discussed above to suggest new interpretations of 1 Samuel 19.10–18a.

According to 1 Samuel Saul does not always consider David as his enemy. At first unknown,⁸² David is conscripted into Saul’s service where he enjoys notable success, eventually being appointed leader of the fighting men.⁸³ His loyalty to Saul is

⁸⁰ James Watson posits another reason for accepting extreme violence. If aggression is both a fact of sociality and key attribute of manhood then the demonstration of violence by the very powerful without the constraints felt by others can mean that they are more fully men than others. Referring to the violent Tairora despot, Matoto, Watson observes that he “is a fuller embodiment of the emphases of the male cult than most apprentices can ever become. Hence he is logically a *better* man. He is no bizarre phenomenon outside the system, but fulfils in unusual degree the teachings and exhortations given to Tairora youths”, “Tairora: the politics of despotism in a small society,” in *Politics in New Guinea* (ed. R. Berndt and P. Lawrence; Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1971), 224–75, quote 268; cited Harrison, *Mask*, 24. Emphasis original.

⁸¹ Cf. Aguilar, “Changing models,” 310.

⁸² 1 Sam 17.58. The author probably wishes to make a theological point, cf. 1 Sam 2.7–8.

⁸³ 1 Sam 18.2, 5. LXX^B omits 17.55–18.6a, cf. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 303–305; Driver, *Notes*, 149–51; although remnants of 18.4–5 have been identified at Qumran, DJD 17.80. 1 Sam 17.1–18.5 has appeared to many critics “impossible” (Driver, *Notes*, 149) to harmonise with 1 Sam 16.14–23, even if one opts exclusively for LXX^B (which omits 1 Sam 17.12–31, 41, 50, 55–18.5), cf. 1 Sam 17.33, 38–39 with 1 Sam 16.18, 21. Modern literary approaches have suggested a way of reconciling these chronological difficulties by conceiving these chapters as “a binocular vision by montage” Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 203; for the original idea see Alter, *Art*, 147–54. That is, the various sources are presented a-chronically in order to offer various perspectives upon the important event of David’s introduction to Saul’s court. I am sympathetic to the literary resolutions of this problem; in any case I

tested and proven, and ‘all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved’.⁸⁴ David is portrayed as an individual properly incorporated into Saul’s service, someone who is personally powerful yet in a client relationship with the king. Despite this rosy picture the text alludes to friction between the two men from the very beginning.⁸⁵ Although there is no suggestion that the victory parade upon returning from killing Goliath was anything other than a celebration, Saul takes umbrage at the women’s exuberant singing of ‘Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten thousands’.⁸⁶ Saul perceives a slight to his honour, which leads him to eye, *צָיוֹן*, David suspiciously from that day on.⁸⁷ No other motive than jealousy and fear for his throne is provided for Saul’s anxiety.⁸⁸ Within the narrative he has known himself to have been rejected as king by God since chapter 15, but is unaware of his replacement’s identity. Fokkelman proposes that Saul has been tormented by continually looking around for his rival.

He has now reached the stage where he identifies him as David, and that is correct despite the fact that he reaches this interpretation via false contact with the poem. This moment is a milestone to Saul’s process: on the one hand it denotes the start of a drastic reduction of tormenting uncertainty...on the other hand the identification gives his jealous aggression which has concentrated all the time without finding a way out, an object at which to direct itself.⁸⁹

Thus the following narrative details an attempt to place David closer to the firing line by demoting him to commander and enticing him to take extreme risks by offering his daughter’s hand in marriage.⁹⁰ At this time Saul seeks to prejudice David alone and

wish to affirm that David is, at different times, both Saul’s friend and enemy. It is the construction of each status that is important for my interpretation.

⁸⁴ 1 Sam 18.5.

⁸⁵ 1 Sam 18.6 dates the following narrative to ‘when David returned from killing the Philistine’. Attempts to solve the chronological difficulties by supposing אֶת־הַפְלִשְׁתִּי is a general reference lack textual support in Samuel: אֶת־הַפְלִשְׁתִּי always refers to Goliath; פְלִשְׁתִּים are Philistines generally.

⁸⁶ 1 Sam 18.7–8. Stanley Gevirtz notes that the parallelism of נָאָל and רַבָּבָה is not antithetical. He maintains it is very unlikely the welcoming party of women should insult Saul on his return from victory, concluding the song is lavish praise of both Saul and David, see *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), 24. The interpretation of their eulogy as an insult is thus Saul’s alone. For a detailed analysis of the pericope and Saul’s ‘paranoia’ see Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 210–21.

⁸⁷ 1 Sam 18.9. Following the *Qere*; for discussion see Driver who argues וַיַּחֲדַד with participle “expresses at once origin and continuance”, *Notes*, 151–52; cf. Gen 4.17; 21.20; Judg 16.21; 2 Kgs 15.5, something made explicit by the phrase מִנְיָמָם הַחֲוֹא וְחַלְאָה. Philip Esler thinks the ‘eying’ is related to the evil eye, see “The Madness of Saul: A Cultural Reading of 1 Samuel 8–31,” in *Biblical Studies / Cultural Studies* (JSOTSup 266; ed. J. C. Exum and S. D. Moore; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 220–62, especially 240.

⁸⁸ Cf. 1 Sam 18.8.

⁸⁹ Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 221.

⁹⁰ This interpretation of 1 Sam 18.17–27 is well defended by David Clines, “Michal Observed: An

covertly, perhaps because of the people's adulation.⁹¹

The text lends support to the view that Saul appreciated multiple cultural goods, not just the death of a personal foe. Indeed, these are the basis for Jonathan's petition in 1 Samuel 19.4–5. He does not argue that Saul acts unreasonably if David is his enemy, but offers a two pronged argument: that David has not harmed Saul, and that David has been useful. He contends kings need competent military commanders, and should maintain order by reciprocating respect and service. In other words, Jonathan argues for democratic violence and the tangible good of military prowess. Saul recognises the logic of Jonathan's petition, of the need for these cultural goods even though they competed with his desire to eliminate someone he considered as a competitor for the throne, and restores David to court.⁹²

I noted above that the existence of multiple cultural goods means that 'the other', the differentiated individual or group, is a social construct, not an ontological description. Saul constructs David as 'the other' when he speaks 'with his son Jonathan and with all his servants about killing David'.⁹³ The point is that as the king's enemy David was deserving of death, regardless of whether Saul practices democratic or nihilistic violence.⁹⁴ There are two ways in which the inscription of David's otherness occurs in 1 Samuel 19.10–18a. First, Saul sends messengers to corral David in his house. Although a temporary location, David's 'otherness' is visible as one hemmed in by the king's forces and subject to his majesty's pleasure. Second, Saul's purpose throughout is the ultimate inscription of power upon a body: David's death. This observation enables us to shed new light on the question of why Saul *wanted* to wait until the morning in order to kill David. At a literary level the delay both creates tension—what *will* happen in the morning?—and facilitates to the author the time his characters need to make the subsequent moves in the story. But I suggest that this is not a forced device. To date those commentators who speculate upon this 'delay' have made two suggestions. First, Bressen argues "per gli antichi Semiti la notte era sacra: non era

Introduction to Reading Her Story," in *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation* (JSOTSup 119; ed. D. J. A. Clines and T. C. Eskenazi; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 24–63, especially 27–32.

⁹¹ Cf. 1 Sam 18.16, 30.

⁹² 1 Sam 19.7.

⁹³ 1 Sam 19.1.

⁹⁴ Cf. 1 Sam 18.29; 19.1.

lecito uccider uno nel sonno”.⁹⁵ However, the law allowing the killing of nocturnal thieves indicates that although it may not have been licit, the practice of breaking and entering certainly occurred, and darkness would have been no impediment to Saul’s thugs.⁹⁶ Second, Eerdman maintains that “[w]e may guess that only the fear of alarming the town, and of rousing the populace to rescue their favourite hero, prevented him from directing them to break into the house and slay David there”.⁹⁷ But this does not solve the problem, for presumably ‘rescue of their favourite hero’ could be accomplished even more easily by daylight.

The supposition of these exegetes is that Saul’s action is an aberration: he has become a ‘brazen murderer’ or a ‘mad king’. They assume that the ‘correct’ moral behaviour is that sanctioned by the modern state, with its emphasis upon due process and ‘impartiality’. I propose, however, that this supposition is unlikely and that Saul’s action can be explained as culturally expected—not for everyone but certainly for a powerful leader. I noted above that rulers exercise nihilistic violence in order to demonstrate their superiority over others: as the guardians of order they show that they can do as they please. Indeed, it is their ability to do so that reveals they are able to impose order on others. So Gilsonan notes that “Abboud fulfilled the ‘character’ of the ‘great *bey*’, of the ‘one who goes to excess’ and becomes the supreme figure of order in negating the order through which others imagine existence”.⁹⁸ This excess can be wanton—Abboud smashes a man’s head against a wall ‘for nothing’, and shoots a boy to test his new rifle—or by ignoring the ‘rules’ of honour and shame. In the biblical narrative, for example, the latter occurs when Saul is magnanimous to ‘the worthless fellows’ who initially refused to support him.⁹⁹ This was only possible because overwhelming violence was a potential option. Whilst modern Westerners tend to read this as ‘the right thing to do’, ‘the people’ were expressing the cultural expectation of vengeance upon those who attempt to dishonour a powerful figure. In fact, the appeal to

⁹⁵ Bressan, *Samuele*, 317. Cf. Smith, *Samuel*, 179: “to enter the house of another in the night is contrary to oriental morals”. The Philistines waited until morning to attack and kill Samson, Judg 16.2.

⁹⁶ Note that killing at night is also nowhere condemned: Jael probably kills Sisera during the hours of darkness Judg 4.21. Night and day have received particular attention in relation to Gen 18–19, see below.

⁹⁷ Eerdman, *Samuel*, 251, citing Kitto, a 19th century source unavailable to me; cf. Kirkpatrick, *Samuel*, 171, for the same quote. As an aside Eerdman also suggests that the fear of harming Michal could have been a motive.

⁹⁸ Gilsonan, *Lords*, 35.

⁹⁹ 1 Sam 10.27; 11.12–13. On בְּנֵי בְּלִיעָל see Burnside, *Signs*, 55–58; Fokkelman, *Reading*, 151–53. Saul’s was also a useful political move: ruthless leaders always have uses for ‘worthless fellows’.

‘the right thing’ is an appeal beyond the person of the king. That God and not the monarch is the ultimate authority is a constant Old Testament theme precisely because it was counter-cultural.¹⁰⁰ When visible authority resides in a person and not a bureaucratic state, however, that individual must continually reassert his right to exercise power. Michael Foucault addresses this issue in *Discipline and Punish* by contrasting medieval and modern economies of power with reference to penal styles. He argues 19th century prison discipline aimed to control individuals, objectifying and observing their ‘docile bodies’.¹⁰¹ In monarchical law, however, both process and punishment was simultaneously a restoration of order *and* a reaffirmation of the regal claim *to* order. Thus a (perceived) crime against the monarch was defiance towards sovereignty itself, requiring a kingly response to the personal affront in the form of revenge. Furthermore, “[i]ts aim is not so much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, at its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength”.¹⁰² Foucault makes much of the spectacle of torture and public execution:

punishment is a ceremonial of sovereignty; it uses the ritual marks of the vengeance that it applies to the body of the condemned man; and it deploys before the eyes of the spectators an effect of terror as intense as it is discontinuous, irregular and always above its own laws, the physical presence of the sovereign and of his power.¹⁰³

I do not suggest that ancient Israelite monarchy shared the baroque execution practices of medieval Europe. Nevertheless, it is possible to relativize the assumption that Saul’s actions in seeking to detain David in his house at night, yet kill him ‘in the morning’, that is, *publicly*, were somehow strangely inexplicable. The point of David’s house arrest was to demonstrate that Saul dominated his enemy: he was *able* to restrict his movements for as long as he pleased. His death, the ultimate inscription of regal power upon the body of a subject, would have proclaimed the same thing. That no reason for

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., the deuteromomic injunctions about the king Deut 17.14–20. Regarding the temptation to appoint a foreign king, without acquired loyalties to local people, see Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (2nd ed; London / New York: Tauris, 2001), 175–90.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. A. Sheridan: London: Penguin, 1977), 188: “Discipline, however, had its own type of ceremony...the review, the ‘parade’, an ostentatious form of the examination. In it the ‘subjects’ were presented as ‘objects’ to the observation of a power that was manifested only by its gaze”.

¹⁰² Foucault, *Discipline*, 48–49. On the basis of works like Gilsenan’s I think it is unnecessary to speculate that the transgression need always be against ‘law’. Any violation of the king’s will would in principle be adequate, although conflicting demands upon him, e.g. the need for the transgressor’s services against the violation of his desires, will mean the king will not always burn everyone who crosses him at the stake.

¹⁰³ Foucault, *Discipline*, 130.

Saul's enmity towards David is given in the text is, of course, significant—the books of Samuel are an apology for David's kingship¹⁰⁴—but besides the point for ancient implied readers with respect to Saul's violence. Gilsenan and Foucault help us see that whilst Saul's behaviour could have been erratic in that David had *not* done anything wrong, it could still have been, and perceived to have been, typical for kings and other very senior authority figures in a context where the modern state apparatus of violence did not exist.¹⁰⁵ In this case Saul's actions could be considered as acceptable practice for a king.

The final aspect of Saul's inscription of his power upon his subjects is the performative obligations imposed upon his messengers to act violently in specific situations. He commands them to go and watch David's house: they obey. He sends them to fetch David: they go. He resends them to check Michal's story that David is ill: they do so.¹⁰⁶ At each point Saul reasserts his power to order. The messengers' lack of success will be discussed later, but it is not significant with respect to the performative aspect of Saul's inscription of his authority upon the *messengers*. This aids translation of לְהַמֵּתוּ in verse 15, which many authorities render 'so I can kill him'.¹⁰⁷ A more literal translation is 'in order to kill him',¹⁰⁸ but this begs the question as to *who* would do so. It is possible to suppose that Saul wished to slaughter David personally, much as Samuel executed Agag.¹⁰⁹ There are two reasons, however, for thinking the messengers were to be responsible for the killing. First, the identical verb, with the messengers as the implied subjects, is found in verse 11. Second, the anthropology of violence and in particular the performative aspect of 'corrective' violence suggests it would have only been a failure of the messengers, that is an inability of Saul to oblige them to act as he wished, that could have induced Saul to kill David directly.¹¹⁰ A more exemplary form

¹⁰⁴ Kyle McCarter, "The Apology of David," *JBL* 99 (1980): 489–504.

¹⁰⁵ Here I do not fall into the evolutionary trap of defining the past with reference to the *absence* of some facet of modern society, simply couch my argument in terms that contrast the suppositions of some exegetes with my contention; cf. Herzfeld, *Anthropology*, 118.

¹⁰⁶ See below for other instances of שָׁלֹחַ indicating royal power.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Klein, de Vaux, Smith, Hertzberg, NRSV, NIV.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 267; David Alter, *The David Story: A translation with commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 120; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 324, has 'so that he can be put to death'.

¹⁰⁹ 1 Sam 15.33.

¹¹⁰ An interesting comparison can be made with Judg 8.20–22, where Jether's reluctance to kill Zebah and Zalmunna obliges Gideon to kill them himself. In these verses the author portrays Gideon as a powerful figure accustomed to oblige others to do his bidding, then questions the reality of this authority by having his son prevaricate. This failure of Jether and Gideon is excused כִּי יִרְאָכִי

of violence, one that inscribed Saul's authority in the messengers themselves, would have been to command them to kill David in Saul's presence. This is what seems to be envisaged in verse 15.

Of course, Saul also intends that David should be affected by these acts of violence. That he is not, beyond being forced to escape, is thanks to Michal, who does not acquiesce to Saul's attempt to impose regal power, but urges David to flee. At the end of the scene when confronted by Saul she excuses her actions with the words **דָּוֹאָ אָמַר אֶלְיָה שְׁלַחֲנִי לְמֵה אָמִיתָךְ**. They constitute Michal's reply to Saul's aggrieved query **לְמֵה בְּכָה רְמִיתָנִי וְתִשְׁלַחְנִי אֶת־אִיבִּי**, and, as readers are aware, are no less a creative invention than the *teraphim* dummy.¹¹¹ I highlight two elements of Michal's excuse. First, in the Masoretic tradition Michal underscores the fact that two moral agents are acting and that David's position is distinct from hers: '*he* said, *to me*'.¹¹² She thus distinguishes and separates herself from her husband by emphasising the individual identity of them both. Second, Michal claims that David threatened her, forcing her to facilitate his escape, with the words 'Why should I kill you?'. Most commentators reduce the significance of Michal's utterance to a last ditch attempt at saving her own skin. Thus Campbell argues that the "exchange with Saul is important less for Michal's lame excuse than for Saul's characterization of David as 'my enemy' ".¹¹³ In fact, Michal's words carry more freight, and are successful—Saul does not punish Michal¹¹⁴—precisely because of what they signify. We have seen that

עֲזָבָנוּ גַּעַד. Then, however, the writer has the kings of Midian further question Gideon's authority by challenging him to kill them himself—**כִּי קָאִישׁ גַּבּוּרָתוֹ**—to demonstrate that he, too, is not simply a lad, but a 'real man'. The resolution, Gideon's execution of his adversaries, reconfirms his authority, something reiterated by the Israelites inviting him to rule over them in the next verse. In general, the presentation of Saul as failing to conform to patterns of hegemonic masculinity is one way in which the author undermines his voice, see Mark George, "Constructing Identity in 1 Samuel 17," *Biblia* 7 (1999): 389–412; Herzfeld, *Poetics of Manhood*, 19; R. W. Connell and James Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *GS* 19 (2005): 829–59; David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1990); Eduardo Archetti, *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999); Annie George, "Reinventing Honorable Masculinity: Discourses from a Working-Class Indian Community," *MM* 9 (2006): 35–52; Joanna Overing, "Styles of Manhood: an Amazonian contrast in tranquillity and violence," in *Societies at Peace: Anthropological Perspectives* (ed. S. Howell and R. Willis; London: Routledge, 1989), 79–99.

¹¹¹ This despite Edelman's opinion that Michal's words introduce the possibility that David *did* take the initiative; the *text* says that Michal was the active agent, and a reading of *the text* must therefore contrast the two statements and assume that the second is a lie. See Diana Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (JSOTSup 121; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1991), 148.

¹¹² LXX^B omits 'to me', cf. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 325; Klein, *I Samuel*, 193.

¹¹³ Campbell, *Samuel*, 205.

¹¹⁴ Although he does inscribe his power in her body by giving her to another husband, Paltiel, cf. 1 Sam 25.44. This helps explain *David's* claim for her restitution in 2 Sam 3.13–14, which is also an

biblical narratives present the killing of enemies as normal. That is what Saul has been attempting to effect throughout the passage. The reason for his actions is disclosed by Saul himself in his accusing question to Michal in the first half of the verse: David is ‘my enemy’. By having David threaten to kill her, therefore, Michal takes up Saul’s perspective and presents him not only as a violent husband but, much more importantly, as *her enemy*. That is, Michal construes herself as having been construed by David as an opponent, and herself as on Saul’s side. For the implied readers, Saul could be understood to interpret the fact David did not kill her but sought to avoid violence not as sage discretion but a sign of weakness. That is why he attempts to press home his advantage in the following verses, pursuing David to Naioth and beyond.

Michal’s words suggest that she is in a similar position to Saul. They invite him to believe, despite doubts about her loyalty to him in the matter of the *teraphim*, that she remains a faithful daughter. This excuse often sounds hollow to modern Western readers who assume that Michal’s natural loyalty would have been to her husband and that Saul was demanding the unreasonable, *viz.* his daughter’s prioritisation of loyalty to him over that towards her spouse. Fokkelman comments that Saul “maintained the illusion that the bond of blood would be the decisive factor for her, and not the bond of marriage”. That Saul appears to accept her explanation, however, indicates implied readers could have been expected to view her excuse as entirely plausible. At the same time it means Michal’s actions were problematic not just in terms of obedience to the monarch but also in the context of the family. In order to justify such an interpretation I now consider their relationship in more detail.

5.3 FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Michal is introduced to readers in a list of Saul’s relations in 1 Samuel 14.49,¹¹⁵ but her ‘voice’ is heard for the first time four chapters later when the narrator reports that ‘Saul’s daughter Michal loved David’.¹¹⁶ Michal’s textual relationships are almost entirely limited to those with her father and (future) husband.¹¹⁷ The task of this section

inscription of royal power in Paltiel himself and, performatively, in Abner and Ishbaal. See also Zafira Ben-Barak, “The Legal Background to the Restoration of Michal to David,” in *Studies in the Historical Books* (VTSup 30; ed. J. A. Emerton; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 15–29.

¹¹⁵ MT and 4QSam^a; LXX reads Μελχολ, cf. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 254.

¹¹⁶ 1 Sam 18.20.

¹¹⁷ Or their proxies, cf. 1 Sam 18.20–28; 19.11–17; 25.44; 2 Sam 3.13–16; 6.16–23.

is to examine how Michal might have been expected to behave as Saul's daughter and David's wife.

5.3.1 Michal: Saul's Daughter / David's Wife

In the books of Samuel being given or taken as a bride is a daughter's most important social role.¹¹⁸ Perhaps the most obvious difference between modern Western marriages and those described in the Old Testament is that the latter are arranged by fathers or their representatives.¹¹⁹ Although love may influence a parent's decision, as it does when Michal is the object of Saul's matrimonial strategies,¹²⁰ the institution of marriage fundamentally involved the transfer of rights between families. The bridegroom's family paid the 'bride-price' to her relations, whilst the bride and the right to any children of the union went in the opposite direction.¹²¹ A bride-price of several year's wages may have been distributed among kin, perhaps explaining why Rebekah's brother negotiated eagerly with Eliezer.¹²² The bride herself could receive a portion of the bride-price as dowry. "Only the stingy father keeps all the bride price for himself and uses it for his own purposes—'eats it up,' as both the modern Arabic and Biblical phrases (Gen. 31:15) have it".¹²³ The dowry comprised moveable possessions, possibly including slave girls,¹²⁴ and remained the property of wives not the husband.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ 1 Sam 17.25; 18.17, 19, 27; 1 Sam 25.44. Other roles include being perfumers, cooks, bakers (1 Sam 8.13), and a prized prisoner of war (1 Sam 30.3, 6; rescued 1 Sam 30.19), mourning the death of her father (2 Sam 1.24), celebrating military victories (2 Sam 1.20), and of being a mother in a genealogy in order to specify a relationship between men (1 Sam 14.49–50; 2 Sam 17.25; 21.8. The identity of a woman is sometimes established in relation to her male relatives, e.g. 2 Sam 3.3, 7; 21.10–11; and, especially, 'Saul's daughter Michal' 2 Sam 3.13; 2 Sam 6.16, 20, 23; 2 Sam 11.3).

¹¹⁹ E.g., Gen 26, cf. Deut 7.2–3. Raphael Patai asserts: "Only the disobedient son, the recalcitrant and rebellious one, would marry a woman of his own choice without the prior consent of his father", *Family, Love and the Bible* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1960), 44, citing Gen 26.34–35 where Esau's taking of Judith and Basemath 'makes life bitter' for Isaac and Rebekah.

¹²⁰ See also Gen 29.20; 34.3; Judg 14.1–3; the further examples of David and Bathsheba, and Adonijah and Abishag proposed by Patai, *Family*, 42, are debatable. That the woman had the right of refusal may be indicated in Gen 29.51, 57–58.

¹²¹ See Robin Wakely, "מִתְבָּרֵךְ," *NIDOTTE* 2.859–63. Wright demonstrates that neither the bride nor children were 'property', *God's People*, 183–238. Instead, the issue concerns the group with which they will live, and thus the family that will benefit from their presence.

¹²² So Patai, *Family*, 54; cf. Gen 24.29, 31–50, 55.

¹²³ Patai, *Family*, 54. For detailed discussion of dowry see Raymond Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law* (JSOTSup 113; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 142–64.

¹²⁴ Cf. Gen 29.24, 29.

¹²⁵ See Jonathan Paradise, "A Daughter and her Father's Property at Nuzi," *JCS* 32 (1980): 189–207. Although there is no biblical evidence of the practice, note Patai's contention that the bride price is not normally paid in full, so that about a third remains to be paid upon divorce, a powerful disincentive to overly precipitous action, cf. *Family*, 52.

There are several indications that the preferred Old Testament marriage is endogamous to the kin group,¹²⁶ although leaders often marry exogamously.¹²⁷ The advantage of endogamous marriage is patrimonial cohesion,¹²⁸ whilst exogamous alliances facilitate political cooperation between kin groups, tribes or nations. Thus, affirms Deist, the “choice of marriage partners depends, among other things, on whether, given the environment and economic system, intra- or inter- group relations are more important for a group’s survival”.¹²⁹ The books of Samuel contain data about Saul and David’s families’ marriages only (see Appendix D). Sometimes details are scanty, for example, readers know only that Saul’s wife Ahinoam was daughter of Ahimaaz, and his concubine, Rizpah, daughter of Aiah.¹³⁰ Other passages provide clues that he married his daughters to notables of strategic towns within Gibeah’s sphere of influence. The father of Merab’s husband, Adriel, was Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim. Barzillai was a local notable, a ‘very wealthy man’.¹³¹ His town was a dependency of Abel Meholah, in Gilead,¹³² and this marriage was designed to cement an alliance with towns to the east of Gibeah.¹³³ David’s marriages also appear to be contracted with political alliances in mind. His first, Ahinoam is from Jezreel, a town to

¹²⁶ Cf. Gen 11.27–29; 28.9; 29; 36.3; 50.23; Ex 6.20; Num 26.59; Chr 2.4–5, 21. For the emotional aspect of the parallel-cousin marriage ideal note 2 Chr 11.20–21: “Rehoboam loved Maacha the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and concubines” (a total of 78 women!). Further examples of romance are listed in Victor Matthews and Don Benjamin, eds. *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250–587 BCE* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 13; *pace* Blenkinsopp, who opines that a whole battery of factors “discouraged emotional warmth and intimacy”, “Family,” 77. On romantic emotion in the Old Testament and its relationship to other values see Lawrence, *Reading*, 131–51; for comparison with other ANE literature see Hennie Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (OS 44. Leiden: Brill, 2003), 73–84.

¹²⁷ Especially from the time of the monarchy, cf. Hermann M. Neumann, “Choosing Brides for the Crown-Prince. Matrimonial Politics in the Davidic Dynasty,” *VT* 56 (2006): 226–38. Exogamous, alliance orientated union is characteristic of ‘גִּנְחָן-type’ marriages, cf. Allen Guenther, “A Typology of Israelite Marriage: Kinship, Socio-Economic, and Religious Factors,” *JSOT* 29 (2005): 387–407, especially 390–96.

¹²⁸ Cf. Num 27.1–11; 36.1–12.

¹²⁹ Deist, *Material Culture*, 239. He argues that the “amount of attention devoted to Jacob’s marriage and his relation to Laban in the patriarchal narratives holds up *this* kind of marriage [mother’s brother’s daughter] as the ideal solution for marriages in ‘Israelite’ society”, *Material Culture*, 246. Emphasis original. Cf. Robert Oden Jr., “Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew: Kinship Studies and the Patriarchal Narratives,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 189–205, especially 198–99.

¹³⁰ 1 Sam 14.50; 2 Sam 3.7.

¹³¹ NRSV; 2 Sam 19.32[33]: אֲיַשׁ גָּדוֹל הַוָּא מֵאָדָ’. On the identity of Barzillai see Baruch Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 84–85.

¹³² Cf. 2 Sam 17.27; 19.32; 21.8. ‘Gilead’ is used as a geographical reference to the (Israelite) Transjordan not simply the Gileadite clan of the tribe of Manasseh, cf. Kenneth Kitchen, “Gilead,” *NBD* 421.

¹³³ 2 Sam 17.27; 19.31–9 record that these territories shifted their loyalties to David. Halpern concludes that David’s war against Israel and the eclipse of Jabesh Gilead, which “vastly enhanced the status of Abel Meholah”, outweighed a marriage alliance with Saul and compensated for the massacre of his grandsons (2 Sam 21), *Secret Demons*, 301–302; for maps see, e.g., Luc Grollenberg, *Atlas de la Bible* (trans. R. Beaupère; Brussels: Elsevier, 1954), 66.

the south of Hebron.¹³⁴ According to the chronology of the text David resided in the Wilderness of Ziph at this time and took advantage of the death of one Nabal, a leading Carmelite farmer, to establish another alliance with his widow, Abigail. It is possible that David's fourth, fifth and sixth wives, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah, also hailed from towns to the south of Hebron. The text describes David settling the families of himself and his men בָּעֵרִי חֶבְרוֹן^{,¹³⁵ obviously extant towns. It is likely that David married the daughters of local notables to strengthen ties with nearby population centres, a strategy that may be inferred in 2 Samuel 3.2–6 where David's wives and their sons are listed followed by the editorial note 'These were born to David in Hebron'.¹³⁶ David's third wife was the daughter of King Talmai of Geshur, a town to the north of Israel on the Golan Heights. Here, David formed an alliance with another king who shared antipathy towards Saulide regional hegemony.}

It appears that residence following marriage was usually patrilocal, although there are biblical examples of residence with the wife's kin.¹³⁷ Von Rad thought there was a discrepancy between patriarchy and יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אָמוֹ in Genesis 2.24.¹³⁸ Those unwilling to postulate, with von Rad, an original 'matriarchal culture' interpret this text as speaking of interpersonal priorities. Wenham, for example, argues that 'leave'

was not meant so much literally as emotionally. In traditional societies, the most important social obligation is to one's parents. "Honor your father and mother" is the first of the commands in the Decalogue regarding obligations to other people. But Genesis is saying that when a man marries, his order of responsibilities changes: though his parent's needs are still important, his wife's needs are even more important. Responsibility for her welfare now must take priority even over care for his parents.¹³⁹

I doubt that this text enjoins such a psychological *volte-face* at marriage. Von Rad

¹³⁴ Josh 15.56. The exact site is unknown, although Kh. Terrama has been accepted by some cf. Grollenberg, *Atlas*, 60; *pace* Melvin Hunt, "Jezreel," *ABD* 3.850.

¹³⁵ See Andersen, *2 Samuel*, 24 for discussion of the phrase and rejection of possible emendations.

¹³⁶ The strengthening of Judean alliances coheres with the placing of this biographical note directly after the comment about war between the houses of David and Saul, and that David gradually gained the upper hand. On the villages around Hebron as a '80%-endogenous' grouping see Lehmann, "Reconstructing," 164–67.

¹³⁷ Cf. Gen 29–30; Judg 8.31; 14; 15.1; 2 Sam 17.25; Ezra 2.61; 1 Chr 2.16–17; 34–35.

¹³⁸ Cf. von Rad, *Genesis*, 82–83.

¹³⁹ Gordon Wenham, "Family in the Pentateuch," in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context* (ed. R. S. Hess and M. D. Carroll R.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17–31, quote 18.

himself notes that it is aetiological, an explanation for the mutual attraction of the sexes, and, in my view, there is no reason to suppose that Genesis 2.24 affirms anything other than that the man leaves his parents' house upon marriage in order to live in another dwelling within the compound of the **בֵּית אָב**.

Very few clues are available as to the social role of wives in the books of Samuel, which restrict themselves to references to 'knowing' or lying with a wife,¹⁴⁰ specifying the relationship of a woman to a man in order to identify the woman,¹⁴¹ and being given to a man as a wife.¹⁴² The regulations in Numbers 30, however, seem to have been conceived for a situation in which the status of wife comes into conflict with that of daughter since the teaching assigns the right to determine the ongoing validity of a woman's vow to *either* her father or husband.¹⁴³ This guidance is surprising if one simply assumes a husband's authority over his wife, and points to the ongoing influence of a father in the life of a married woman. Indeed, a new residence at marriage does not seem to have been the end of a wife's links with her natal kin, and widows or divorcees usually returned to their original **בֵּית אָב**.¹⁴⁴ A view from the husband's perspective is reflected in Samson's objection to telling his wife the secret of his strength. It suggests caginess towards the newcomer, a sign that she was not yet considered a full member of the family.¹⁴⁵

Marriage also has implications for relationship between a woman's father and her husband, his son-in-law. Early anthropological kinship studies focused upon the classification of relatives through kinship terms. Radcliffe-Brown asserts that the

general rule is that the inclusion of two relatives in the same terminological category implies that there is some significant similarity in the customary behaviour due to both of them, or in the social relation in which one stands to each of them.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ 1 Sam 1.19; 2 Sam 11.11.

¹⁴¹ E.g. 'his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas' or 'Saul's wife was Ahinoam'. 1 Sam 1.4; 4.19; 14.50; 19.11; 25.3, 14, 37; 25.44; 2 Sam 3.5, 14; 11.3; 12.9–10, 15, 24; 17.19.

¹⁴² 1 Sam 18.17, 19, 27; 25.39–40, 42; 2 Sam 11.27.

¹⁴³ For the distinction between legal and personal responsibility, and the view that this text does not signify personal oppression of women see Grace Emmerson, "Women in ancient Israel," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 371–94, especially 380–82.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Gen 31.30; 38.11; Lev 22.13; Judg 19.2. Ruth was a *rare* case of a woman cleaving to her husband's family rather than to her own.

¹⁴⁵ Judg 14.16.

¹⁴⁶ Radcliffe-Brown, "Introduction," 9.

In biblical Hebrew a daughter's husband refers to her father with a word that has the same root, **חַתָּן**, as that which the latter employs to address his son-in-law. In other words, the term is used for male relationships of affinity like those of Saul and David.¹⁴⁷ The most likely explanation for their being classificatory kin is their obligation to protect the same woman, and possibly the duty of the father-in-law to protect the son-in-law.¹⁴⁸ If this is the case, both men failed to fulfil the stereotype. In any case I have argued that social structure is an insufficient guide to individuals' actual practice. It is essential, therefore, to examine marriage and its implications in more detail.

5.3.2 Marriage—Anthropological Perspectives

Constructing a universal definition of marriage is problematic. Stone comments that “[e]very society in the world has something we might roughly recognize as ‘marriage.’” But beyond this, little can be said of marriage that holds cross-culturally.”¹⁴⁹ Barnard suggests it is usually considered “the mechanism which provides for the legitimation of children and defines their status in relation to the conjugal family and the wider kin group”.¹⁵⁰ That is, marriage is a rearrangement of social structure, a new relationship between families, not merely individuals, that confers rights and establishes duties.

Stone remarks upon the “basic tension between marriage as a social, political, or economic strategy and marriage as an institution involving individuals in intimate interpersonal relations”.¹⁵¹ Although the emotive element of the union is not normally neglected, different contexts treat it differently. In particular, it may not be the basis for

¹⁴⁷ And thus also indicates brother-in-law, certainly in other Semitic languages and possibly Hebrew, cf. E. Kutsch, “**חַתָּן** *htn*,” *TDOT* 5.270–77, especially 71–72; Robert H. O’Connell “**חַתָּן**,” *NIDOTTE* 2.325–28, especially 326; Deist, *Material Culture*, 246–47.

¹⁴⁸ O’Connell outlines the debate about whether the Hebrew has a semantic connection to the Akkadian *hatānu*, ‘to protect’. Although Kutsch rejected a link some studies adduce Old Testament examples that appear to support it, e.g. S. Rattray, “Marriage Rules, Kinship Terms and Family Structure in the Bible,” *SBLSP* 26 (1987): 537–44.

¹⁴⁹ Linda Stone, *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction* (3rd ed; Boulder: Westview, 2006), 191.

¹⁵⁰ Barnard, “Human Kinship,” 798. Fox notes that the bride price is often conceived as giving the man’s family rights over any children, citing a Bantu proverb: ‘Cattle beget children’ *Kinship and Marriage*, 119. See also Radcliffe-Brown: “Marriage is a social arrangement by which a child is given a legitimate position in the society, determined by parenthood in the social sense”, “Introduction,” 5. For difficulties of this definition in polyandrous societies see Edmund Leach, “Polyandry, inheritance and the definition of marriage,” *Man* 55 (1955): 182–86. On the practice of ghost and woman marriage among the Nuer see Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer*, 29–123.

¹⁵¹ Stone, *Kinship and Gender*, 203.

either the coming together of the couple or of their personal loyalty to each other.¹⁵² In some cases ‘love’ is perceived as a threat to the family’s control of female sexuality. Abu-Lughod argues that among the Egyptian Bedouin the acceptance of love matches “would be to legitimate as a force in social life passion that does not derive from relationships of kinship”.¹⁵³ This does not obliterate pre-matrimonial ‘love’. Instead, the emotion is expressed in ways that do not directly challenge the social *status quo*, such as poetry. The fact that marriages are arranged enhances the authority of the family. Indeed, the girl’s paternal first cousin can be understood to have the ‘right’ to marry her should the wider kin group need to arbitrate in the matter. The existence of such ‘norms’, however, is evidence for a father’s discretion to negotiate with the families of other potential partners. It is this freedom of choice that undermines the use of *categories* in alliance theory. According to Trawick, the exclusion of real people draws attention to the fact that it is the *idea* of affinity rather than affinity itself that is at stake: “the cultural relationship linking this pair of individuals is a matter of the categories they belong to and has nothing to do with the relationship of each...to the other”.¹⁵⁴ For this reason she prefers Bourdieu’s portrayal of marriage practices as relating to, but not determined by, dominant preferences. He recognises that although the preferred match for a man might be his Mother’s Brother’s Daughter (MBD), actual marriage contracts can be very different, whilst being associated with, or even justified by, this scheme.¹⁵⁵ Trawick notes that in South India there is a distinct preference for known non-kin or close cross-cousins over distant cross-cousins in actual marriage practice. She claims this “hints at the way in which the institution of cross-cousin marriage is taken as an affirmation of personal ties, more than just a reproduction of categorical affinities”.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, she continues, if “you marry a stranger that stranger *becomes* your cross-cousin. The kinship system, unlike caste, bends to accommodate the heart’s desire, or seems so to bend, promises the hope of joy, or seems so to promise”.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² The latter may be a function of social identity, for example, ‘husband’, cf. Yanagisako, “Variance,” 21.

¹⁵³ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (2nd ed.; Berkley: University of California Press, 1999), 210.

¹⁵⁴ Trawick, *Notes on Love*, 129.

¹⁵⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline*, 58–71.

¹⁵⁶ Trawick, *Notes on Love*, 151.

¹⁵⁷ Trawick, *Notes on Love*, 151. Emphasis original. She discusses cross-cousin marriage as a romantic ideal.

The father's strategies are illuminated by Martha Roth's observations about age at marriage. She adduces three models,¹⁵⁸ concluding that the typical model of marriage in Neo-Assyria and Neo-Babylonia approximated to that of 'Mediterranean marriage'. Husbands married aged 26–32 whilst new wives were aged 14–20. This means a man would marry at about the same time as he received his patrimony. Roth remarks:

When the new husband begins his economic independence and sets up his own household he will have the economic and social advantages of his association with his father-in-law. The father-in-law in turn can utilize his son-in-law in the economic arena in ways in which his own, younger, sons cannot be utilized.¹⁵⁹

The father's 'use' of his daughter for his chosen purposes can result in a certain conditionality in their relationship. I will discuss the woman's perspective shortly, but regarding the father Campbell's comments are instructive of an extreme possibility: "If the girl's reputation for virtue remains unblemished, she receives his favour; if it does not, she may suffer the ultimate sanction of death at the hands of her own father".¹⁶⁰

Although many matches may conform to the parallel or cross-cousin ideal (where this exists), this is less likely to hold for higher ranking families. Bourdieu states:

In accordance with the general law of exchanges, the higher a group is placed in the social hierarchy, and hence the richer it is in official relationships, the greater the proportion of its work of reproduction that is devoted to reproducing such relationships. It follows that the poor, who have little to spend on solemnities, tend to settle for the ordinary marriages that practical kinship provides for them, whereas the rich, that is, those richest in kinsmen, expect more from – and sacrifice more to – all the more or less institutionalized strategies aimed at maintaining social capital, the most important of which is undoubtedly the extra-ordinary marriage with prestigious 'strangers'.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ See Martha Roth, "Age at Marriage and the Household: A Study of Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Forms," *CSSH* 29 (1987): 715–47, especially 720–22: (1) Western – marriage late, narrow age difference, low proportion of people marrying ever, low proportion of multi-generational households; (2) Eastern – marriage early, narrow age difference, high proportion of people marrying ever, high proportion of multi-generational households; and (3) Mediterranean – marriage late for men, early for women, wide age difference, high proportion of people marrying ever, high proportion of multi-generational households.

¹⁵⁹ Roth, "Age at Marriage," 747. The wife, aged mid-teens, will have a mother aged 40 and father about 50; the husband, aged late 20s, will have mother aged 50 and father either in his 60s or deceased. Roth continues: "Many wives will outlive their husbands, and society will have a high number of widows, relatively young and economically independent. As a widow, such a woman might live in her son's house along with his young bride, just as her own mother-in-law had done."

¹⁶⁰ Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 172.

¹⁶¹ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 180.

The prestige of marriage with a stranger is a function of the difficulty of its arrangement: assessing distant families over a long period is costly, involving ‘payment’ of intermediaries¹⁶² and the expenditure of symbolic capital in the form of marshalling notable kinsmen of affines as guarantors.¹⁶³ Bourdieu claims that prestige marriages are high risk adventures aimed at turning strangers into relatives for political ends. Because of this the dowry is transformed from a means of passing on the daughter’s share of the family’s wealth into a statement of honour.¹⁶⁴ There is a similar inflation of the bride price. Abu-Lughod mentions the case of Fāyga and Rashīd: because both were from “high-status families that were unrelated, the negotiations had been long and the bride-price was high. There was a big wedding.”¹⁶⁵

Residence patterns after marriage can take a number of forms.¹⁶⁶ When residence is patrilocal and descent patrilineal there is a convergence of authority structures. However, even in this situation a new wife inevitably disturbs established familial practices, for marriage gives younger men a domain of their own. Indeed, incoming wives may be catalyst for younger brothers to split from the father’s or elder brother’s household. In such cases the wife is then more independent, nearer the top of the familial hierarchy. Abu-Lughod records wedding songs that recognise these conflicting bonds.

When he shuts the door behind him
he forgets the father who raised him.

He reached your arms stretched on the pillow
forgot his father, and then his grandfather.¹⁶⁷

Abu-Lughod concludes that the “challenge to the hierarchical relationship between providers and dependents, or elders and juniors, is at the heart of Bedouin attitudes about sexuality”.¹⁶⁸ The need to secure descendants conflicts with the desire to maintain

¹⁶² One of Bourdieu’s examples is reimbursement of the priest through gifts at major religious feasts, cf. *Logic*, 182–84.

¹⁶³ Cf. the discussion of the marketplace and marriage contracts in Bourdieu, *Logic*, 114–16.

¹⁶⁴ The dowry, as an indication of the bride’s value to her natal family, may be means of acquiring honour—even a lower status son-in-law can enhance his father-in-law’s status by enlisting his family as clients, cf. Alice Schlegel and Rohn Eloul, “Marriage Transactions: Labor, Property, Status,” AA 90 (1988): 291–309, especially 301.

¹⁶⁵ Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 216. Cf. Bourdieu, *Logic*, 183–84. In a system of MBD preference it is customary to note that wives pass ‘down’ and wealth moves ‘up’, although since exchange is generalised there is overall equality between moieties.

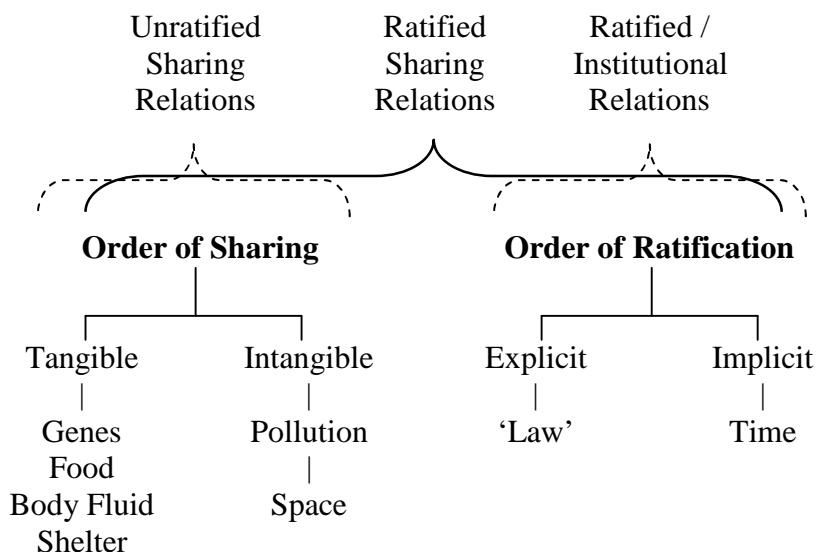
¹⁶⁶ For a typology see Barnard, “Human Kinship,” 795.

¹⁶⁷ Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 147.

¹⁶⁸ Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 147.

control, one reason why senior men arrange but refrain from celebrating young men's weddings. This perception, however, is not the only point of view. Many ethnographies of Mediterranean societies note that a wife is only gradually accepted into her husband's family. Campbell argues that conjugal solidarity on the part of the husband is subordinate to sibling solidarity until the birth of the first child. Nadia Abu-Zahra thinks progression is even more protracted: the "social incorporation of a married woman into her husband's *dār* is a very slow process...only completed when the wife has grown-up sons".¹⁶⁹ Kathey-Lee Galvin's theoretical work shows why this is so.¹⁷⁰ Whilst Schneider argued that the orders of law and nature were uniquely American and thus not cross-culturally valid, Galvin enlarges the categories. On the basis of case studies from places as diverse as Ecuador, Nepal and Malaysia she contends that there are two orders: of sharing and ratification. She further distinguishes between tangible and intangible sharing and explicit and implicit ratification.¹⁷¹ Figure 3 shows how the orders are related.

FIGURE 3 – A Cross-Cultural Model of Relatedness¹⁷²



Employing these insights to elucidate the ethnographic data one can see that a new wife

¹⁶⁹ Nadia Abu-Zahra, "Family and kinship in a Tunisian peasant community," in *Mediterranean Family Structures* (ed. J. G. Peristiany; Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 157–71, quote 165.

¹⁷⁰ Kathey-Lee Galvin, "Schneider Revisited: Sharing and Ratification in the Construction of Kinship," in *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship* (ed. L. Stone; Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 109–24.

¹⁷¹ Ratification "refers to processes that legitimize relationships through social convention (which might be codified in written language and law) rather than the sharing of substances". Galvin, "Schneider Revisited," 121.

¹⁷² Adapted from Galvin, "Schneider Revisited," 119.

is incorporated into her husband's family by explicit ratification (the formal or legal aspect of marriage) and implicit ratification over time. Yet full assimilation also depends upon sharing, for example, food or pollution, and progeny. Until this combination of orders is effected brides remain outsiders, "worms within the apple of a patrilocal domestic group",¹⁷³ and husbands are likely to champion their mothers in preference to spouses.¹⁷⁴

The gradual incorporation of a wife into their husband's family also affects the woman's view of to whom she should naturally be loyal. Rudolph Bell argues that although modern people start with an ancient paterfamilias and work down, this is the opposite to the perception of the family held by the Italian peasants that he studied. They started with ego and conceived of the family as four spirals emanating towards parents, siblings, spouse and children.¹⁷⁵ Since the woman is an independent ego it is important to consider where her loyalties might lie. Several ethnographies record contingency in the relationship between father and daughter. The attitude of a daughter can depend upon her assessment of her father's choice of husband. Is he, for example, a good man from an honourable family? Campbell comments upon one woman who disparaged her father's selection:

The daughter of a rich and powerful family, forced against her will to marry her second cousin, swore to her father as she left her home that she would never set foot in it again. Such a case of complete breach of trust and mutual esteem between father and daughter is rare; but there are also women who harbour resentment against their fathers because, as they allege, they were given to indifferent husbands in order to avoid the payment of a substantial dowry.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 148, quoting Jane Collier, "Women in Politics," in *Women, Culture, and Society* (ed. M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 89–96, quote 92.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. John Peristiany, "Introduction," in *Mediterranean Family Structures* (CSSA 13; ed. J. G. Peristiany; Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 1–23, especially 13.

¹⁷⁵ Rudolph Bell, *Fate and Honor, Family and Village: Demographic and Cultural Change in Rural Italy since 1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 76. This is a slightly different, although related, point to that which Caroline Brettell argues: "once male and female roles are given equal analytical focus, the multidimensional meanings of kinship, family, and descent are revealed", "Not That Lineage Stuff: Teaching Kinship into the Twenty-First Century," in *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 48–70, quote 59. Not that doing so is without its problems, cf. Karen Field on Ivan Illich's thesis regarding the differences between ancient and modern family roles: "while it is true that women in preindustrial societies enjoyed forms of power and prestige denied them in the modern West, they also encountered some very real restrictions, to which Illich, in his enthusiasm for a *temps perdu*, seems blind", "Review of Ivan Illich's *Gender*," *JMF* 45 (1983): 710.

¹⁷⁶ Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, 172.

Lloyd and Margaret Fallers comment that since the responsibility for finding a husband lies with others, the woman does not accept full responsibility for the outcome of her marriage.¹⁷⁷ “She has a sense of fate about it – and resignation”.¹⁷⁸ Instead, she identifies with her patrikin, especially her brothers. The expectation that a woman will take this view can be shared by her husband’s family. Abu-Lughod comments that a

woman retains her tribal affiliation throughout her life and should side with her own kin in their disputes with her husband’s kin; I heard many stories of women who left for their natal homes, abandoning children, under such conditions. In her marital camp people refer to her by her tribal affiliation, and she may refer to herself as an outsider even after twenty years of marriage.¹⁷⁹

The identification of the woman with her patrikin provides her with some backing during the years of integration, and protection against abuse by her husband’s family. “When mistreated or wronged, she argues that she need not put up with such treatment because ‘behind me are men’ ”.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand the woman remains responsible to her agnates for her behaviour. In particular, “they, and not her husband, kill her if she commits adultery, in order to preserve *their* honour”.¹⁸¹ The ambivalence of the husband—wife relationship contrasts with the close ties between brother and sister highlighted in many studies. Women, peripheral to their husband’s father’s household, depend upon brothers for assistance. Peristiany observes that this “permits the brother of a marginally-integrated woman to meddle in her affairs. A man wishing to be in full control of his home should be careful to choose a wife whose father and/or brother are not powerful and overbearing enough to interfere in its administration.”¹⁸²

This discussion leads us to conclude, with Peletz, that “[t]otal assimilation of

¹⁷⁷ Although it is often the father’s obligation to find a spouse for his daughters, to whom this is an obligation is not necessarily obvious. It could be to his daughter, the wider family, the descent line, or even himself, cf. the Kabyle proverb ‘He who has a daughter and does not marry her off must bear the shame of it’, Bourdieu, *Logic*, 177.

¹⁷⁸ Lloyd Fallers and Margaret Fallers, “Sex roles in Edremit,” in *Mediterranean Family Structures* (CSSA 13; ed. J. G. Peristiany; Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 243–60, quote 253.

¹⁷⁹ Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 54. Peristiany comments upon the consequences of an acute case of such identification among the Gheg of Albania: “Never integrated into their husband’s clan, as only patrilineal links are valued, Gheg women remain through life closely attached to their brothers. In rare instances, when the conflict of allegiances was extreme, women killed their children as a desperate outlet to their predicament”, “Introduction,” 11.

¹⁸⁰ Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 54. Note also the tale of a woman who justified her threat to leave her husband after the latter had slurred her father with the appeal: ‘Would you stay if anyone said that about your father?’, *Veiled Sentiments*, 65.

¹⁸¹ Ladislav Holy, *Kinship, honour and solidarity: Cousin marriage in the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 123. My emphasis. Holy argues that the practice of bride capture also symbolises a woman’s continuing attachment to her natal relations, cf. 121–22.

¹⁸² Peristiany, “Introduction,” 9.

women into their husband's kin groups (like the notion of their complete severance from natal kin) is...a Western fiction informed by market metaphors and economicistic thinking".¹⁸³ It is worth repeating that the

bond between generations, the bond between siblings, and the bond between spouses, are likely to come in conflict with each other in any kin-based society...The trick is to have as many bonds as possible and keep them all in harmony with each other, not let any of them break.¹⁸⁴

Did Michal (and for that matter Saul and David) manage to achieve this? It is time for a conversation between biblical text and ethnographic data.

5.3.3 Understanding Michal's Excuse

The context for Michal's excuse in 1 Samuel 19.17 is Saul's arrangement of her marriage to David. This tale commences when, having promised his first daughter, Merab, to the vanquisher of Goliath, Saul instead gives her to Adriel.¹⁸⁵ David Clines summarises a number of interpretations of 1 Samuel 18.17–27, concluding that virtually all commentators fail to produce a coherent reading *of the text* without making unwarranted suppositions.¹⁸⁶ A satisfactory account must explain *all* the following points *and* their interrelations:

- (i) Saul's offer of Merab to David (verse 17)
- (ii) David's protestation of his 'unworthiness' to be Saul's son-in-law (18)
- (iii) Saul's decision to give Merab to Adriel (19)
- (iv) Saul's subsequent decision to offer Michal to David (21)
- (v) Why Michal's love for David pleased Saul (20)
- (vi) The persuasion required to convince David to accept Michal (22–26)
- (vii) The nature of the bride-price (25, 27)

¹⁸³ Peletz, "Kinship Studies," 356–57. It also explains why the preferred partner for a man in many Middle Eastern societies is his Father's Brother's Daughter (FBD), because there is a coincidence of interests: "a father's brother's daughter cares about you and your things because they are hers", Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 58. Quoting an informant. A common patrimony also means a FBD has a right to support from the patriline independent of her ability to bear children. For the argument that FBD is not primarily a means of protecting family property interests but a statement of family solidarity see Ladislav Holy, *Kinship, honour and solidarity: Cousin Marriage in the Middle East*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), especially Chapter 5 'Preference for FBD marriage in context'.

¹⁸⁴ Trawick, *Notes on Love*, 157.

¹⁸⁵ The text of 1 Sam 18.17–19 is found in MT and LXX^{AL} but not LXX^B, leading some commentators to suppose the account has been interpolated with "a minimum of redactional harmonization", see McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 306–309, quote 308. I follow MT because, *pace* McCarter, there are both lexical and thematic links between these verses and the ongoing narrative.

¹⁸⁶ Clines, "Michal Observed," 27–32.

(viii) David's pleasure at becoming Saul's son-in-law (26)

(ix) Saul's decision to give Michal to David despite not having given Merab (27)

The verses immediately preceding the pericope portray Saul being offended by the praise heaped upon David by the people, and his attempts against David's life, both personally and by placing him in the line of fire as a battle commander. The end of verse 17 make it clear that Saul's offer of Merab is a continuation of this quest. He is motivated by the desire to encourage David to take military risks with the hope that he fall in battle. David's answer is entirely conventional in that he came from a perfectly suitable family, but within this narrative the expression 'Who am I and who are my kinfolk...?' is a form of refusal.¹⁸⁷ It is possible that David is negotiating: Fokkelman suggests he enquires after advantages for his family, for example, exemption from taxes, if he agreed to becoming Saul's son-in-law.¹⁸⁸ If so, the reason why David did not marry Merab was because *Saul* decided not to give her to David rather than because of the latter's refusal.¹⁸⁹ However, David's words *do* constitute a refusal; whether as the first stage in a process of negotiation cut off by Saul's decision, or not, is impossible to say. That David repudiates Saul's offer in this way explains why he has to be persuaded to accept Michal's hand in marriage in verse 25 when he makes a similar protestation.¹⁹⁰ The NRSV translates verse 19 'But at the time when Saul's daughter Merab should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife'. Taking

¹⁸⁷ MT מִנִּי, 'my life', a gloss for the original קִנְיָה, 'my kinsfolk', subsequently explicated by the addition of אֲבִי, cf. Driver, *Notes*, 153; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 303; Klein, *I Samuel*, 189; *pace* Smith, *Samuel*, 172, who follows LXX^L in omitting the explanation and reads וּמַי חֵר אֲבִי. David is *not* an insignificant nobody: his protestations in 1 Sam 18.18 are entirely conventional, cf. George Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," *JBL* 89 (1970): 14–26. Although Saul used the prospect of marriage to his daughters as a trap, it would have been entirely natural for Saul to seek an alliance with someone like 'Jesse the Bethlehemite'. To judge from the size of his family Jesse was the head of a significant house in a potentially strategic Israel-Philistine border region and, further, one that had already provided Saul with military assistance (1 Sam 17.13). Saul probably follows the same strategy in marrying Michal to Paltiel of Gallim (1 Sam 25.44, which reads Palti for Paltiel. Gallim: MT; LXX^B reads Πολύμα, which McCarter explains as a corruption of the Greek majuscules; LXX^L, OL reads 'Goliath,' a gloss dismissed by McCarter with an exclamation mark, *I Samuel*, 369. The location of Gallim is unknown, although probably north of Jerusalem, possibly 1km west of Anatoth, see Isa 10.30; Duane Christenson, "The March of Conquest in Isaiah X 27c-34," *VT* 26 (1976): 385–99; Jefferies Hamilton, "Gallim," *ABD* 2.901).

¹⁸⁸ Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 232; cf. 1 Sam 17.25.

¹⁸⁹ So Clines, who argues, correctly, that Saul *never* intended to marry Merab to David—he planned that he should die before the time came, cf. "Michal Observed," 30.

¹⁹⁰ *Pace* H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel* (OTL; London: SCM, 1964), 160. Hertzberg argues that the words 'in Israel' are significant, but there would be no reason to be an important family 'in Israel' for a prestige marriage; they are a conventional distraction. An overly literalist understanding of David's words ignores normal variety of expression. Consider, for example, the convention of British understatement, or the Spanish phrase 'haré todo lo posible', which is usually understood to mean the opposite.

David's words as a conventional expression of refusal means this rendering is problematic.¹⁹¹ The difficulty with the adversative is that Saul's action is cast adrift from its narrative context. It is preferable to translate וַיֹּאמֶר ‘and so’, thus McCarter: ‘So at the time to give...’,¹⁹² a temporal reference that presumably refers to the promise of his daughter's hand in marriage to the slayer of Goliath.¹⁹³

Verse 21 states Saul wanted to offer Michal in marriage for the same reason he offered Merab, to entrap David. This time, however, the opportunity Saul sees to use his daughter as bait arises because ‘Michal loved David’. Fokkelman attends to the ‘theological’ importance of her love, claiming that its repeated mention “occurs almost as a foreign body or disturbance between the lines concerning Saul’s misery. This repetition makes her love something worth mentioning as an independent entity.”¹⁹⁴ I concur that mention of Michal’s love only makes sense if it is a ‘foreign body’, a factor which explains the otherwise inexplicable. The ethnographic data presented above shows why this could be so. First, love is not normally the basis for marriage. Indeed, taking it into account, as Saul does, could be interpreted as a risky move that potentially damages kin relations and undermines social hierarchy. Second, a family with a stock of symbolic capital would be expected to arrange prestige marriages. It is instructive to consider the effect upon daughters of this sort of union. Bernard Batto’s study shows that becoming the wife of an ancient Near Eastern king for diplomatic purposes could be risky. He describes how one Inib-šarri bewails her condition as a ‘political’ wife who did not receive due respect because her husband wished to assert his political

¹⁹¹ NRSV is followed by e.g. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 184; Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 231.

¹⁹² McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 301. Cf. MNK 333.

¹⁹³ Because Clines takes verse 19 as adversative he asks why Saul had to marry Merab to Adriel, for, he supposes, David could have been sent on missions against the Philistines even as the king’s son-in-law, cf. “Michal Observed,” 27. My interpretation does not create this problem, for Merab had to be married to *someone*, and since David refused Saul’s offer, or, at least, was taken to have refused it, another marriage had to be arranged.

¹⁹⁴ Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 243. There is a debate about whether political or romantic love is in view in 1 Samuel, see Peter Ackroyd, “The Verb Love—’āhēb in the David-Jonathan Narratives—A Footnote,” *VT* 25 (1975): 213–14; Ada Taggar-Cohen, “Political Loyalty in the Biblical Account of 1 Samuel XX–XXII in the Light of Hittite Texts,” *VT* 55 (2005): 251–68; J. A. Thompson, “The Significance of the Verb *Love* in the David-Jonathan Narratives in Samuel,” *VT* 24 (1974): 334–38; idem, “Israel’s Lovers,” *VT* 27 (1977): 475–81. I see no reason why both aspects should not be present, even though the political seems to dominate, see Susan Ackerman, “The Personal is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love (’āhēb, ’ahābā) in the Hebrew Bible,” *VT* 52 (2002): 437–58; P. J. J. S. Els, “אֶחָד,” *NIDOTTE* 1.277–99. The moral issue lies in the fact that love implies partiality, which can lead to ‘moral danger’, see Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, “Friendship and Moral Danger,” *JP* 97 (2000): 278–96. My argument for the priority of the good means, *pace* Cocking and Kennett, that this risk should not be framed in terms of a conflict between abstract principle and personal loyalty, but between the moral goods of loyalty to different people, cf. EN 1164b22–1165a33; 1160a5.

independence.¹⁹⁵ Sarah Melville states that despite “lively communication via messengers and embassies, once a woman married a foreign king, she was not able to remain in close contact with her original family”.¹⁹⁶ It is probable, therefore, that royal daughters were wary of consenting to matrimony with foreigners.¹⁹⁷ This may explain the attraction of someone in a position like David’s. Cyrus Gordon discusses the Egyptian romance of Sinuhe, concluding it was

not uncommon to welcome desirable foreigners (like Sinhue) as sons-in-law. But in such cases, the husband joined the bride’s family; and, if he eventually returned to his homeland, he could not force his wife to leave her father’s domain. Such a marriage gave the groom practical opportunities, but socially the wife was protected; for she, her children and property could not be removed.¹⁹⁸

These sources suggest David was a potentially sound choice of husband for a ‘princess’ like Michal.¹⁹⁹ Regardless of what prompted her love—something about which the text is profoundly silent²⁰⁰—Saul could easily have surmised that Michal would be prepared to be married to David: *she*, at least, would not create an insurmountable hurdle to his stratagem.²⁰¹

Saul’s negotiations with David once again produce a conventional excuse, but this time he is not dissuaded. Using intermediaries, which, as we have seen, is standard practice in the arrangement of prestige marriages, Saul rejoins that 100 Philistine foreskins will suffice as bride-price, with the intention that David be killed in the process of collecting them. David’s opinion of the matter is a little less clear. The fact that Michal loved David was told to Saul **בְּעִינָיו** **דַּקְּבָר** **וַיֹּשֶׁר**, is mirrored by the phrase

¹⁹⁵ Treatment of another’s daughter married to cement a treaty was a proxy for the current status of the alliance, cf. Bernard Batto, *Studies on Women at Mari* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 37–40. Further discussion of Zimri-Lim’s daughters can be found in Daniel Bodi, *The Michal Affair: From Zimri-Lim to the Rabbis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 64–87.

¹⁹⁶ Sarah Melville, “Royal Women and the Exercise of Power in the Ancient Near East,” in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (ed. D. C. Snell; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 219–28, quote 225.

¹⁹⁷ On the necessity of consent see Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel*, 52–53, 70–72. Another of Zimri-Lim’s daughters seems to have suffered similarly for she complains ‘My father and lord (himself) installed me on (this) queen’s throne!’, Batto, *Women at Mari*, 42.

¹⁹⁸ Cyrus Gordon, “The Marriage and Death of Sinuhe,” in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope* (ed. J. H. Marks & R. M. Good; Guilford: Four Quarters Publishing Company, 1987), 43–44, quote 44. That is, removed without her family’s consent. Sinhue eventually turns his property over to his sons and leaves. Note that David and Michal lived near her father’s house following their marriage, cf. 1 Sam 19.11.

¹⁹⁹ And a father-in-law like Saul, although it seems likely that Saul did not envisage David being able to survive the ordeal of providing 100 Philistine foreskins.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Clines, “Michal Observed,” 32–37.

²⁰¹ Michal’s love also accounts for her preference of David later in the passage, but this is something Saul does not anticipate.

וַיִּשְׂרֹר הַכֶּבֶר בְּעִגֵּנִי דָּוד²⁰² The contrast is the motivation for the men's satisfaction: Saul was pleased he had thought of a way of disposing of David, David of becoming the king's son-in-law. Many scholars note that his enthusiasm has nothing to do with Michal, although this does not mean she was merely instrumental to David's political ambitions.²⁰³ The *text* links his pleasure to the prospect of avenging the king's enemies; any other interpretation is a secondary elaboration beyond the text. In any case, he loses no time in delivering twice the required number of bloody tokens before the deadline,²⁰⁴ thus obliging Saul to marry Michal to him. This reading accounts for all the textual data enumerated above and, importantly, enables similar elements to be interpreted in the same way.

Throughout 1 Samuel 18 Michal is mute. It is Saul's voice that is heard as he uses the opportunities afforded by his daughters' marriages to pursue his own ends. Saul's agency, however, receives a sharp riposte from the narrator in verse 28, when he

²⁰² Cf. verses 20 and 26. This expression is idiomatic, cf. Hannes Olivier, “ישָׁר,” *NIDOTTE* 2.563–68, especially 565; *pace* Bodi, *Michal Affair*, 16–22.

²⁰³ While concern with marriage in the books of Samuel is not limited to political alliances it is connected to monarchical legitimacy. Matitiahu Tsevat's study of non-descendents succeeding to thrones in Ugarit and Israel leads him to conclude that “the temporal, protological, and quasi-legal order is: marriage—kingship...and not kingship—marriage, which would merely be a special case of inheritance”, “Marriage and Monarchical Legitimacy in Ugarit and Israel,” *JSS* 3 (1958): 237–243, quote 242. This may lie behind Ishbaal's challenge to Abner (2 Sam 3.7), Nathan's affirmation that David had received his master's wives (2 Sam 12.8). Tsevat understands ‘and *thus* gave you the house of Israel and Judah’. Whether David did marry any of Saul's wives is debated, cf. Andersen, *2 Samuel*, 162–63; Driver, *Notes*, 291–92), Ahithophel's advice to Absalom (2 Sam 16.21). Ahithophel advises Absalom to enter his father's concubines ‘and all Israel will hear קְרִינְגָּבָשְׁת אֶחָד אֲבָבָרָן’. Since, according to Tsevat, all other cases of the verb בָּאַשׁ in Samuel (1 Sam 13.4; 27.12; 2 Sam 10.6) epitomise political challenge, he translates this that ‘you have challenged your father’ cf. Tsevat, “Monarchical Legitimacy,” 242–3 for discussion and comparison with ancient sources. He concludes: “Taking נְבָאָשָׁת as what it is, a term in the field of government and politics, we recognize that it is precisely the public appropriation by Absalom of part of David's harem that is the decisive act in the plot and the fanfare to rally and reassure his followers”), and Adonijah's request for Abishag (1 Kgs 2.13–25. Cf. also the case of Aribalbu's brother detailed by Tsevat. There are exceptions to the conferment of kingship through marriage, e.g. Gen 36.31–9 and the history of Northern Kingdom). Thus, without undermining the role of Jonathan in the transfer of kingship to David, the fact that David is married to Michal does give his claim to the Northern throne a validity it would otherwise have lacked.

²⁰⁴ 1 Sam 18.26: וְלֹא מִלְאָוֹן חִימִים. Note another contrast between Saul and David in verses 19 and 27: Saul failed to fulfil his obligations by the appointed time; David completed his mission before time. On the number in 1 Sam 18.27 MT reads 200; LXX 100. Although NRSV; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 316 follow LXX the harder reading is to be preferred, so Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 242 (who discusses a number of duplications in the passage); Hertzberg, *Samuel*, 162. I disagree with Driver that וְיִמְלָאָוּם supports reading 100 foreskins since the author could simply be emphasising the fact that a full set of 200 was presented to Saul and not that David “completed the tale of them [ie. the 100 in verse 25] to the king”, *Notes*, 154. Emphasis original; cf. NRSV ‘were given in full number’. That 200 was double Saul's demand demonstrates David's valour (or that of his friends), and makes the theological point that while Saul intended that David be harmed, actually he is doubly successful because, as the next verse makes explicit, ‘the LORD was with David’.

records that ‘the LORD was with David, and that Saul’s daughter Michal loved him’.²⁰⁵ What this means for the relationship between father and daughter becomes clear in 1 Samuel 19.

The discussion of anthropological evidence concerning a daughter’s loyalty leads one to suppose that she would normally be loyal to her father and his house for many years after her marriage. Many commentators, assuming modern Western notions of family dynamics, fail to perceive that Michal’s fidelity to her husband would be very unlikely in any clash of obligations. Even Philbeck’s assertion that “Michal’s support of her husband is not to be taken for granted. Marriages in important families were often arranged for political purposes in ancient Israel, and intrigue was commonplace,” only moves part of the way towards my interpretation.²⁰⁶ I propose that implied readers would assume that normal practice for a woman like Michal faced with the dilemma of facilitating her husband’s escape or siding with his father-in-law would be to opt for her father. Any other course of action would leave her, already isolated in her husband’s household, without support from her natal kin.²⁰⁷

At this point one could ask whether Michal is in fact an agent in her own right—*can* she act on her own account?; *must* she adhere to the cultural schema? Cheryl Exum opines that Michal is always ‘acted upon’ and that the text never allows her an agency of her own. She is ‘hemmed in’ by the narrative because “the scenes where she is a

²⁰⁵ NRSV, following MT; LXX^B reads καὶ πάς Ἰσραὴλ ἡγάπτα αὐτόν; LXX^L reads that both Michal and all Israel love David, cf. Bernard Grillet and Michel Lestienne, *Premier Livre des Règnes* (Bd'A 9.1; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1997), 316; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 321. Driver posits that LXX “states the ground for Saul’s greater dread” whilst the MT merely repeats verse 20, *Notes*, 155. Similarly, David Clines suggests that it is “virtually certain” וְמִיכָל בַּת־שָׁאול is an orthographical error for וְכִי כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל because otherwise the emphatic ‘saw and knew’ is redundant, since Saul already knew Michal loved David, “X, X BEN Y, BEN Y: Personal Names in Hebrew Narrative Style,” VT 22 (1972): 266–87, especially 270. However, the MT yields exegetical results unavailable to those who emend according to LXX^B, so Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 243.

²⁰⁶ Ben Philbeck, “1-2 Samuel” in *1 Samuel-Nehemiah* (BBC 3; ed. C. J. Allen; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 13–145, quote 60. Additional intratextual evidence for my interpretation includes Ps 45.10[11]. Pedersen asserts that it “is only at a royal wedding that it can be said to a bride: Forget also thine own people and thy father’s house”, *Israel*, 68. It is much better, however, to take the phrase as an exhortation directed towards the bride *precisely because* the father’s house was where her loyalties would have laid.

²⁰⁷ Cf. 1 Sam 1.8; Judges 11.1–7. The protecting function could be reversed, cf. 1 Kgs 1.12. The continuing importance of the *mother’s* בֵּית אָב is also discernable in Judges 9.1 and 2 Sam 14.9. In the latter case Bendor suggests that the “reason for the wording of the exoneration is that the *beit ’ab* into which she married will no longer exist, and she therefore swears by the *beit ’ab* from which she came”, *Social Structure*, 79. I think it is better to suppose that the woman’s protestation is evidence for her continued loyalty was to *her* father’s house, that is what gives her words their force.

subject are surrounded by scenes in which she is ‘acted upon’.”²⁰⁸ Exum supposes that it is her gender that inhibits her choosing between conflicting loyalties. In Bakhtinian terms she has no voice. But, regardless of other scenes, this view contradicts the emphasis upon Michal’s agency in 1 Samuel 19.11–17. Rather than hemming Michal in by writing out her agency it is essential to investigate the meaning of her actions.

In the final form of the narrative the conjunction of spear throwing, and David’s evasion, flight and escape is deliberate. The slightly breathless nature of the narrative may reflect David’s own state as he arrives home with Saul’s henchmen hot on his heels. The house surrounded, verse 11b states that ‘David’s wife Michal told him...’. This simple introductory phrase contains two pieces of information. First, Michal is described as David’s wife. David Clines analyses the use of biblical name styles, concluding that some forms have particular significance for narrative meaning.²⁰⁹ With respect to this text, however, I cannot agree with Clines that styling Michal ‘David’s wife’ indicates to readers that she is behaving as they would have expected her to do *as his wife*.²¹⁰ Quite the contrary, the author titles her thus because Michal’s warning to David is startling: as *David’s wife* she would *not* be expected to warn him of *Saul’s* actions. Readers are now learning what ‘loving David’ means, and why Saul had good grounds for being afraid. Second, ‘Michal told David’. ‘Telling’, תִּגְתַּל, is important for the development of the plot in chapter 19.²¹¹ When Saul speaks with his son about killing David, Jonathan tells, תִּגְתַּל, David to be on his guard. The same verb is used when he promises to obtain further details of Saul’s intentions and, having negotiated David’s return to court, when Jonathan tells him of Saul’s decision. In the context of our passage, therefore, ‘telling’ has echoes of the conflict between David and Saul. How will Michal respond?

In complete contrast to those who see a hemming in of Michal, the author repeatedly highlights Michal’s agency in the next verses. Her actions are given

²⁰⁸ Exum, *Tragedy*, 84. See also Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (JSOTSup 310; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2000), 140.

²⁰⁹ Clines, “Personal Names,” 266–87.

²¹⁰ Cf. Clines, “Personal Names,” 269, 272. Clines argues that the normal form of identification for a married woman was ‘X wife of Y’. Marsman’s assessment of literary and epigraphic evidence from Israel and Ugarit, however, shows that kings married their daughters to both other regents and high ranking officials within their own courts, and that if a woman’s father was more powerful than her husband she sometimes used the style X *bt* Y for formal identification, *Women in Ugarit and Israel*, 643–58, 702, 717, 722.

²¹¹ Cf. 1 Sam 19.2, 3, 7, 11, 18, 19, 21.

prominence by her being the subject of a string of verbs: Michal tells, lets down, takes, lays, puts and covers. Patently, the writer employs literary repetition to underscore Michal's status as an acting subject. Given the context I suggest her actions are not trivial but momentous; and her initiative is important theologically because it is unexpected: another sign that God is on David's side.

When Saul discovers that David has escaped he confronts his daughter, asking why Michal has contravened father—daughter solidarity. But in another twist to the tale Michal uses this very conception as the basis for her excuse. At the beginning of this chapter I asked whether Saul might have had grounds for supposing that Michal should not have deceived him. An affirmative answer to this question is suggested by the anthropological resources surveyed above. On the basis of the narrator's evaluation in 1 Samuel 18.28–29 and his dialogue with Jonathan in 1 Samuel 19.1–7, however, one may surmise that Saul's suspicions have been aroused. But although Michal's deception is patent to readers it is important to recognise Saul's view of the matter could not be so categorical. The genius of Michal's use of the *teraphim* is that its role in healing rituals means both her ruse with the dummy and reply to the messengers were ambiguous.²¹² Indeed, the messengers' credulity is evidence for this ambiguity.²¹³ Michal plays upon multiple ways of interpreting her action.²¹⁴ While Saul charges Michal with responsibility for David's escape and of violating the cultural schema, Michal shifts the blame onto David, alleging that he threatened to kill her. In doing so she *uses* shared understandings of familial loyalty, specifically, the schema of father—daughter loyalty, and the perception that women, regardless of their marital status, comprise part of a family's symbolic capital. Bourdieu elaborates upon the latter point:

The patrimony of the lineage, symbolized by its name, is defined not only by possession of its land and its house, precious and therefore vulnerable assets, but also by possession of the means of protecting them,

²¹² Cf. Rouillard and Tropper, “*TRPYM*”.

²¹³ Given the absence of detail in the Samuel narrative one can only conjecture, but a plausible scenario is: (1) the *teraphim* were employed in healing rituals; (2) the first time they were sent the messengers saw them from a distance, at which point Michal told them David was sick (if they did not see the dummy, or if Michal did not expect them to want to see it, it would have been unnecessary); (3) the messengers believed Michal because it appeared she was telling the truth; so (4) they returned to Saul empty handed, possibly because of sensibilities about disturbing a ritual in progress; but (5) Saul had no such qualms and resends the messengers לְרַאֲוֹת אֶת־דָּוִיד, the sick man rather than the *teraphim* (the Hebrew emphasises *David* not the messengers' seeing, *pace* NRSV ‘to see David for themselves’); so (6) the real situation is discovered.

²¹⁴ For this reason I do not agree that Saul let himself be deceived, cf. Bodi, *Michal Affair*, 27. In my view the text does not discredit Saul in this way, but by contrasting his actions with David's dependence upon God—because Michal's actions were so unexpected.

that is, its men, because land and women are never regarded as simple instruments of production or reproduction, still less as chattels or ‘property’. An attack on these material and symbolic assets is an attack on their master, on his *nif*, his potency, his very *being* as defined by the group.²¹⁵

Her construction of David as threatening Saul’s בַּיִת אֶחָד is an attempt to bring accepted norms onto her side of the argument.²¹⁶ Using social-science enables one to comprehend how she does this: family solidarity for a newly married woman means loyalty towards her father’s house, for she is hardly a member of her husband’s household.²¹⁷ Thus it is entirely plausible to implied readers that Saul believes Michal’s assertion of unwilling complicity, and that her husband could act against her. Any such action would also be construed as an attack of her father’s household, specifically its honour. Michal, therefore, cleverly manipulates received understandings of acceptable social practice in order to change Saul’s conception of her actions from betrayal to innocent, wounded party. And in doing so she puts the ball back in Saul’s court for, she asserts, it is *his* failure to protect *her* that left her with no choice. Michal’s excuse, therefore, is an example of the employment of cultural categories to (re)construct kin relations for individual ends.

Saul’s voice in 1 Samuel 19.11–17 is consistent. He starts with a strategy to eliminate David and does not deviate from this objective. His direct speech to Michal asks why she has deceived him and thwarted his plans. Against those who argue Michal is ‘hemmed in’ I assert that she *has* a voice. It comprises positive support of David and deception of Saul. Because it is unexpected within the social milieu that forms the background to implied readers’ understandings her voice is prominent. The author presents a richly portrayed narrative: in the dark of the night he directs a spotlight onto Michal and holds it upon her as she ‘speaks’ in favour of David. However, whilst readers are allowed to observe all the action, Saul possesses only partial insight, and to him the meaning of her agency is uncertain. His inability to perceive correctly in the half-light of ambiguity makes it possible for the author to have Michal manipulate

²¹⁵ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 189. Emphasis original.

²¹⁶ Cf. Bourdieu’s observations about the manipulation of cultural categories, discussed above.

²¹⁷ David Jobling argues that David did not love Michal, and asks: “If David had gone about the court behaving like an ecstatic newly wed would Saul have been prepared to believe that David would threaten Michal’s life under any circumstances?” David Jobling, *1 Samuel* (Berit Olam; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 152. I agree with Jobling that David did not waltz about as star-struck lover, but this is beside the point—he would never have been expected to.

cultural categories to produce a new interpretation of her actions for Saul's consumption. I will argue later that this move enables the writer to make a theological point regarding moral choices in situations of value conflict. However, Michal's mendacity is itself a moral problem for many commentators. Given that readers of the Old Testament usually suppose that lying falls short of morally upright behaviour it is necessary to consider further the ethics of lying and deception.

5.4 LYING AND DECEPTION

I have argued that the moral dilemma facing Michal is most appropriately understood in terms of conflicting moral goods. Abraham Cowley anticipated modern interpretations that suppose the clash is between Michal's untruth and Saul's intention to kill David:

To unjust Force she opposes just deceit.
She meets the Murd'ers with a *virtuous Ly*,
And good dessembling Tears; May he not *Dy*.²¹⁸

The interpretation of Saul's violence, however, suggests such an understanding may be challenged, for if the force is not unjust, then one can also question where that leaves the contrast with the lie. In this section I will approach the issue by looking first at the Old Testament's prohibition upon telling untruths.

5.4.1 ‘You shall not bear false witness’

The ninth commandment is an obvious place to start.²¹⁹ It is widely thought that it is not a blanket interdiction of lying, but concerns false charges against a neighbour in a judicial setting.²²⁰ We may follow Anthony Phillips in supposing that there is no material difference between the versions of the commandment in Exodus and

²¹⁸ Abraham Cowley, *Davideis* (London: Henry Herringman, 1681), 15. Emphasis and spelling original.

²¹⁹ According to the Jewish and Reformed order; the Roman Catholic tradition numbers it eighth. On the Decalogue in general see: William Brown, ed., *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness* (LTE; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1974), 385–439; Jochem Douma, *Los Diez Mandamientos: Manual para la vida cristiana* (trans. J. M. Blanch; Grand Rapids: Libros Desafío, 2000); Walter Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997); Anthony Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 37–152; J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* (SBT²; 2nd ed; London: SCM Press, 1967); Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 242–75. For a negative assessment of the connections between the Decalogue and the rest of the Old Testament see Rodd, *Glimpses*, 77–93.

²²⁰ Note the use of the noun טָw, ‘witness’, and verb טְw, ‘testify’, cf. Phillips, *Criminal Law*, 142.

Deuteronomy, and that both intend to cover both lying words and deception more widely.²²¹ The purpose of the commandment was to guard “the basic right of the covenant member against the threat of false accusation”.²²² In his comments upon this stipulation, however, Allan Harman speaks of ‘the sanctity of truth’, arguing that the command commends a general prohibition upon lying.²²³ Although I doubt that *this* text can carry quite so much freight, other references do condemn lying and commend its avoidance. Kirkpatrick claims

Scripture affirms the universal duty of Truth without any exception...nor can it be understood to sanction breaches of this general law by recording them without disapproval. It is left to the casuist to justify a falsehood or an act of deception.²²⁴

Evidence for a general prohibition upon lies might be found, for example, in Leviticus 19.11, which states ‘you shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another’,²²⁵ Leviticus 19.16, which refers to lying in contexts beyond the legal setting,²²⁶ and in Job’s protestation of his not having practiced falsehood and deceit.²²⁷ Proverbs 12.19 contrasts truthful lips that endure forever with the transience of a lying tongue, a difference echoed in other parts of the Old Testament.²²⁸ Furthermore, Proverbs 6.16–19 makes it quite clear that God abhors lies. Scholars of an earlier generation contended Old Testament truth is not propositional but relational; not to do with adhering to an

²²¹ Ex 20.16 reads נָקַשׁ, ‘deception’, whilst Deut 5.20 has נָאֹשׁ, ‘vanity’. Phillips rejects the attempt to identify a wider prohibition in the latter and a stricter indictment limited to lying as “much too subtle”, since the Exodus text “simply refers to what the witness does, namely causes deception...[whilst Deuteronomy] seeks to stress what the witness is, that is a worthless, empty man”, *Criminal Law*, 142.

²²² Childs, *Exodus*, 424. Note that since evidence in judicial proceedings was not given under oath the ninth commandment is not concerned with perjury, cf. Phillips, *Criminal Law*, 147–48. Truthful testimony is a concern throughout the Old Testament: Num 35.30; Deut 19.15; 1 Kgs 21; Ps 27.12, as it is in the ANE: CH 3, 11, cf. *ANET* 166.

²²³ Allan Harman, “Decalogue (Ten Commandments),” *NIDOTTE* 5.513–19, especially 518; cf. Ex 23.1–3; Deut 17.6; 19.15–21; 22.13–21.

²²⁴ Kirkpatrick, *Samuel*, 173

²²⁵ M. A. Klopfenstein comments that “[e]n Lv 19,11 no se sabe si se habla, en sentido moral amplio, de comportamiento desleal o, en sentido jurídico estricto, de comportamiento contrario al derecho; los verbos paralelos «robar» y «encubrir» (→*khš*) en Lv 19,11 y el paradigma de Lv 5,21–24 favorecen más bien el primero, que podría indicar concretamente un falso testimonio con la finalidad de encubrimiento”, “נָקַשׁ šqr Engañar,” *DTMAT* 2.1265–76, quote 1269.

²²⁶ According to Childs this demonstrates “an early concern within Israel to protect the reputation of one’s fellow against any abuse, such as idle rumours, which would cause him injury”, *Exodus*, 425; cf. Hos 4.2.

²²⁷ Cf. Job 31.5; Georg Fohrer, “The Righteous Man in Job 31,” in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics* (ed. J. L. Crenshaw and J. T. Willis; New York: Ktav, 1974), 1–22, especially 14. On models of the moral individual in the Old Testament see Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 368–78. These contrast with examples of lying by evil people, cf. Ps 5.9; 58.3; 109.2; 144.8, 11; Isa 32.7.

²²⁸ Note the strong contrasts between truth and lies (Ps 52.1–7; Isa 59.12–15; Jer 7.9; Hos 7.3), God’s law and lies (Ps 119.29, 64, 104, 128, 163; Prov 30.8; Isa 59.12–15; Hos 4.2; 10.12–13; Mic 6.12; Amos 2.4), and the identification of idols with falsehood (Isa 44.20; Jer 13.25; 16.19; 51.17; Hab 2.18).

abstract principle, but about being dependable and steadfast.²²⁹ The basis for this claim was etymological: both **תָּמִית** and **אַמְנוֹנָה** are derived from **עַמְנָה**, “which in its simple stem means to be steady, to be firm”.²³⁰ Kaiser concludes his survey with this polemical assertion:

If truth telling was valued so highly in the courts that the perjurer was to be punished without pity, could it be esteemed any less in situations outside of the courtroom? Since truth ultimately was grounded in no one less than the God who was truth, all interpretations that would raise caveats and equivocations of one sort or another, outside a proper definition for truth or lying, must come to terms not with a system of God, but with a personal accounting to the true and living Lord.²³¹

Kaiser’s claim chimes with Augustine’s influential treatise that lying is deviance from proper standards of truthful speech.²³² According to Augustine, because the soul is worth more than the body lies are not permitted even to save a life.²³³ Regardless of

²²⁹ Cf. M. E. Andrew, “Falsehood and Truth,” *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 425–38, especially 434; Muilenburg, *Way of Israel*, 16–17; Elizabeth Achtemeier, “Righteousness in the OT,” *IDB* 4.80–85; Edmond Jacob, *Théologie de l’Ancien Testament* (Neuchatel: Éditions Delachaux et Niestelé, 1968), 141–42: “‘emunah et ‘emeth définissent à la fois la fidélité et la véracité de Dieu et la foi de l’homme”. YHWH is a God of truth (Ps 31.6) and faithfulness (Deut 32.4), he is just and right (Deut 32.4; Ps 92.16; 119.137; 145.17) and without iniquity (Deut 32.4; Ps 92.16). Explicit statements that God does not lie are found in Num 23.19; 1 Sam 15.29. Jimmy Roberts highlights the importance of righteous practice if one wishes to receive the truth from YHWH, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 131; cf. 2 Sam 22.26–27; Ps 18.26–27.

²³⁰ Edward Ramsdell, “The Old Testament Understanding of Truth,” *JR* 31 (1951): 264–73, quote 264; cf. Kaiser, *Toward*, 223. Such arguments have been contested, most famously by James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: OUP, 1961; repr. London: SCM Press, 1983), 161–205. This does not mean, however, that it is any easier to justify deception, on which see Eugene Carpenter and Michael Grisanti, “רְמֵה,” *NIDOTTE* 3.1122–24; M. Kartveit, “רְמֵה,” *TWOT* 8.500–504. **רְמֵה** is found eight times in OT: Gen 29.25; Josh 9.22; 1 Sam 19.17; 28.12; 2 Sam 19.26[27], Prov 26.19 [for which *BDB* gives ‘beguile, deceive, mislead’]; Lam 1.19 and 1 Chr 12.17 [for which *BDB* gives ‘deal treacherously with, betray’].

²³¹ Kaiser, *Toward*, 228.

²³² *C. mend.* 4; cf. *De mend.* Augustine thought that lying is worse than other forms of deception because it involves asserting something that one knows to be false, cf. Jonathan Adler, “Lying, Deceiving, or Falsely Implicating,” *JP* 94 (1997): 435–52. For an exposition of Augustine and representative later authorities see Paul Griffiths, *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004).

²³³ *De mend.* 8. Augustine distinguishes between hiding the truth and lying, but maintains that one cannot justify lying even if it is more certain of success, cf. *C. mend.* 23. For Aquinas on lies see *Summa II-II* q.109–110; it is merely a venial sin, *Summa II-II* q.110 a.3–4. Kant also maintained a rigorous posture against lies: “Truthfulness in statements which cannot be avoided is the formal duty of an individual to everyone, however great may be the disadvantage accruing to himself or to another”, Immanuel Kant, “On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives,” in *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy* (ed. and trans L. W. Beck; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949; repr. in Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* 2nd ed.; New York: Vintage, 1999), 267–72, quote 268. However, Kant’s duty is an unconditional duty to humanity, not towards the individual with whom one is relating, and although he calls truth-telling ‘sacred’, his view of the deity is not that of the Old Testament.

whether lies are rejected outright or otherwise justified,²³⁴ this tradition has proved enduring, so that truth and lying are mutually exclusive.²³⁵

The Old Testament, however, contains a number of accounts of lying that do not seem to condemn it as a deviant practice. John Ottwell lists cases of deception by men in the Old Testament, including Abraham tricking Pharaoh, Jacob and Laban's mutual deceit, Saul's attempts to kill David, the latter's murder of Uriah, and Joab's ruse using the woman of Tekoa.²³⁶ Female deceivers include Rebekah, Tamar, the Hebrew midwives, Rahab, Deborah, and Michal.²³⁷ YHWH is occasionally implicated in deception, either personally or by approving those who engage in the practice.²³⁸ In

²³⁴ It is unsurprising that the rigorist position has been challenged. In the words of Duns Scotus: "It is less bad to take away true opinion from one's neighbor, or to be the occasion of generating false opinion in him, than to take away his bodily life. Indeed, there is scarcely a comparison." Quoted in Thomas Williams, "Lying, Deception, and the Virtue of Truthfulness: A Reply to Garcia," *FP* 17 (2000): 242–48, quote 245. An approach commended by some is the 'mental reservation', in which deception is effected by omitting some of the truth. Another approach, which does not cause the same disquiet about the ethics of manipulating the message, is to assert that a lie is only such if the recipient has the right to the truth. Originally adopted by Grotius, the major 20th century exponent of this position was Paul Ramsey, cf. Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, 258–61; Paul Ramsey, "The Case of the Curious Exception," in *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics* (ed. P. Ramsey and G. H. Outka; London: SCM, 1968), 67–135. Ramsey maintains that rules prohibiting lying are *always* to be obeyed, but defines a lie as "withholding the truth from someone to whom the truth is due". Bok protests that Ramsey's definition ignores the question of what it means to have a right to truthful information, *Lying*, 15. Here, the reflections of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are illuminating. He distinguishes between God's truth, grounded in love, and Satan's truth, which hates creation. "It is only the cynic who claims 'to speak the truth' at all times and in all places to all men in the same way, but who, in fact, displays nothing but a lifeless image of the truth....He wounds shame, desecrates mystery, breaks confidence [and], betrays community in which he lives." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (ed. E. Bethge; trans. N. H. Smith; New York: MacMillan, 1955), 326–27, quote 328. Interestingly, Bonhoeffer considered that when things that belong to one 'order' or sphere of life are used in another—he provides the example of a child being asked about private family matters in a public classroom—then lying is inevitable. Thus truth-telling, according to Bonhoeffer, must account for a person's relationships in order to identify to whom one is obliged to reveal 'the truth'. Craig Hovey highlights the importance of perception, for even if a rule relating to specific people (e.g. family) is to be followed, moral action "depends upon seeing truthfully those relationships for what they are", "Putting Truth To Practice: MacIntyre's Unexpected Rule," *SCE* 19 (2006): 169–86, quote 183; cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Truthfulness, Lies, and Moral Philosophers: What Can We Learn from Mill and Kant?," Tanner Lectures on Human Values, 1994.

²³⁵ Paul Horwich summarises this position: "if we can understand why truth is valuable, we can thereby explain why lying is wrong", "The Value of Truth," *Noûs* 40 (2006): 347–60, quote 348.

²³⁶ John Ottwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 108; Gen 12.10–20; 20; 26.1–11; 30.25–43; 1 Sam 18.17–27; 2 Sam 11.6–25; 2 Sam 14.1–21. Note the definition of deception provided by Williams: "Deception takes place when an agent intentionally distorts, withholds, or otherwise manipulates information reaching some person(s) in order to stimulate in the person(s) a belief that the agent does not believe in order to serve the agent's purpose", Michael Williams, *Deception in Genesis: an investigation into the morality of a unique Biblical phenomenon* (SBLit 32; New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 3. For other instances of deception in 1 Samuel see 10.15–16; 16.2–5; 18; 21; 23; 25.

²³⁷ Gen 27–28; 38; Ex 1; Josh 2; Judg 4–5; 1 Sam 19; cf. Toni Craven, "Women who Lied for the Faith," in *Justice and the Holy* (ed. D. A. Knight and P. J. Paris; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 35–49.

²³⁸ Ex 3.18–20; 1 Sam 16.1–5; 1 Kgs 22.2–23; Jer 4.10; Ezek 14.9. On whether God is a liar see the exchange between Barr and Moberly: Walter Moberly, "Did the Serpent get it Right?," *JTS* 39 (1988):

terms of lies more narrowly Eerdman identifies lies of necessity,²³⁹ lies of sport,²⁴⁰ and shameful and hurtful lies.²⁴¹ However, it is one thing to identify cases of lying and deception, another to think that the Old Testament presents them as normative.

There are three typical approaches to this question. The first is to attempt to excuse the text, justifying the cases of lying as exceptions that do not undo or relativise what are supposed to be the proper standards of Old Testament morality. The most consistent proponent of this approach is Kaiser. He is concerned to protect the truthfulness of God, claiming that “divine approval of an individual in one aspect or area of his life does not entail and must not be extended to mean that there is a divine approval of that individual in all aspects of his character or conduct”.²⁴² So although Rahab lied and is later commended she is not commended for lying *per se*, rather for protecting Israel’s spies: it is her faith in YHWH that is in view.²⁴³

A second approach, at the other end of the spectrum, posits that there is absolutely no theological difficulty with deceptive practices. Although he restricts his study to Genesis, Richard Freund perceives no attempt on the part of biblical authors to sanitise characters’ actions with respect to lying and deception, concluding that “a standard of absolute truthfulness does not seem to be a major issue in the Hebrew Bible”.²⁴⁴ Similarly, Daniel Friedmann claims “[g]uile was regarded as a praiseworthy talent, legitimate in the attainment of just ends”.²⁴⁵

The first two approaches are relatively infrequent and most commentators seek

1–27; James Barr, “Is God a Liar? (Genesis 2–3)—And Related Matters,” *JTS* 57 (2006): 1–22; Walter Moberly, “Did the Interpreters get it Right? Genesis 2–3 Reconsidered,” *JTS* 59 (2008): 22–40. Craven notes that both Deborah and Jael’s roles in the war were akin that of a Canaanite goddess, thus presenting YHWH as one who controlled even foreign deities. Furthermore, she suggests that Judg 5.2–31 are “a poetic recognition that YHWH...caused Jael to act. If so, then this perhaps oldest of biblical texts testifies to God’s responsibility for and sanction of a woman’s lie”, Craven, “Women Who Lied,” 43; cf. Peter Craigie, “Deborah and Anat: A Study of Poetic Imagery (Judges 5),” *ZAW* 90 (1978): 374–81, especially 374; Glen Taylor, “The Song of Deborah and Two Canaanite Goddesses,” *JSOT* 23 (1982): 99–108.

²³⁹ Ex 1.19; Gen 20.2; 26.7; Josh 2.6.

²⁴⁰ Gen 42.9; 27.15; Judg 9.8.

²⁴¹ Cf. Eerdman, *Samuel*, 256.

²⁴² Kaiser, *Toward*, 270–71

²⁴³ Cf. C. mend. 32: “God did good to the Hebrew midwives, and to Rahab the harlot of Jericho, this was not because they lied, but because they were merciful to God’s people” Thus Rahab is to be imitated in everything except her lying, cf. C. mend. 34. Augustine, surprisingly, does not mention Michal.

²⁴⁴ Richard Freund, “Lying and Deception in the Biblical and Post-Judaic Tradition,” *SJOT* 5 (1991): 45–61, quote 45.

²⁴⁵ Daniel Friedmann, *To Kill and Take Possession: Law, Morality and Society in Biblical Stories* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 66. He argues that only the slyness of the serpent is condemned; all other cases are “treated with tolerance and even admiration”.

reasons for occurrences of lying and deception in the Bible. A source critical explanation is proposed by Caird, who supposes that Michal ‘untrustworthiness’ is due to an early source.²⁴⁶ More recent interpretations, however, posit theological explanations. Esther Fuchs, for instance, supposes the accounts of women’s deception are included to smear their reputations and diminish the credibility of their perspectives.²⁴⁷ Horn Prouser, though, carefully refutes Fuch’s argument, showing that deception is not employed by women because they presented as inherently more duplicitous, but because they are disadvantaged people.²⁴⁸ She avers that “in biblical narrative lying is not considered a moral issue of absolutes. Rather, deception is considered an acceptable and generally praiseworthy means for a weaker party to succeed against a stronger power.”²⁴⁹ An ancient audience, she argues, would have appreciated rather than condemned quick-thinking deception. Michael Williams rejects this conclusion, highlighting a number of different perspectives upon lying.²⁵⁰ He finds that deceptive acts are positively evaluated in Genesis. In the Deuteronomistic History deception against Israel is always viewed negatively;²⁵¹ deception of Israelites by other Israelites is sometimes evaluated negatively,²⁵² and at other times positively;²⁵³ and deception of others by Israelites is evaluated positively.²⁵⁴ In short, it seems that within Genesis deception is acceptable to right a previous wrong, and within the historical narratives if “the deceptive behavior serves to protect, preserve, or restore the well-being of members of this group or the group as a whole, it is positively evaluated”.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁶ Caird, *Samuel*, 987.

²⁴⁷ Esther Fuchs, “‘For I Have the Way of Women’: Deception, Gender, and Ideology in Biblical Narrative,” *Semeia* 42 (1988): 68–83; idem, “Who Is Hiding the Truth? Deceptive Women and Biblical Androcentrism,” in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (ed. A. Y. Collins; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1985), 137–44.

²⁴⁸ Horn Prouser, “The Truth about Women and Lying,” *JSOT* 61 (1994): 15–28, especially 27.

²⁴⁹ Prouser, “Women and Lying,” 15.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Williams, *Deception in Genesis*, 5. Note also Wenham’s remarks: “Witty and perceptive as these observations may be about early Israelite attitudes, they do not represent those of the implied author of Genesis, who sets these episodes in contexts which may clear both his own and God’s displeasure at these lies”, *Story*, 76. Regardless of the view one takes of Wenham’s assertion regarding the Genesis stories, it is not the case that Michal’s lie is undermined by a negative tenor in the narrative context.

²⁵¹ Cf. Williams, *Deception in Genesis*, 60.

²⁵² Cf. Josh 7.19–21; 1 Sam 28.3–12; 2 Sam 3.27; 20.8–10; 4.5–12; 12.14; 13; 15.1–12; 1 Kgs 21.1–14.

²⁵³ Cf. 1 Sam 19.11–17 (note, though, that Williams does not say *how* or *where* Michal’s action is positively evaluated, cf. Williams, *Deception in Genesis*, 62); 2 Sam 15.32–37; 16.15–17.16; 2 Kgs 9.22; 10.30.

²⁵⁴ Ex 1.15–20; Josh 2.1–21; 6.22–25; Judg 3.12–30; 5.17–22; 5.24–27. A review of the ANE evidence of deception between the gods, between gods and people and between humans leads Williams to suggest that it is evaluated negatively when between people but that there was an acceptance or even admiration of deception by gods, cf. *Deception in Genesis*, 151–91.

²⁵⁵ Williams, *Deception in Genesis*, 221. ANE evidence also points to negative evaluation of intra-group deception, cf. Williams, *Deception in Genesis*, 223.

This echoes Craven's view that women's lies are endorsed because they are on the side of God and his people,²⁵⁶ a claim that begs the question of who constitutes the people of God; of who is an 'insider' and who an 'outsider'. John Pilch thinks that it is not so much the people of God as the family that comprises the key group, and that individuals justifiably lie to protect 'family honour'.²⁵⁷ "The *truth of the honor* of any family is much more important than *factual truth*".²⁵⁸

The last two interpretations of Old Testament lies set them in the context of a clash of moral goods and commitments. Peter Barnes's careful assessment of Rahab's lie makes the same point: "Truth-telling takes place in concrete situations, and can never be treated as though it occurs in a vacuum".²⁵⁹ He supposes that a commitment to YHWH means Rahab's lie was no sin. In order to understand whether Michal's deception can be similarly interpreted I turn now to consider anthropological perspectives upon lying.

5.4.2 Lying—Anthropological Perspectives

In a classic essay published at the beginning of the 20th century Georg Simmel claimed that the important point about a lie is not that the other possesses false information—that is merely error—but that "the person deceived is held in misconception about the true intention of the person who tells the lie. Veracity and mendacity are thus of the most far-reaching significance for the *relations* of persons with each other."²⁶⁰ Although the paucity of anthropological studies of lying and deception has been lamented,²⁶¹ those that exist differ from philosophical or theological appraisals in that they do not view lying as deviant but as a social phenomenon replete with meaning. Herzfeld explains that "they may offend the moral sensibilities of some observers, but, when used consistently, they reflect moral valuations in which we may find explanations for what strike us, but do not strike our informants, as irrational

²⁵⁶ Cf. Craven, "Women Who Lied," 48.

²⁵⁷ John Pilch, "Lying and Deceit in the Letters to the Seven Churches: Perspectives from Cultural Anthropology," *BTB* 22 (1992): 126–35, especially 129.

²⁵⁸ Pilch, "Lying and Deceit," 130. Emphasis original. He identifies seven kinds of deception and lies: concealment of failure; concealment of unintentional failures; false imputation; avoiding quarrels; attaining material gain; mischief; defence of kin.

²⁵⁹ Peter Barnes, "Was Rahab's Lie a Sin?," *RTR* 54 (1995): 1–9, quote 9.

²⁶⁰ Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," *AJS* 11 (1906): 441–98, quote 445. My emphasis.

²⁶¹ John Barnes, *A Pack of Lies: Towards a Sociology of Lying* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 8–9.

practices".²⁶²

Gilsenan argues that the practice of lying in the Lebanese community he studied was "a fundamental element not only of specific situations and individual actions, but of the cultural universe as a whole".²⁶³ As such, lying has to be learnt. Julian Pitt-Rivers notes the importance of socialisation. He calls the Andalusians 'accomplished liars', "for it requires training and intelligence to distinguish rapidly when the truth is owed and when it is to be concealed".²⁶⁴ It is important to realise that the prevalence of lying does not indicate debased morality. The same author observes

it is logical rather than paradoxical that the Andalusians should be people profoundly concerned with the truth and with the true state of the heart...When knowledge is something to give or to deny you become concerned with its exact worth.²⁶⁵

Gilsenan elaborates that the "lie is a technique for the restriction of the social distribution of knowledge over time, and is thus ultimately woven into the system of power and control in society".²⁶⁶ Although this can be true in modern industrial societies,²⁶⁷ the most detailed ethnographies are from societies where people live very closely together so that there are few real secrets.²⁶⁸ In such a community, claims Ursula Sharma, "a sense of personal integrity and privacy is maintained less through the use of space than through the use of information".²⁶⁹ Because deception creates ambiguity and

²⁶² Herzfeld, *Anthropology*, 110.

²⁶³ Michael Gilsenan, "Lying, Honor, and Contradiction," in *Transaction & Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behaviour* (ed. B. Kapferer; Philadelphia: American Anthropological Association, 1976), 191–219, quote 191.

²⁶⁴ Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra* (2nd ed.; Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), xvi. Note the importance of embodiment: the quote continues "and to acquire conscious control over facial expression is an ability which takes practice from childhood". See also Barnes, *Pack of Lies*, 8; Banfield, *Moral Basis*, 148.

²⁶⁵ Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra*, xvii.

²⁶⁶ Gilsenan, "Lying, Honor, and Contradiction," 191.

²⁶⁷ De Certeau speaks of *la perruque*, 'wig', to highlight the way in which the practices of those with less power seek to use their (disadvantaged) situation for their own benefit, for example, the worker creates opportunities to do his own work during 'company time' or using 'company resources', cf. *Everyday Life*, 24–28.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Juliet du Boulay, "Lies, mockery and family integrity," in *Mediterranean Family Structures*. (ed. J. G. Peristiany; CSSA 13; Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 389–406; Els van Dongen, "Theatres of the Lie: 'Crazy' Deception and Lying as Drama," *A&M* 9 (2002): 135–51; Jana Fortier, "The Arts of Deception: Verbal Performances by the Rāute of Nepal," *JRAI* 8 (2002): 233–57; Gilsenan, "Lying, Honor, and Contradiction".

²⁶⁹ Ursula Sharma, "Trust, Privacy, Deceit and the Quality of Interpersonal Relationships: 'Peasant' Society Revisited," in *An Anthropology of Indirect Communication* (ed. J. Hendry and C. W. Watson; London / New York: Routledge, 2001) 115–27, quote 122. Note, *pace* Sharma, that this need not be linked to ideas of limited good.

thus social distance Gilsenan is able to assert that lying “is vital to the life of this society—indeed, lying *makes it possible*”.²⁷⁰

Lying can be used both to deceive and to reveal deeper truths. Jana Fortier describes how the Rāute adopt strategies of verbal evasion and deceit when in contact with Nepali agriculturalists in order to create social space for their nomadic practices. The main means by which this is achieved is through *uklān*, rhyming proverbs, which are performed in order both to entertain and mislead.²⁷¹ Similarly, in the psychiatric ward studied by van Dongen the very space and structure of the ward induced lying. Competition for staff time, disillusionment with years of care and no prospect of ‘a cure’, tensions between medical staff, psychologists and nurses, and the very art of the ‘lying truths of psychiatry’,²⁷² all provided an arena in which lying was a rational strategy for creating personal space. Lying is therefore a means of resisting the environment and even exaggerated lies, which are obviously false, may be admired because they show a person is unwilling to succumb to reality.²⁷³ On the other hand, sometimes lies can be told in order to ascertain the truth, for example, to catch another liar. Gilsenan recounts how a particularly depraved member of the community pretended to become a disciple of a visiting sheikh in order to test whether he possessed the powers he claimed. The whole group, normally warily suspicious of this individual, went along with the deception, thus exposing the visitor’s assertion of supernatural insight as a lie.²⁷⁴

The relationship between truth and deception can be complex. Van Dongen asserts that in the context of a mental health ward, “it did not make sense to look for the truth...nobody would make a deep search for the truth, simply because all were aware

²⁷⁰ Gilsenan, “Lying, Honor and Contradiction,” 211. Emphasis original. Cf. du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 405–406; Joy Hendry, “To Wrap or Not to Wrap: Politeness and Penetration in Ethnographic Inquiry,” *Man NS* 24 (1989): 620–35.

²⁷¹ Cf. Fortier, “Arts of Deception,” 233–34. Fortier (or rather, as she acknowledges, her ‘research assistant’, Bishnu) recognises that most proverbs were used to disguise the situation of the Rāute, these were ‘fake’ proverbs, since they “did not describe Rāute experiential knowledge”. Other proverbs were revelatory of Rāute perspectives. “‘Real’ proverbs are voiced only during moments of exceptional conversational conflict, effectively pulling off the elegant mask of the performance to reveal the sweating actor underneath”, Fortier, “Arts of Deception,” 237.

²⁷² T. Sasz, “The Lying Truths of Psychiatry,” *JLS* 3 (1986): 121–39.

²⁷³ Cf. van Dongen, “Theatres of the Lie,” 145–46. Such lies are ‘grotesque’ in Bakhtin’s sense of ridiculous and world reversing. Note also Abu-Lughod’s accounts of women maintaining the socially expected stance that they had no interest in their husbands and had thus fought him off on their wedding night, even though the tent walls had told a different story, *Veiled Sentiments*, 48. Van Dongen points to other uses of the lie: to joke, be polite, or because of a feeling of affection.

²⁷⁴ Gilsenan, “Lying, Honor and Contradiction,” 206–10; cf. Herzfeld, *Anthropology*, 65.

that there was more at stake than simple truth.”²⁷⁵ Part of what is at stake is ongoing relations between people as autonomous individuals. Bella DePaulo and Deborah Kashy conclude their empirical study of the differences in patterns of lying between close and more distant relationships by suggesting that truth can be more prejudicial than lies, with the result that “close relationships may be breeding grounds for deceit”.²⁷⁶ This conclusion appears to clash with the notion that marriages and friendships, for example, are arenas of trust and transparency. Barnes’ comments, however, are instructive:

An absence of mutual trust may lead to an abundance of lies, each party trying to deceive the other, but the presence of trust does not necessarily result in an absence of lies. In intimate face-to-face relations the shared expectation of mutual trust may lead to collaboration between, or more likely connivance by, liars and dupes in order to maintain the plausibility of a lie, as well as the plausibility of continuing trust. When this happens it is no longer obvious who is deceiving whom.²⁷⁷

In any case, when people live in close proximity, promoting misinformation by lying, or attempting to control access to information through secrecy, can only have the effect of delaying people’s eventual understanding. The hope is that by the time all are appraised of an event and the lie ‘uncovered’ it is sufficiently overshadowed by the individuals’ entanglement in other, more immediate considerations.²⁷⁸ That this is so indicates people know they should not lie or, to express the matter more precisely, that ‘truth’ is also a moral good. Campbell states that a “head of family who was sincere (*ειλικρινής*), or without cunning words (*ντόμπρος*), would be considered foolish and neglectful of his duty. This is not to say that the Sarakatsani fail to understand the virtues of truth and sincerity...”.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Van Dongen, “Theatres of the Lie,” 141. He notes the exception of when a patient harmed another.

²⁷⁶ Bella DePaulo and Deborah Kashy, “Everyday Lies in Close and Casual Relationships,” *JPSP* 74 (1998): 63–79, quote 77. Overall, people more often lied to those in casual rather than close relationships. See also Craig Palmer, “When to Bear False Witness: An Evolutionary Approach to the Social Context of Honesty and Deceit Among Commercial Fishers,” *Zygon* 28 (1993): 455–68.

²⁷⁷ Barnes, *Pack of Lies*, 23. There may be ‘norms’ of cooperation in deception. For example, a lie told only once or twice may not be considered as such: “Among the Navajo the fourth time a lie is repeated it becomes deceitful”, Barnes, *Pack of Lies*, 67.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Sharma, “Trust, Privacy, Deceit,” 122. Stanley Brandes’ cynicism may be typical: “It is simply assumed that if a person can get away with it, he will engage in almost any activity to further his own well-being regardless of how his actions affect others”, *Migration, Kinship and Community: Tradition and Transition in a Spanish Village* (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 149. On the other hand, Alexandra Agenti-Pullen describes the how deception can be *immediately* followed by disclosure, both to flirt and to avoid conflict with more the powerful by “a type of trial-and-error communication”, “Obvious Pretence: For Fun or For Real? Cross-Cousin and International Relationships in Sri Lanka,” *JRAI NS* 13 (2007): 313–29, quote 321.

²⁷⁹ Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 283.

Edward Banfield glossed the prioritisation of family interest as ‘amoral familism’.²⁸⁰ Herzfeld refrains from nuancing his rejection of Banfield’s thesis: “Lies... may be a legitimate defense of a kin group’s interests, and dismissing such a perspective as ‘amoral familism’...is a piece of self-contradictory nonsense that blithely ignores its fundamentally ethical focus”.²⁸¹ Herzfeld’s point is that Banfield only looks to deceptive behaviour in isolation, failing to include in his appraisal the social and moral good of ‘the family’ itself. This good is protected both by lying, and maintaining a reputation for lying and dirty tricks.²⁸² Du Boulay’s typology of lies distinguishes between defensive and offensive mendacity. Defensive lies conceal a person’s deficiencies with respect to social norms and thus are prevalent in situations of competing obligations in which it is impossible to meet all expectations, to conceal family behaviour, or to defend kin or friends. Offensive lies, for example, false accusations, are told in order to smear another’s character and to create mischief.²⁸³ All of these strategies can be employed to draw a veil around family activities.

Many early ethnographies constructed a sharp divide between those who could be trusted and those who could not; between those to whom the truth might be disclosed and outsiders from whom family secrets should be concealed.

Secrecy erects a barrier around the members of the family and their intimate relations. The family secrets, whether they have significant content or not, are relevant, simply because they represent something which is denied to other people who are not members of the group.²⁸⁴

The act of lying itself helps create group identity. Pitt-Rivers’ monograph shows how lying to outsiders both hides divisions within the community and performatively reduces these divisions as those on the ‘inside’ are able to ‘read’ the lie more easily than those on the ‘outside’.²⁸⁵ Fissures within the family group, however, point to the weakness of a simple ‘them’ versus ‘us’ view of the matter. People lie to family group members in order not to offend or to avoid appearing not to fulfil obligations to kin.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁰ “It is not too much to say that most people of Montegrano have no morality except, perhaps, that which requires service to the family”, *Moral Basis*, 134.

²⁸¹ Herzfeld, *Anthropology*, 110.

²⁸² Cf. Sharma, “Trust, Privacy, Deceit,” 121.

²⁸³ Du Boulay, *Portrait*, 399–404. Peristiany speaks of “the defensive use of deception and the offensive use of ridicule”, “Introduction,” 23.

²⁸⁴ Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 192.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra*, 8–10, 29–30; A. P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985), 89, 110–11.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Barnes, *Pack of Lies*, 70.

Individual social goals are thus as important as group concerns, although these may often coincide. Pitt-Rivers describes “a kaleidoscope of changing relationships” that depend upon context. He continues by observing that the individuals he studied “faced choices of allegiance and *defined themselves* by the attitudes they adopted. They were not simply members of a given tribe and tribal segment.”²⁸⁷

In Chapter 3 I used Rapport’s work to highlight both the importance of individual agency for practice, and the ubiquity of ambiguity in social interaction. The latter causes problems, for people cannot be certain that their trust and confidence is rightly placed, a situation only exacerbated when lying and deception are common features of social intercourse. To ameliorate uncertainty, when an interlocutor wishes to be taken seriously explicit markers are employed to warrant veracity, for example, ‘on my honour’.²⁸⁸ The latter is a type of oath, an appeal to a higher good or god to guarantee the truthfulness of the affirmation. Although oaths can form part of ordinary speech, more formal oath taking in sacred places can be used to validate protestations of innocence. Herzfeld’s study of oath taking among Cretan shepherds involved in cycles of reciprocal sheep rustling illustrates its social function.

The practice of resolution by oath permits a face-saving avoidance of further conflict in the name of higher truths, but this implies precisely the opposite of ingenuous trust: it furnishes a ritualised means of letting a rival escape further retributions without necessarily changing one’s mind about his guilt. The invitation to take the oath comes invested with a guarantee that the matter will end there. The very sanctity of the process is what protects the lie that it may—and, in general estimation, often does—conceal.”²⁸⁹

And even if the truth should come to light, “[m]ere evidence cannot gainsay an oath’s holy authority and it is both blasphemous and a heinous solecism to suggest that it might”.²⁹⁰ This does not lead to easy demands that others swear, for obliging another to do so means one cannot refuse to take an oath in return as a gesture of one’s own commitment to restoring goodwill. The accuser, for example, may have to swear that

²⁸⁷ Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra*, xix. My emphasis. Cf. Sharma, “Trust, privacy, deceit,” 121: “Family honour is not irrelevant in Ghanyari, but personal reputation can be distinguished from it to a large extent”.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Gilsenan, “Lying, Honor and Contradiction,” 199, 215; Barnes, *Pack of lies*, 21.

²⁸⁹ Michael Herzfeld, “Pride and Perjury: Time and the Oath in the Mountain Villages of Crete,” *Man* NS 25 (1990): 305–22, quote 311.

²⁹⁰ Herzfeld, “Pride and Perjury,” 312.

the animals *are* missing.²⁹¹

We have seen that attention to the social dynamics of lying does not preclude appreciation of truthfulness. But nor is it the case that family well-being and truth are the only moral goods. Many studies of the Mediterranean identify ‘honour’ as another, perhaps the key, value. Although space precludes extensive discussion of ‘honour and shame’, it is necessary to ask how ‘honour’ relates to the ostensibly dishonourable practice of lying. Bourdieu comments that the “ethos of honour is fundamentally opposed to a universal and formal morality which affirms the equality in dignity of all men and consequently the equality of their rights and duties”.²⁹² The reason for this is that a universal duty to be truthful curtails a person’s autonomy, which is the essence of honour.²⁹³ The obligation to speak truthfully for a person who adheres to the ‘honour code’, therefore, is situational: deception is perfectly acceptable as long as one deals with people to whom there are no duties of honour. Strangers would be such individuals. Thus to “lie is to deny the truth to someone who has the right to be told it and this right exists only where respect is due”.²⁹⁴ The moral obligation to tell the truth, then, derives from a prior commitment to individuals. This explains how an honourable man may be faithful and truthful to some yet not be dishonoured by practising deceit. Of course, omnipresent ambiguity means a person’s intentions are never transparent, so it is always possible to question whether a statement did in fact commit the honour of the speaker. Where no oath or other marker removes this doubt and the intentions of the interlocutor were misinterpreted the dupe, and not the deceiver, is humiliated.²⁹⁵ Pitt-Rivers concludes that according to the ‘honour code’ “it is lack of steadfastness in intentions which is dishonouring, not misrepresentation of them”.²⁹⁶ The implications for someone who sticks doggedly to the truth, the “pathologically honest”,²⁹⁷ are patent: “*Adami*, ‘a good man,’ is a term of moral approval but not of prestige. It relates to personal characteristics but not to social rank, save insofar as it is frequently followed

²⁹¹ Cf. Herzfeld, “Pride and Perjury,” 313.

²⁹² Pierre Bourdieu, “The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society,” in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (ed. J. G. Peristiany; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 191–242, quote 228.

²⁹³ See Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 79; Pitt-Rivers, “Honour,” 33.

²⁹⁴ Pitt-Rivers, “Honour,” 33.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Pitt-Rivers, “Honour,” 33.

²⁹⁶ Pitt-Rivers, “Honour,” 32; cf. Phillip Esler, “Making and Breaking an Agreement Mediterranean Style: A New Reading of Galatians 2:1 – 14,” *BI* 3 (1995): 285–314.

²⁹⁷ Barnes, *Pack of Lies*, 21.

by *mishin*, ‘poor chap’.”²⁹⁸ In a similar vein Sharma notes that truthful ‘simplicity’ is only advantageous “when allied to a genuine otherworldly piousness [sic], a reputation for utter moral rectitude”.²⁹⁹ If this is unattainable then a tendency towards truthfulness will probably result in others taking advantage.

A final area of anthropological research into the lie is the literature on ‘tricksters’. Robert Pelton’s description of the African trickster Ananse points to the essence of these characters: “Tricksterlike, Ananse speaks the truth by dissembling”.³⁰⁰ Lawrence Sullivan summarises a trickster as “a type of mythic figure distinguished by his skill at trickery and deceit as well as by his prodigious biological drives and exaggerated bodily parts”.³⁰¹ He or she is both comic and amoral, occasionally human, but often animal. Above all the trickster parodies pretension. Cristiano Grottanelli identifies essential traits of lowness, rule breaking in tragic yet comical ways, and sacredness.³⁰² Pelton cautions against two prominent approaches to tricksters: splitting the trickster’s contradictions up into different beings, and accepting the ambiguities but explaining them away.³⁰³ Similarly, Ellen Basso argues against the common approach of *distinguishing* tricksters from ordinary people, instead proposing that they are ‘flawed cultural heroes’ with whom people identify, at least in part.³⁰⁴ She comments that the

very attributes that make such tricksters inventive heroes and clownish fools in the first place are, after all, natural necessities of human intelligence, operating in practical concrete, face-to-face relations that people negotiate all the time, sometimes with considerable immediacy.³⁰⁵

She records numerous Kalapalo oral narratives, concluding that these “stories about deceit are especially concerned with people’s action qualified by feelings: about how

²⁹⁸ Gilsenan, “Lying, Honor and Contradiction,” 215.

²⁹⁹ Sharma, “Trust, Privacy, Deceit,” 121.

³⁰⁰ Robert Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 2.

³⁰¹ Lawrence Sullivan, “Tricksters,” *ER* 15.45–46, quote 45. See also Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

³⁰² Cf. Cristiano Grottanelli, “Tricksters, Scape-Goats, Champions, Saviors,” *HR* 23 (1983): 117–39, especially 120. Note his definition of a trickster: “a breaker of rules who is funny because he is lowly”.

³⁰³ Pelton, *Trickster*, 6.

³⁰⁴ Ellen Basso, *In Favor of Deceit: A Study of Tricksters in an Amazonian Society* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 3–8. Stanley Diamond contrasts the trickster with Job in “Introductory Essay: Job and the Trickster,” in *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (ed. P. Radin; New York: Schocken Books, 1976), xi–xxii. Diamond contrasts Job’s possession of clearly demarcated conceptions of good and evil with the trickster’s embrace of the ambivalence and tragedy of real life.

³⁰⁵ Basso, *In Favor of Deceit*, 8.

enacted emotions give meaning to particular contexts, relationships, and goals".³⁰⁶ The tales examine issues from various points of view, for example, the consequences of being either too sceptical or overly trusting, and seek to stimulate and engage the emotions. A key theme is how the trickster uses duplicity in the context of unequal power relations to reverse socially expected outcomes. Thus Basso states that "Kalapalo deceit has less to do with truth or falsehood than with enactment of an illusionary relationship".³⁰⁷ It is this reversal of the social order that Grottanelli highlights as the social 'meaning' of tricksters, since they demonstrate "the power of breaking boundaries, of getting away with it, and of achieving salvation through sin".³⁰⁸

The trickster motif views lying very differently from the Augustinian tradition that has informed much European thinking. It points to the truth of Barnes' comment that "[s]ocieties vary not only in their recognition of the ubiquity of lying and other modes of deceit but also in the way in which they evaluate different kinds of lies".³⁰⁹ The account of Michal's lie hails from a very different social setting to that of contemporary Western readers; how might it be understood?

5.4.3 Understanding Michal's Lie

So far I have not attempted to *define* lying. This apparent lacuna has enabled me to refrain from excluding material pertinent to this study on the basis of a potentially erroneous classification.³¹⁰ Nevertheless, an adequate definition will aid interpretation of Michal's actions and words. Augustine's definition of lying views it as the stating of one thing while thinking another, with the intent to deceive.³¹¹ Many commentators follow him in distinguishing between deception and the narrower practice of lying. Sissela Bok describes deception as communicating messages that are intended to lead others to believe what we ourselves do not hold.³¹² A lie is a subset of deception, "an intentionally deceptive message in the form of a *statement*".³¹³ According to this

³⁰⁶ Basso, *In Favor of Deceit*, 351.

³⁰⁷ Basso, *In Favor of Deceit*, 3.

³⁰⁸ Grottanelli, "Tricksters," 139.

³⁰⁹ Barnes, *Pack of lies*, 66.

³¹⁰ I find support for my approach in Sissela Bok's study: "I take it for granted that people ought to be free to use any definition of lying as they want, so long as they make clear which one they have in mind and so long as they do not use it to blind themselves to the moral dimensions of what they say and do", Bok, *Lying*, xxv.

³¹¹ C. mend. 23.

³¹² Bok, *Lying*, 13.

³¹³ Bok, *Lying*, 15. Emphasis original.

definition there are two important components to a lie: the *intention* to deceive, and the *verbal* statement. Regarding the first element there is little discussion.³¹⁴ About the necessity of ‘stating’ the lie, however, there is considerable debate.³¹⁵ In their typology of deceit Roderick Chisholm and Thomas Feehan maintain that ‘stating’ or ‘saying’ should not be interpreted narrowly to mean only something that is verbally asserted, but that it should also include a nod or other conventional sign.

What distinguishes lying as such from the other types of intended deception is the fact that, in telling the lie, the liar ‘gives an indication that he is expressing his own opinion.’ And he does this in a special way—by getting his victim to place his faith in him. The sense of to ‘say’, therefore, in which the liar may be said to ‘intend to say what is false’ is that of ‘to assert’.³¹⁶

An assertion is confirming the truth of what is communicated in spite of actually communicating what one believes to be false.³¹⁷ Thus lies are frequently considered worse than other forms of deception because “is assumed that, if a person *L asserts* a proposition *p* to another person *D*, then *D* has the *right to expect* that *L* himself believes *p*”.³¹⁸

This moves the question on, for now the issue is not simply whether someone intends to deceive and does so by saying something, but whether in any specific case they do, or do not, assert the truth of what they communicate. Thomas Carson supposes that the use of language involves an implicit promise to tell the truth, affirming that “making a statement (ordinarily) involves warranting that what one says is true”.³¹⁹ However, Maria Bettetini correctly observes that this “confunde el compromiso implícito a utilizar las palabras y las frases según la gramática y el léxico compartido,

³¹⁴ Note that it is not the veracity of the statement that is at stake, i.e. it is possible to lie yet state a fact, or not lie yet communicate a falsehood: the key issue is *intention*.

³¹⁵ For contrasting views see, e.g., J. L. A. Garcia, “Lies and the Vices of Deception,” *FP* 15 (1998): 514–37; Williams, “Reply to Garcia,” 242–48. Compare: “Lying is asserting what one does not think true. Asserting is a speech act, so only speech acts can be lies”, Garcia, “Lies,” 515; with “a commitment not to lie is compatible with all sorts of low cunning, dissimulation, hypocrisy, conniving, suppression of truth, and the like. To describe as honest someone who is habitually motivated to act in any of those ways seems clearly mistaken”, Williams, “Reply to Garcia,” 246. I concur with Barnes that it “is a strange view of morality that justifies deception but cringes at lying”, “Rahab’s Lie,” 9. Bernard Williams speaks of ‘fetishising [verbal] assertion’, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 107–110.

³¹⁶ Roderick Chisholm and Thomas Feehan, “The Intent to Deceive,” *JP* 74 (1977): 143–59, quote 149. Emphasis original.

³¹⁷ In their typology of deception Chisholm and Feehan classify lying as “always involv[ing] the intent of what we have called ‘positive deception *simpliciter*’ [i.e. to add to another’s beliefs something false]”, “Intent to Deceive,” 153. Emphasis original.

³¹⁸ Chisholm and Feehan, “Intent to Deceive,” 153. Emphasis original.

³¹⁹ Thomas Carson, “The Definition of Lying,” *Noûs* 40 (2006): 284–306, quote 292.

con la convención de decir la verdad y no engañar".³²⁰ Although the ethnographic data above leads one to be sceptical of Carson's claims that the default situation of most intercourse is that statements will be true, his emphasis upon the importance of the liar 'warranting' the lie is helpful.³²¹ Carson commends a definition of lying as involving a warrant because it explains why there is often dispute about whether a statement is a lie.³²² Furthermore,

it makes sense of the common view that lying involves a breach of trust. To lie...is to invite others to trust and rely on what one says by warranting its truth, but, at the same time, to betray that trust by making false statements that one does not believe.³²³

In courtrooms witnesses are required explicitly to state that they warrant the truth of what they affirm. In everyday interaction the warranting of an affirmation is usually implicit, which means it can be ambiguous and open to manipulation. We have seen that in societies in which people assume others' statements will quite often *not* be true, especially when dealing with unknown or casual acquaintances, there is tremendous ambiguity, requiring special speech markers explicitly to warrant veracity, although even then truthfulness does not *necessarily* follow. Furthermore, interlocutors are not obliged to recognise a warrant, indeed they may manipulate expectations for their own idiosyncratic ends. Nevertheless, it does seem to be reasonable to suppose that the "wrongness or culpability of a lie is determined, in part, by the strength with which it is warranted to be true".³²⁴

There are two instances of lying in 1 Samuel 19.10–17. In the first case Michal precedes her lie by disguising a *teraphim*. Regardless of the significance of this item³²⁵ it is essential to the efficacy of her lie. The anthropological material pointed to the ubiquity of lying as a defensive measure in societies where the family is central. Given

³²⁰ Maria Bettetini, *Breve historia de la mentira: De Ulises a Pinocho* (CT; trans P. Linares; Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2002), 52.

³²¹ Cf. Carson, "Definition of Lying," 295–98. In a footnote Carson recognises that the presumption of implicit warranty is not universal, quoting Barnes, *Pack of Lies*, 70, who in turn cites Gilsenan, "Lying, Honor, and Contradiction". I do not accept Carson's assertion that the "villagers Barnes describes have different understandings about when statements are warranted to be true than people in most other societies", "Definition of Lying," 305.

³²² Carson's definition is: "A person S tells a lie to another person S1 iff: 1. S makes a false statement x to S1, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), 3. S states x in a context in which S thereby warrants the truth of x to S1, and 4. S does not take herself to be not warranting the truth of what she says to S1", "Definition of Lying," 298.

³²³ Carson, "Definition of Lying," 302.

³²⁴ Carson, "Definition of Lying," 302

³²⁵ See note 6, above.

the importance of kin in the Old Testament, attention to how mendacity functions in ethnographic accounts can suggest a new interpretation of Michal's words and actions. It was observed that because people are sceptical of the claims of others, they tend not to have confidence in their affirmations unless accompanied by a marker of intention. The data surveyed indicated that oaths were one way in which an individual's true purposes can be revealed. In our text, though, Michal does not warrant her assertion that David is ill in this way. Instead, the narrative takes great pains to describe her preparation of a dummy comprising *teraphim* and pillow of goat's hair.³²⁶ I will argue below that there is a theological motive for prolonging the focus upon the *teraphim*, but the ruse itself also serves as a warrant for Michal's words. The messengers may have thought that Saul's daughter would 'naturally' have sided with her father against David, yet readers may suspect that the very fact they have been sent on this mission could have sown seeds of doubt in their minds so that they distrusted Michal's assertion. Yet a dummy purporting to be David or one associated with a healing ritual—it is not necessary to choose between these options—pointed to the truth of her claim that David was sick: she warranted her assertion. On the definition above, Michal lied.

To readers, Michal's other statement in 1 Samuel 19.11–17 is obviously a lie; but Saul cannot be so certain. Although her claim that David threatened to kill her is not explicitly warranted one may suppose that the context of Michal and Saul's relationship as father and daughter constitutes a type of implicit warrant. Indeed, I argued above that the very nature of Michal's affirmation plays upon this supposition. One could ask why Saul, who obviously considers himself deceived in the matter of the *teraphim*, should think that her words are any more reliable. Jonathan Adler comments that when people betray another by lying, "although full trust may have been sacrificed sufficient trust may remain".³²⁷ The ambiguity of the situation and the understanding of 'natural'

³²⁶ The translation of **כְּבִיר** **דַּעֲזִים** is contested. LXX reads **כבד**, 'liver', for **כְּבִיר**, and Josephus subsequently portrays Michal as putting a throbbing goat's liver into the bed to give the impression that David was gasping in his illness, *Ant.* 6.217. Since **דַּעֲזִים** signifies goats' hair (Ex 25.4) and the cognates **כְּבָרָה**, 'sieve' (Amos 9.9), and **מַכְפֵּר**, 'network', (Ex 27.4; 38.4; 2 Kgs 8.15), it is probable that **כְּבִיר** **דַּעֲזִים** is something woven from goat's hair. Thus, "un tresse en poils de chèvre", de Vaux *Samuel*, 103, cf. Rouillard and Tropper, "TRPYM," 343–46. Smith however, contends that **מַרְאַשְׁתֵּרִיו** means 'at his head' (cf. 1 Sam 26.7; 1 Kgs 19.6), which "would not naturally be used of a net put over the head", *Samuel*, 180, thus a pillow or blanket, *pace* McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 326, who suggests the article indicates 'a certain tangle', cf. GKC 125r. Caird strikes the right note: "The phrase *pillow of goat's hair* is a conjectural translation of unintelligible Hebrew. We have accordingly to accept with resignation the fact that we do not know the nature of either of the objects which Michal used for her deception", *Samuel*, 987. Emphasis original.

³²⁷ Adler, "Lying," 441.

loyalties mean Saul's apparent acceptance of Michal's second lie is understandable. In any case, drawing upon the anthropological data, one could surmise that both he and she may be viewed as not desiring to validate the truth of the matter for the sake of their continuing relationship.

On the definition above it is clear that Michal does indeed lie, twice. However, it is one matter to analyse whether Michal dissembles, another to think that there are cases in which lies are acceptable or, specifically, that Michal's deception might be justified. On the rigorist view, they are not, since even the prospect of David's death would not justify her dissembling as she stated David's infirmity. Given that the author does not indicate any sort of mental reservation, it is appropriate to think that her lie is justified only if Michal did not have the obligation to reveal the truth to either the messengers or Saul. The accounts of deception in the Old Testament would tend to indicate that lying occurs to those outside the 'in-group'. The commentators noted above assume that the group is both static and known, *viz.* either Israel or the family. Although many ethnographies also point to lying in service of the family or village, they also highlight that groups are not fixed but fluid, and that individuals use situational ambiguity to define and redefine their relationships with others.³²⁸ For this reason truthfulness is not expected unless *explicitly* warranted, and *even then* lying is only condemned if a person's intentions are unambiguous. Although I have argued that Michal's lie to the messengers was warranted by the *teraphim* dummy, the polysemous nature of symbols means that the warrant could be misinterpreted. By resending the messengers, Saul indicates that he suspects as much, and when the matter is laid bare these suspicions are confirmed. The anthropological perspectives adduced above suggest that the issue for them would not have been the lie as such, but her choice of David. This is confirmed in the text, where both Saul and Michal assume that the fundamental question is one of loyalty not mendacity, for it is *not* the lie but the *change in loyalty* that is challenged. Both father and daughter understand that Michal's loyalty is *revealed* by her lie. But then, as I explained above, Michal lies again. This time she uses cultural categories to redefine her loyalty as being to Saul. Only readers, however, know this is what she does: whilst Saul can accept her words as a reaffirmation of his daughter's loyalty to the family, readers can perceive her true allegiance.

³²⁸ Cf. Herzfeld, *Poetics of Manhood*, 76.

A final consideration is whether Michal's lying and disloyalty to Saul signifies that she is a trickster figure. Ann Engar claims that many Old Testament women demonstrate their faith in God by engaging in trickery. "Though deceit has connotations of wrong doing, the trickery of each woman is seemingly blessed by God and brings about his will".³²⁹ Michal certainly fulfils the criteria for a trickster adduced by Naomi Steinberg: she is socially disruptive and operates from a position of comparative weakness.³³⁰ However, Michal is not a comic figure, a defining feature of virtually all tricksters. This is important, for not every liar is a trickster.³³¹ Furthermore, although Michal does appear to resist expectations of loyalty to her father, she is not a model of resistance to David; indeed, if she were, the author's theological point would be undermined.³³² Given the absence of a number of defining attributes of tricksters it seems best to view Michal simply as a woman who lied to her father. By doing so Michal crosses from the category of loyal family member to outsider or, at least, to some sort of ambiguous, indeterminate state 'between' categories, a place where she remains for the remainder of her textual life.

To conclude, Michal's 'voice' tells lies. But by lying she reveals that she has chosen loyalty to David over Saul. Although modern interpreters are scandalised more by her mendacity than her choice of allegiance, I have suggested that ancient implied readers would have viewed the matter the other way around. Her lie was merely an incidental consequence of her prior choice to be loyal to David. Michal's voice, then, speaks of the priority of loyalty to God's anointed. Saul's question, the only time he utters anything in this pericope, speaks of the priority of family loyalty. The key theological question concerns which of the text's voices is affirmed by the author.

³²⁹ Ann Engar, "Old Testament Women as Tricksters," in *Mapping of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text* (BR 33; ed. V. L. Tollers and J. Maier; Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 143–157, quote 143. The purpose of women's trickery is defence of Israel or family.

³³⁰ Naomi Steinberg, "Israelite Tricksters, Their Analogues and Cross-cultural Study," *Semeia* 42 (1988): 1–13; cf. Susan Niditch, "Samson As Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 608–24; idem, *Tricksters and Underdogs: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Melissa Jackson, "Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters," *JSOT* 26 (2002): 29–46. Steinberg also notes, however, that biblical tricksters are human, not demigod or animal; and that whilst non-biblical trickster tales deal with macrocosmic issues of human boundaries the Bible's stories touch upon the microcosm of daily life, cf. "Israelite Tricksters," 9.

³³¹ Cf. Edwin Good, "Deception and Women: A Response," *Semeia* 42 (1988): 117–32, especially 120–21.

³³² For the view that David himself is a trickster see Raymond-Jean Frontain, "The Trickster Tricked: Strategies of Deception and Survival in the David Narrative," in *Mapping of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text* (BR 33; ed. V. L. Tollers and J. Maier; Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 170–192.

5.5 MICHAL'S VOICE APPROVED

I have suggested that Saul's voice would have resonated with cultural mores and that despite his murderous intentions readers would have expected Michal to remain loyal to her father. Right from the very beginning of the pericope, however, readers are led to mistrust Saul's voice. The narrative uses a variety of devices to undermine his perspective and promote an alternative ethic.

5.5.1 A House, in the Night

One of Mikhail Bakhtin's central concepts for literary interpretation is the chronotope,³³³ an intersection of time and place that cannot be reduced to either. According to Bakhtin

[i]n the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.³³⁴

The significance of this for narrative is that events are organised by the chronotope, "it is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied",³³⁵ an image that readers utilise in their interpretation.

The initial action in our passage occurs at night. In biblical narratives the night is an occasion of danger and uncertainty, a time to attack,³³⁶ when protection is required,³³⁷ when death may visit³³⁸ and when a negative assessment of even righteous acts is expected.³³⁹ In short, the night is the archetypal time for wickedness.³⁴⁰ But these allusions by no means exhaust the significance of Saul's sending messengers to the house at night. This particular space—time combination or chronotope is pregnant with negative associations that count against Saul's voice. Apart from Joshua's spies'

³³³ Cf. "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (ed. M. Holquist; trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist; Austin: Texas University Press, 1981), 84–258.

³³⁴ Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.

³³⁵ Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 250.

³³⁶ E.g. Josh 8.3; Judg 7.9; 9.32–34; 16.2; 1 Sam 14.36; 2 Kgs 6.14; 8.21.

³³⁷ E.g. Ex 13.22; 1 Sam 25.16.

³³⁸ E.g. Ex 11.4; 12.29–30; 2 Kgs 19.35.

³³⁹ E.g. Gen 19.34; Judges 6.27; 1 Sam 15.11, 16; 28.8.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Ps 17.3: 'If you try my heart, if you visit me by night, if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress'. The night can also be the time for provision, cf. Num 11.9 and visions from God, cf. Gen 20.3; 26.24; 40.5; 46.2.

sojourn at Rahab's house, mentioned below, the two other Old Testament instances of people laying siege to a house at night compromise Saul's voice by alluding to the most depraved iniquity.³⁴¹ Lot's invitation to the angels in Sodom and Gomorrah presents the house as a place of refuge and succour in contrast with the dangers of spending the night in the village square.³⁴² But even before the family and guests had retired to sleep Lot's house was surrounded by agitating townsmen, and only divine intervention saved Lot and his visitors from being abused. The parallels with 1 Samuel 19 are patent, as Figure 4 reveals.

FIGURE 4 – Parallels between Genesis 19 and 1 Samuel 19

	Genesis 19	1 Samuel 19
A man in his house:	Lot	David
Accompanied by:	Lot's family and angels	Michal
House besieged by:	Townsmen of Sodom	Saul's Messengers
Deliverance by:	Angels	Michal

In both cases the threat to the house and its occupants is removed by someone else in the man's house, the angels in Genesis 19 and Michal in our passage. The comparison between the men of Sodom and Saul's messengers, who fulfil exactly the same role in each case, clearly portray Saul in a negative light, and partly assuage doubts concerning Michal's behaviour.

The second instance of the chronotope occurs in Judges 19. A man of Gibeah invites a Levite stranger to spend the night in his house rather than in the square.³⁴³ Again, the house was surrounded by 'wicked men' demanding that the man be handed over to them for sexual gratification, and once again the owner of the house confronted them, offering his virgin daughter in lieu.³⁴⁴ This time there are no structural parallels to the angels in Genesis 19 to strike the assailants blind; and the Levite expelled his concubine to endure their abuse. Although the text does not say that the men of Gibeah

³⁴¹ In a less threatening situation Abraham's servant, on his mission to find a wife for Isaac, asks Rebekah if there is room at her house to stay, cf. Gen 24.23.

³⁴² Gen 19.1–8. Two recent interpretations that compare day and night in this passage are Robert Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) and Brian Doyle, "‘Knock, Knock, Knockin’ on Sodom’s Door’: the Function of פֶתַח/דָלַת in Genesis 18–19," *JSOT* 28 (2004): 431–48.

³⁴³ Judg 19.20.

³⁴⁴ This horrifying thought is probably meant to signify that the host was beyond reproach with respect to fulfilling his duties of hospitality, since there is no reason to assume this offer would not have been equally as shocking to ancient readers as modern ones. For a detailed exegesis of this passage see Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 65–91.

wanted to kill the host or Levite stranger,³⁴⁵ Judges 19 displays the same chronotope of the house at night. Their perversities are not attributed to Saul, but the fact that his hometown was Gibeah directly links his actions in 1 Samuel 19 and the men of Gibeah in the Judges account.³⁴⁶

To conclude, by setting David's escape from Saul in a house, in the night, the author undermines Saul's voice, however much it may have chimed with contemporary morals.

5.5.2 Sending and Being Sent

Another way in which the writer of Samuel subverts Saul's voice is by highlighting the decreasing efficacy of Saul's commands as the narrative progresses. This is particularly true of his sending. Whilst Saul is the subject of **שָׁלַח** in verses 11, 14 and 15, his messengers' mandate "shrinks into an anticlimax".³⁴⁷ At first Saul sends messengers to *kill* David. Even before Michal's ruse has been discovered, however, the narrative hints at a diminution of Saul's kingly power: **וַיִּשְׁלַח...לְקַחַת אֶת־דָּיוֹד**, he sends messengers to *fetch* David.³⁴⁸ Nor is this the end of the process. The messengers, thinking Michal remained loyal to Saul as discussed above, accepted her lie as an adequate excuse. Saul, not so easily deflected—and possibly alerted by his prior apprehensions concerning Michal and Jonathan's advocacy of David—sends again. This time, however, **וַיִּשְׁלַח...לְרֹאֹת אֶת־דָּיוֹד**, he merely sends messengers to *see* David. Ironically, David is absent during most of Saul's decreasingly efficacious sending—to kill, then to fetch, and finally to see. Only the reader, with Michal and the narrator, knows this; Saul remains in not so blissful ignorance,³⁴⁹ a sardonic comment upon the pretensions to kingly control symbolised by his sending messengers.³⁵⁰ Furthermore, some commentators suggest that 'brought up' indicates Saul's house was

³⁴⁵ Although cf. Judg 20.5 where the Levite embellishes the narrative report in Judg 19 by suggesting that he was threatened with death.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Wenham, *Story*, 70–71. Note also that the concubine was from Bethlehem, David's hometown.

³⁴⁷ Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 265.

³⁴⁸ The differences in vocabulary are one reason for rejecting David Tsumura's proposal that there was only one sending, i.e. verse 11 = verse 14, *The First Book of Samuel* (NICOT; Grand Rapids / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), 494.

³⁴⁹ Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 258.

³⁵⁰ That it is typical of kings to oblige others to do their bidding is further evidenced by David's sending, **שָׁלַח**, of messengers to inquire about and then fetch Bathsheba, cf. 2 Sam 11.1–3.

on the height of Gibeah.³⁵¹ This supposition can be juxtaposed with an observation by Gilsenan to intensify Saul's bathos. Gilsenan refers to a powerful lord whose

domain lies beneath his gaze and he is the focus of men's regard; he is the centre of a landscape formed and given meaning by the controlling force of his possession. This visual/spatial perspective is crucial both to the fantasy and the actualities of power, to the fantasy as part of the actualities of power.³⁵²

The lord both sees and is seen to see, a construction of reality represented by the location and design of his palace: an imposing edifice high upon the hill overlooking his domains, and with large windows in which he can sit in order to be observed by others as he fulfils the obligations of his position, including that of appearing to take his ease. If Saul's palace is indeed on the hill it, too, could reflect a construal of his kingship as 'feudal' control, not only by Saul himself but his subjects. They would observe the sending of messengers and interpret this action as an indication of his authority. By doing so, of course, they inscribe Saul's authority in themselves.

By verse 16 David, however, has vanished from sight. Saul is wholly thwarted and left to ponder his political impotence. His only recourse is to challenge his daughter, although even then his vocabulary implicitly recognises that he has failed: whereas the NRSV glosses 'let my enemy go' he accuses Michal both of deceiving him ותַּשְׁלַחְךָ, and of *sending* David. The author has Michal rub more salt into his wounds with her reply: 'He said', with the emphatic pronoun, **הִיא**, שְׁלַחֲנִי, 'send me'.³⁵³ There is no direct speech by David in the pericope, yet even his 'reported' discourse, in his absence, is utterly effective. Whilst Saul struggles yet fails to effect his commands employing significant military resources, David's single word and the assistance of a woman³⁵⁴ achieve his objective.

The following verses hint at divine working behind David's escape, since when Saul once again sends messengers to capture David in Naioth in Ramah they fall into a prophetic frenzy. After sending messengers three times with the same result he himself travels to Naioth. Yet Saul is not only unable to control the messengers but is also

³⁵¹ Eerdmann, *Samuel*, 252; Kirkpatrick, *Samuel*, 172.

³⁵² Gilsenan, *Lords*, 34; cf. also 3–22, which imagines how a great lord seated in his palace fits into a wider narrative concerning the exercise of power.

³⁵³ Piel imperative with suffix. NRSV translates 'let me go', which disguises the irony.

³⁵⁴ NB this is simply a comment upon the mores of ancient manly honour.

subject to a similar experience.³⁵⁵ This is a far cry from Saul's initial experience of sending. In 1 Samuel 11.7 and 13.2, for example, his command was devastatingly effective. The turning point seems to come in 1 Samuel 15.20, where Saul's view is that he has walked in the ways God has sent him.³⁵⁶ Samuel, however, hears not obedience but the bleating of sheep and rejects Saul as king.³⁵⁷ From this point Saul's sending is ineffective, except when it is to promote David.³⁵⁸ The contrast between the two men could not be sharper, and points to the writer's subversion of Saul's voice.

An intra-textual allusion to **שָׁלַח** in Joshua 2.1–22 supports this interpretation. The parallels between the passages are remarkable and I think it probable that the author of 1 Samuel 19.10–17 had access either to the Rahab text or the underlying traditions, which he used to inform the Michal narrative. Although the events described in each passage are distinctive the structural and verbal connections are obvious. First, both start with a woman in a house, who is accompanied by men whom she will eventually lead to safety. Second, the threat to Joshua's spies commences when the king of Jericho sends (the same verbal root, **שָׁלַח**, as when Saul sends) for Rahab.³⁵⁹ Third, the time of the subsequent action is night; and, fourth, the initiative comes from the women. Fifth, both Rahab and Michal lie to their king's messengers.³⁶⁰ Sixth, as Michal takes, **הַקְרֵב**, the *teraphim* in order to simulate David's sleeping body,³⁶¹ Rahab takes, **הַקְרֵב**, the men in order to hide them.³⁶² Seventh, the means of escape is through the window. The author of Joshua concludes the account of the spies' escape with the phrase **וַתִּשְׁלַחַם וַיָּלֹכֶד**, ‘she sent them away and they departed’. Thus, eighth, just as the king of Jericho

³⁵⁵ 1 Sam 19.18–24.

³⁵⁶ Note the use of the verb **וַיַּאֲלַק בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַחַנִי יְהוָה: שָׁלַח**

³⁵⁷ 1 Sam 15.26. Note the irony: **קוֹל יְהוָה** (what Saul hears, 1 Sam 15.20) with **קוֹל-הַצְאָן...וּקוֹל הַבָּקָר** (what Samuel hears in v. 14).

³⁵⁸ 1 Sam 16.19–20, 22; 18.5. In contrast, David's sending is successful, cf. 1 Sam 25.14; 26.4; 2 Sam 2.5; 3.14; 9.5; 10.2, 7; 11.1, 3–4, 6, 14, 27; 13.7; 18.12; 19.11. In the Bathsheba episode, which uses **שָׁלַח** extensively, the problem is not with his ability to command, rather the view that he himself is above moral norms. Although I suggested above that some ethnographies point to an expectation that ‘great lords’ will ‘abuse’ their position, as a sign of their power, the Old Testament’s view of such excesses is uniformly negative, cf. Deut 17.14–20; 1 Sam 8.6–18; 2 Sam 12. The latter perspective is clear also in 1 Sam 22.11, Saul’s only ‘successful’ post-rejection sending—for the priests of Nob in order to have them massacred.

³⁵⁹ **וַיִּשְׁלַח יְרִיחֹה אֶל-רְחִיב** Josh 2.3.

³⁶⁰ The imperative at the end of her speech (Josh 2.5), **רְקָפֶו** (3rd person masculine plural), indicates that she speaks to the king’s messengers rather than him personally—like Saul he does not deign to visit himself.

³⁶¹ **וַתִּתְקַל מִיכָּל אֶת-הַתְּרִפִּים** 1 Sam 19.13.

³⁶² **וַתִּתְקַה דָּאשָׁח אֶת-שְׁנִי דָּאֲנָשִׁים** Josh 2.4.

sent in vain but Rahab sent successfully, so with king Saul and Michal; and, finally, the verb **הָלַךְ** is employed by the writer of Samuel to conclude the ‘David’s escape’ portion of the narrative in verse 12.³⁶³

What do these intra-textual allusions mean for the interpretation of 1 Samuel 19? Obviously, the meaning of the Rahab text is quite different, yet the close parallels point to the real possibility that readers were meant to connect the two narratives. The King of Jericho represents the land to be conquered and Joshua’s spies the precursors of the rightful heirs to the territory, which will be given by God.³⁶⁴ The king is duped by Rahab, despite his best attempts at ‘sending’, and she lowers the escapees through a window so that they are able to get away. In the Samuel narrative Michal replaces Rahab as the cunning woman who deceives a king. It is probably significant that the allusion is to the king of Jericho for it portrays Saul as the king to be defeated by miraculous means. And David, like the spies, the inheritor of the king’s kingdom.

To conclude, Saul’s voice is further undermined by his inability efficaciously to send, something highlighted in 1 Samuel 19. It is a reminder of a theological point made repeatedly in Samuel that exercise of power depends not on human will alone but divine providence.

5.5.3 *Teraphim*

The most commentated topic in our passage is the identity of the *teraphim*. Despite the stalwart efforts of exegetes, however, the meaning of both **הַתְּרָפִים** and **בְּבֵיר חֲצִזִים** remain opaque.³⁶⁵ In short, there is little to profit in discussing the precise identity of the objects Michal employed for her ruse. Nevertheless, I suggest that the author highlights her use of *teraphim* to subvert Saul’s voice.

The *teraphim* appear to link Michal with Rachel, both daughters loyal to their husbands over their fathers.³⁶⁶ Bodner elaborates that Genesis 31 and 1 Samuel 19

³⁶³ The whole phrase reads: **וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבְרֹךְ וַיִּמְלֹט**. The additional words function as a bridge between the statement in verse 10, **וַיִּמְלֹט**, and the conclusion in verse 18 that employs the identical phrase, **וַיִּבְרֹךְ וַיִּמְלֹט**.

³⁶⁴ See the dialogue between Rahab and the spies in verses 9–14. For discussion of the *differences* between the two passages see André Caquot and Philippe du Robert, *Les Livres de Samuel* (CAT VI; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1994), 233.

³⁶⁵ See notes 6 and 334, above.

³⁶⁶ So, e.g., Alter, *Art*, 120; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 197.

“feature angry father-in-laws (Saul and Laban), younger daughters (Michal and Rachel), fugitive husbands (David and Jacob) and deceptive idols”.³⁶⁷ Although these texts may constitute a common type-scene³⁶⁸ this does not seem to me to be the key to understanding the writer’s emphasis upon Michal’s use of *teraphim*.³⁶⁹ The only other reference to this object in the books of Samuel is in 1 Samuel 15.23, a chapter central to the author’s whole thesis. The narrative commences when Saul is charged to attack and utterly destroy, חָרֵם, Amalek.³⁷⁰ The text highlights the partial fulfilment of his commission: ‘Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the cattle and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was valuable, and would not utterly destroy, חָרֵם, them; all that was despised and worthless they utterly destroyed, חָרֵם’.³⁷¹

In the next verse YHWH himself declares to Samuel that Saul’s disobedience means he regrets making him king; and Samuel journeys to confront Saul. The latter protests that he has been obedient, and that the spoil was brought back ‘to sacrifice, זְבַח, to the LORD your God in Gilgal’.³⁷² Niditch notes, however, that from “*zēbāhîm*, sacrifices of the sort Saul mentions[,] one makes a feast and enjoys eating meat from the sanctified flesh. That devoted to destruction is not to be shared with God in any sense.”³⁷³ Thus Saul’s response provokes Samuel to pronounce:³⁷⁴

Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices (זְבַח),
as in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice (זְבַח)
and to heed than the fat of rams.

Then comes an explicit reference to *teraphim*: כִּי חֲטֹאת־קָסֶם מֵרִי וְאָרוֹן וְתַרְפִּים

³⁶⁷ Keith Bodner, *National Insecurity: A Primer on the First Book of Samuel* (Toronto: Clements, 2003), 140. Emphasis original.

³⁶⁸ Alter’s concept, cf. *Art*, 47–62.

³⁶⁹ Although the similarity of structure is suggestive, since “[d]ans ces parallèles, Saül tient le rôle de Laban, le personnage négatif de Gn 29-31”, Grillet and Lestienne, *1 Règnes*, 314. There is certainly intertextuality, although I doubt whether one text is a commentary on the other, as claimed by Craig Y. S. Ho, “The Stories of the Family Troubles of Judah and David: A Study of the their Literary Links,” *VT* 44 (1999): 514–31.

³⁷⁰ On חָרֵם in general see, e.g., J. P. U. Lilley, “Understanding the *Herem*,” *TynBul* 44 (1993): 169–77; Jackie A. Naudé, “חָרֵם,” *NIDOTTE* 2.276–77; Niditch, *War*, 28–77.

³⁷¹ 1 Sam 15.10.

³⁷² 1 Sam 15.21, cf. 15.15. On the ban as sacrifice see Niditch, who notes that 1 Samuel 15 “evidences two sorts of tension: the tension between the ideology of statecraft and the ban—or perhaps between more or less rigorous interpretations of the ban—and the tension between the ban as sacrifice and the ban as rooting out of that which is unclean and sinful”, *War*, 28–55, quote 61.

³⁷³ Niditch, *War*, 62; cf. Richard Averbeck, “זְבַח,” *NIDOTTE* 1.1066–73.

³⁷⁴ The change from narration to succinct verse highlights the climactic nature of Samuel’s words, cf. Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 98. For the same reason Klein suggests they may have been preserved independently of the narrative, *1 Samuel*, 152.

הַפְצֵר, ‘for rebellion [is] [the] sin of divination, presumption [is] vanity and *teraphim*'.³⁷⁵ Here Saul's disobedience is classified as rebellion, in turn described as the sin of divination. It is juxtaposed with presumption,³⁷⁶ Saul's pushiness to get things done his way.³⁷⁷ The piling up of the negative characterisations of rebellion, idolatry, and presumption, all associated with the concrete physical object *teraphim*, produces the sensation of a wave whose crest tips over and crashes down as Samuel declares God's rejection of Saul in the next verse: 'Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king'.

Many commentators, obviously at a loss to explain the significance of the *teraphim*, think that they cast a negative shadow over Michal. Bergen declaims that in "the present compelling scene and without the intrusion of a didactic commentary, the writer suggests that Michal was as much a spiritual rebel as her father" and that "whereas Michal trusted in a teraphim to save David, David trusted in the Lord".³⁷⁸ I doubt that this is the issue. Bergen's citation of Psalm 59 does not inform the first element of his contention; and the more moderate positions of others, for example, Klein's suggestion that the *teraphim* were Michal's, not David's, are without textual

³⁷⁵ Smith comments that this "verse is obscure, and the versions do not give much help", *Samuel*, 138. I follow the MT; for discussion of the LXX see Grillet and Lestienne, *I Règnes*, 279–80. Regarding the first clause: NRSV, on the basis of presumed parallelism with verse 22, compares the seriousness of rebellion and divination. Others define rebellion as the sin of divination (e.g. Smith, McCarter), or suggest rebellion 'is like' (Klein), 'is as' (Eerdman) divination. On the order of subject and predicate in nominal clauses see WO'C 130, and the literature cited there. Regarding the second clause: I take the subject to be הַפְצֵר, cf. WO'C 591. Driver proposes that "the fundamental idea of אָנוֹן is apparently what is *valueless and disappointing*", *Notes*, 127. Emphasis original. It denotes, according to context, either calamity, naughtiness or worthlessness, the latter in reference to idols, cf. Isa 66.3; Zech 10.2, where הַתְּרִפְפִים דְבָרוּ אָנוֹן. I translate it 'vanity', cf. Klein. On the meaning of הַפְצֵר see below.

³⁷⁶ הַפְצֵר is the pausal form of an absolute hiphil infinitive with substantival force, cf. Driver, *Notes*, 127. פְצֵר means to urge or press upon (Gen 19.3, 9; 33.11; Judg 19.7; 2 Kgs 2.17; 5.16); the hiphil, which is unique, appears to mean 'display pushing' or, in the nominal infinitive, 'forwardness', 'presumption', cf. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 145; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 263; pace Smith who translates it 'obstinacy' on the basis that a "too insistent [en]treaty of God was not Saul's fault", *Samuel*, 139. He overlooks the fact that there is no need for God to be involved here: the charge is that Saul was too insistent or presumptuous *on his own account*. Smith attempts to find an alternative reading that could be parallel to מְרִי yet corrupted to הַפְצֵר. LXX reads ἐπτάγουσιν, 'they urge on', leading him to suggest חַפֵּצָו, but McCarter doubts if this is original, being a change "which could have arisen from the reading of MT in the third century B.C. when r and w were especially easily confused", *1 Samuel*, 263.

³⁷⁷ On the latter as a good characterisation of Saul cf. 1 Sam 14.24–46; 15.13, 15, 20. I think it is pushiness rather than a concern with 'ritual action without obedience', as claimed by Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 100. Cf. Evans who notes that one of Samuel's central themes is the contrast between 'grasping' after power and offering support from a position of weakness, *Samuel*, 9–10.

³⁷⁸ Robert Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel* (NAC 7; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 208.

support.³⁷⁹ Instead I contend that the *teraphim* symbolise both Saul's rejection of God and God's rejection of him as ruler. Observing that the *teraphim* of 1 Samuel 15.23 form the link between Samuel's declaration that God prefers obedience to sacrifice, precisely in contradistinction to Saul's priorities, and the final rejection of Saul as king has tremendously important ramifications for their significance in Michal's ruse. In the drama of chapter 19 the *teraphim* remind readers that although Saul appears to act as king, the days of his reign are numbered. Their prominence in the narrative is clearly intended to subvert the authority of Saul's voice: however acceptable it may have seemed to his contemporaries, it is a vain rebellion against God.

5.5.4 Michal's characterisation

At *this stage* in the narrative Michal is presented by the author as a reliable character.³⁸⁰ Although her literary persona is flat rather than rounded two 'character traits' can be identified.³⁸¹ First, Michal is Saul's 'youngest daughter'.³⁸² In Old Testament narrative such apparently brief descriptors or epithets are significant.³⁸³ Sternberg explains that in general "the epithet is a ticking bomb, sure to explode into action in the narrator's (and God's) own good time".³⁸⁴ He observes that "a woman described as good-looking will sooner or later become an object of love or lust".³⁸⁵ This may well explain why Michal is *not* described in these terms, for her role in the narrative is to exercise decisive agency, for good or ill, not simply to be an object of desire.³⁸⁶ That Michal is described as the youngest, therefore, is theologically important since it is a sign of favour.³⁸⁷ A second feature of Michal's character is revealed by the author's description of her inner thoughts in the repeated statement that 'Michal loved David'.³⁸⁸ Regardless of whether this refers to a political or emotional disposition it is

³⁷⁹ Klein, *1 Samuel*, 197.

³⁸⁰ So also Ellen White, "Michal the Misinterpreted," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 451–64, especially 456.

³⁸¹ For this distinction see Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 90. Bar-Efrat identifies the following methods of characterisation in Biblical narrative: outward appearance, inner personality, and indirect characterisation by speech. Alter suggests characterisation is revealed by a scale from actions or appearance through direct speech to the narrator's explicit statement, cf. *Art*, 117.

³⁸² 1 Sam 14.49.

³⁸³ According to Steinberg the Old Testament resorts to explicit characterisation only when in "pure ideological narrative", Sternberg, *Poetics*, 328.

³⁸⁴ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 339.

³⁸⁵ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 339.

³⁸⁶ Whilst, for example, Abigail is, cf. 1 Sam 25.3; Adel Berlin, "Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David's Wives," *JSOT* 23 (1982): 69–85.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Benjamin, Gen 44–45; Jothan, Judg 9.5; and David himself, 1 Sam 16.11.

³⁸⁸ 1 Sam 18.20, 28.

clear that Michal is on David's side.³⁸⁹ By highlighting this allegiance the author prepares readers to listen to Michal's voice rather than Saul's.

However, the interesting and theologically important facets of Michal's characterisation do not lie in her 'character traits' but in the way she is used. In other words, "[c]haracter is something that the author tends toward speaking *with* rather than speaking *about*".³⁹⁰ This Bakhtinian mode of thinking views characterisation as occurring on the boundaries of interaction, and since characters' voices engage in dialogue their characterisation is not fixed but changeable. Michal is a good example of changing characterisation, although the way in which it occurs safeguards the author's preference for Michal's voice over Saul's in 1 Samuel 19 and David's over Michal's in 2 Samuel 6. This is crucial, for when Michal acts in the latter passage she is not portrayed positively but as a despiser of David's antics before the ark of God.³⁹¹ Nevertheless, I do not think the final negative verdict upon Michal expressed in the damning phrase 'And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death' should be viewed as encapsulating the whole of Michal's characterization.³⁹² The reason is that Michal ends her textual days in barren disgrace for despising David.³⁹³ As Alter notes, a "theologically minded reader, and certainly any advocate of the divine right of the Davidic dynasty, is invited to read this statement as a declaration that Michal was

³⁸⁹ Robert Lawton argues that the Merob—Leah parallelism highlights David's lack of love for Michal, "David, Merob, and Michal," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 423–25. See also Jobling's comment: "Ominously...there is no mention of any reciprocating love on David's side...A reader who pursues the story of Michal to its end will doubt that David ever had any love for her." *Samuel*, 151. These authors make much of David's supposed emotional detachment, concluding that he views his marriage to Michal as merely instrumental, which is viewed as a bad thing, cf. Alter, *Art*, 121. I do not think it is especially significant that Michal's love is not recorded as being requited, since my discussion of marriage, above, points to the inappropriateness of conceiving of ancient Near Eastern political marriages in primarily emotional terms; and if the love here is essentially political, then the ideological nature of the history of David's rise means it is obvious that only love for the Davidic dynasty will be highlighted.

³⁹⁰ David McCracken, "Character in the Boundary: Bakhtin's Interindividuality in Biblical Narratives," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 29–42, quote 36. McCracken identifies five features of the Bakhtinian interindividual character: (1) character is relatively free from objective authorial determination; (2) character exists in relation with others; (3) character is presently real to readers, thus forming a dialogic with them; (4) characterisation aims to provoke a response, not merely describe; and (5) character exists in discourse, it is not simply described by an omniscient narrator.

³⁹¹ 2 Sam 6.12–23. The notes about her marriage to David and enforced remarriage do not refer to Michal's agency, cf. 1 Sam 25.43–44; 2 Sam 3.12–16.

³⁹² 2 Sam 6.23. Pace Alter, *Art*, 123: "by suppressing any causal explanation in his initial statement of Michal's scorn [the author] beautifully suggests the 'overdetermined' nature of her contemptuous ire, how it bears the weight of everything that has not been said but obliquely intimated about the relations between Michal and David".

³⁹³ 2 Sam 6.16.

punished by God for her presumption in rebuking His anointed king".³⁹⁴ The narrative has stressed the holiness of the ark and the logistical steps taken by the king to placate God following the death of Uzzah.³⁹⁵ This is the context for the presentation of David and Michal according to their reactions to the entrance of YHWH's ark into Jerusalem. David dances, shouts, sacrifices, blesses and distributes food. Liturgically correct and bountifully generous he contrasts with Saul, who could not seem to sacrifice properly, and took rather than gave.³⁹⁶ But Michal 'daughter of Saul'—it is highly significant that her lineage is highlighted every single time her name is mentioned in this passage³⁹⁷—is said to despise David in her heart. This is ominous not only because David was worshipping YHWH, but also because readers may hear intra-textual resonances within the books of Samuel. The word despise, פָּנָא, is used by God to make the theologically important point that 'those who honour me I will honour, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt'.³⁹⁸ Furthermore, Michal is in the same category as the 'worthless fellows' who despised Israel's first king, and the Philistine who despised David.³⁹⁹ All of these despisers receive a riposte, by being rejected, shown to be wrong, or killed. Michal is condemned to die without having produced life. However, whilst in all these examples the pairing despiser—opponent is a proxy for the pairing despiser—YHWH, this is *not* the case in 1 Samuel 19.⁴⁰⁰ There she is on God's side, as 1 Samuel 18.28 makes explicit: 'for the LORD was with David and Saul's daughter Michal loved him'.⁴⁰¹ Following Bakhtin, we can see that it is the interaction of David and Michal that determines her characterisation: Michal is portrayed positively when she supports David, and negatively when she despises him. In 1 Samuel 19.11–17, therefore, her voice is to be preferred over Saul's.

It is suggestive to interpret Michal's characterisation as a process of being stripped of agency. In her analysis of Grimm's Fairy Tales Ortner discerns a difference between the portrayal of men and women, boys and girls. She argues that "female characters had to be *made* passive, weak and timorous, that is a recognition that agency

³⁹⁴ Alter, *Art*, 123.

³⁹⁵ 2 Sam 6.1–15.

³⁹⁶ Saul, as king, is the quintessential 'taker' as Samuel threatened he would be, 1 Sam 8.11–17; Samuel himself did not take, 1 Sam 12.3.

³⁹⁷ 2 Sam 6.16, 20–21, 23. In verse 21 David contrasts himself and 'your father'.

³⁹⁸ 1 Sam 2.30.

³⁹⁹ Cf. 1 Sam 10.27; 17.42.

⁴⁰⁰ Eli's sons—YHWH; 'worthless fellows'—Saul (who was chosen by God); Philistine—David (who comes in the name of the living God).

⁴⁰¹ My translation.

in girls had to be *unmade*".⁴⁰² Thus girls who exercise agency are punished, either by not maturing into adults or by passing through trials to undo learned agency.

If any sort of agency must be punished, even for "good" girls, the punishment is even worse for "bad" female characters, witches, and wicked stepmothers. These women are highly agentic—they have projects, plans, plots. Needless to say, they all come to terrible ends.⁴⁰³

It is important to observe, however, that Michal's lot derives not from her agency with respect to letting David go, but because she despises him for his conduct at the parade. Whereas she acts contrary to societal expectations in her loyalty to David and deception of Saul, in 2 Samuel 6 she is concerned to uphold proper standards of decency, protesting that David has acted shamefully in full view of the maids. It is precisely the concern for such 'norms' that receives David's heated reply that he will degrade himself yet further because he was dancing 'before the LORD'. The condemnation of her defence of societal values where they conflict with honouring YHWH lends further support to her counter-cultural action in letting David go. The final snuffing out of Michal's agency, which would seem to fit Ortner's appraisal of other morality tales, is given a theological rationale in David's retort. He declares that he danced 'before the LORD, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince of Israel, the people of the LORD'.⁴⁰⁴ David makes explicit that Michal pertains to the rejected house of Saul. And the narrator makes sure that the legitimacy of David's claim to the kingship is unquestioned by observing that 'Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death'.⁴⁰⁵ To conclude, both Michal's characterisation in 1 Samuel and the contrast with the more negative presentation in her final appearance show that her voice as she facilitates David's escape is approved by the author.

5.6 CONCLUSION: LOYAL LYING

Many commentators do not remark upon 1 Samuel 19.10–18a in detail, perhaps

⁴⁰² Ortner, *Making Gender*, 9. Emphasis original.

⁴⁰³ Ortner, *Making Gender*, 10. One difference between these fairy tales and the Old Testament, therefore, would seem to be that in the latter not *every* woman comes to a sticky end, e.g. Deborah, Judg 4–5; Ruth; Hannah, 1 Sam 1–2.10, Abigail, 1 Sam 25.

⁴⁰⁴ 2 Sam 6.21.

⁴⁰⁵ 2 Sam 6.23. In the absence of male heirs transmission of the patrimony to the grandsons was through daughters, cf. the daughters of Zelophedad, Num 27.1–7; 36.1–11. Both biblical and ANE sources point to the desirability of the daughter's husband having some relationship to the patriarch. Ben-Barak notes an adoption certificate from Nuzi obliging the adopted son to marry one Gilimniu, Zafrira Ben-Barak, "Inheritance by Daughters in the Ancient Near East," *JSS* 25 (1980): 22–33, especially 23. Since the adopted son was to receive the adopted father's estate the interest was clearly in *her* descendants, thus the scheme of inheritance is: father—daughter—inheriting grandsons.

considering it an insignificant component of the overall narrative. Those that do tend to concentrate on exculpating Michal's lie. Very few notice a conflict of values involving a decision concerning family loyalty. Juxtaposing the passage with anthropological data, however, has offered a new way of interpreting this text that shows it to be surprisingly 'heavy' with meaning. To conclude my interpretation I return to the key aspects of the practice of the ethics of kinship identified at the end of Chapter 3, *viz.* the existence of multiple, contradicting and potentially mutually exclusive moral goods in the text, the variety of perception of any particular situation or action, and the *necessarily* personal, and thus open, nature of practice, which nevertheless can exhibit regularity.

The textual voices of Michal, David and Saul point to several moral goods, not all of which can be achieved in the situation described by the author. The good of life is prominent because of the threat to David. Yet the good of family loyalty, with all that this implies in terms of continuance of the father's house and lineage, which itself is a guarantor of life and a source of protection, is also present. Truth telling, which for modern commentators is the moral good most obviously betrayed, also competes with the need to protect the family, and the benefits of dominating or eliminating enemies. And amongst these moral goods, unknown to characters but revealed to readers, is God. He has spoken his rejection of Saul and already arranged for the anointing of David.

As one may expect given my discussion of variety of perception, these goods and the appropriate way of resolving their conflict are viewed differently by each character. Furthermore, the perceptions themselves are sometimes opaque and uncertain. David seems not to appreciate his situation until Michal informs him that unless he saves himself he will be killed. Perhaps he cannot envisage Saul actually prosecuting nihilistic violence. I have suggested that it was quite logical that the king, meanwhile, would *not* have assumed that husband and wife were 'one flesh' with a natural tendency to act together against the wife's father should the situation demand, but that Michal would turn David over at first light. Readers perceive that Saul acts in line with societal expectations in terms of the practice of violence, his marriage strategies and in his assumption that Michal should tell him the truth. When Saul acts within the narrative his agency conforms to the cultural schema regarding the moral goods in conflict. Michal, however, acts in extraordinary ways, bucking the expectations of 'structure'.

It is in the description of Michal's perceptions that the theology of the books of Samuel takes over. In the programmatic hymn of praise at the beginning of the composition Hannah declares that

the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and on them he has set the world.
He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;
for not by might does one prevail.
The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered;
the Most High will thunder in heaven.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king,
and exalt the power of his anointed.⁴⁰⁶

Hannah attributes to YHWH the power to turn the world upside down, to reverse the status of the powerful but wicked, and the poor but faithful. For that reason, she declaims, God's anointed will be protected. Against all probability as far as implied readers are concerned—and this is the crucial point—Michal perceives the clash of moral goods in culturally unexpected ways, and prioritises David's life over loyalty to her father. The chapter's epigraph points to this understanding of the narrative: the author told ‘the truth’ that the pillars of the earth, the way the world works, are subject to God’s rule.⁴⁰⁷ But he did so using the unpalatable truth of a lie. In the case of modern readers this is the point that causes ethical problems; to ancient implied readers, I have argued, the lie was merely symptomatic of Michal’s (dis)loyalty.

Walter Brueggeman claims that this narrative is devoid of God. “We are treated to calculating human actions that do not conform to our expectations. Something is deeply awry when a future king must crawl through a window, when the wife of a coming king must lie to the father who is still king.”⁴⁰⁸ Yet this pessimistic evaluation is not quite correct. 1 Samuel 19.11–18a constitutes a key moment for David, Saul and Michal. For David, because he is in a corner and his life is threatened. For Michal,

⁴⁰⁶ 1 Sam 2.8–10.

⁴⁰⁷ In this light, some scholars have portrayed Saul's fighting against his destiny as ‘tragic’, e.g. David Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (JSOTSup 14; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1980), 78–83; Exum, *Tragedy*, 16–42; Edwin Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1981), 56–80. For a detailed response see Peter Williams, “Is God Moral?: on the Saul Narratives as Tragedy,” in *The God of Israel* (UCOP 64; ed. R. P. Gordon; Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 175–89. Note especially William’s observation that Saul is an agent: he is not simply trapped by fate. See also Sam Dragga, “In the Shadow of the Judges: The Failure of Saul,” *JSOT* 38 (1987): 39–46; Lee Humphreys, “The Tragedy of King Saul: A Study of the Structure of 1 Samuel 9–31,” *JSOT* 3 (1978): 18–27.

⁴⁰⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 144

because she must decide, perhaps unwittingly, between two anointed kings. For Saul, because he is about to eliminate his rival. And for God, because his anointed is in mortal danger. At this moment, Michal lets David down through a window, thus thwarting Saul's attempt to have him brought up to death.⁴⁰⁹ Some commentators are unhappy with her actions, arguing that “[a]lthough imperfect moral conduct may subserve the interests of God's servants, it nevertheless is dishonouring to them”.⁴¹⁰ Michal's configuration of the conflicting moral goods, however, is endorsed by the author's approval of her voice. In the conclusion I shall briefly discuss the implications of this sanction.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 267.

⁴¹⁰ R. Payne Smith and C. Chapman, *1 Samuel* (PC; ed. H. D. M. Spence and J. S. Snell; London: Kegan Paul & Co, 1881), 366.

Conclusion: Michal, Contradicting Values

'Who is the greatest Italian painter?'
'Leonardo de Vinci, Miss Brodie.'
'That is incorrect. The answer is Giotto,
he is my favourite.'

— Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*¹

In order to elucidate the significance of the moral dilemma facing Michal this dissertation has constructed an interdisciplinary conversation between Old Testament studies, anthropology and ethics. I have argued that her conundrum is best explicated by attending to the moral goods that feature in the biblical narrative, but that these can only be adequately comprehended when the social world of authors and implied readers is understood. To achieve this I have examined anthropological resources relating to practices of enmity, affinity and mendacity, asking how these might inform the interpretation of characters' heteroglossic voices. The approval of some voices as they present particular configurations of moral goods reveals the author's theological affirmations. In adopting this innovative methodology I have refrained from simply assuming the superiority of my interpretation à la Miss Brodie. Instead, I have sought to commend my interpretative understandings with discussion of how they account for the textual data and why they would have resonated with ancient implied readers. To conclude, I suggest answers to the research questions enunciated at the beginning of the thesis.

First, what are the moral conflicts faced by actors in these narratives? Rather than assume the appropriateness of intuitive responses from modern Western readers I have demonstrated that reading with anthropology reveals the multifaceted nature of the conundrum confronting Michal. Attention to the contested nature of anthropology has served as a caution against importing the supposedly 'assured results' of ethnographic

¹ The epigraph is from Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (London: Penguin, 1961), 11.

investigation into biblical studies in the form of a models of social or moral action. The attention to particularity as well as generality has revealed that the truth of Michal's utterances in 1 Samuel 19.11–18a is neither the only nor most important moral issue. In this particular case, I have argued, family loyalty is more prominent. Furthermore, it has been possible to observe that habitual constructions of moral goods are not simply accepted but *used* by both Michal and Saul to justify their choices—my interpretation of characters' practices demonstrates how cultural 'norms' can be manipulated in ambiguous situations.

Second, how are the conflicts of moral values resolved? All the characters in my selected narrative *do* something: faced with a moral conundrum they decide upon a particular course of action. These choices comprise the 'resolution' of the value clashes in the selected biblical texts. Michal tells David his life is in danger, lets him down through the window, confects a dummy with the *teraphim*, and dissembles to both Saul and his messengers. Saul's narrative voice, however, is consistent in his attempt to resolve the situation according to 'cultural norms'.

The third question concerns not the characters' resolutions of their respective dilemmas, but the author's evaluation of their choices. It is noteworthy that the author does in fact construct a conflict of values and does not simply assert the hegemonic schema. Saul's voice, which coheres with what, I have argued, implied readers would have accepted, is discredited. Michal's unexpected perspective, however, is approved. If the moral dilemma which faces Michal is conceived in terms of contradicting voices that conflict, then *her* voice, which speaks into this situation, contradicts societal norms unexpectedly to assert fidelity to David, YHWH's anointed.

This leads directly to the final question, concerning why these assessments matter. McCarter outlines seven ways in which the 'History of David's Rise' justifies the political legitimacy of David's kingship in theological terms.² The incidents involving Michal fit into this apology by showing how power comes to him: David does not grasp it. Whilst David's marriage to Michal does not confer the kingship upon David, her choice to facilitate David's escape speaks of loyalty to *this* king: if Michal chose David, so should readers. The other side of the coin is the 'negative' assertion

² Cf. McCarter, "Apology," 499–502. See also Frank Frick, "Cui Bono? — History in the Service of Political Nationalism: The Deuteronomistic History as Political Propaganda," *Semeia* 66 (1994): 79–92.

concerning the validity of societal norms when these conflict with loyalty to David's house. Just as Michal in preferring David also *rejected* not only Saul but also the dominant schema of a morality that prioritised family loyalty and filial obedience, so readers should remember that loyalty to YHWH's anointed—and his successors—is paramount. *This* is the central concern of the narrative.

These 'political' affirmations are set in the context of a wider assertion concerning YHWH's agency. As Fokkelman remarks, "it is not at all self-evident that the hero's career will terminate in succession to the throne", or that "power falls into David's lap like a ripe apple".³ That David *does* become king is the result of God's work. This discovery might lead us from questions about why these narratives *did* matter, to another: why *do* they matter? Some commentators are troubled that the books of Samuel fail explicitly to condemn 'questionable' morality. Gordon observes that "they often stop short just where we might expect a word of censure or a moralizing tailpiece", and he feels compelled to exculpate *his* lack of attention to their present relevance by assuring readers that he, too, is "‘against’ murder, duplicity and all their evil cronies".⁴ When considered in the context of competing moral goods, however, the matter is not so black and white, for the interpretative issues concern which goods are preferred in cases when attaining them all is impossible. In such situations narratives can play an important role in moral formation. They can certainly do so by exemplifying virtues or principles. However, a more significant way is by engaging readers in the moral dilemma itself, thus training the moral faculties of readers, both by analogy ('this is what to do, or not do, if you find yourself in a similar situation') and by refining appreciation of the ethical goods and their relations to each other.⁵ Given the author wishes to justify a novel solution to the moral dilemmas themselves, one that the implied readers would have found counterintuitive, this is an essential didactic move. Augustine supposed that a moral community is one that shares common objects of

³ Fokkelman, *Crossing*, 313. On the various ways in which David's kingship is justified in 2 Samuel see Whedbee, "House of David," 148–49. Exum states that "the theological problem of the transfer of kingship from Saul to David is resolved in Jonathan", Exum, *Tragedy*, 75. It is important to observe, however, that David *doesn't* receive the crown from either of Saul's children, but is only recognised as leader of a united 'kingdom' after an extended period of conflict concluded when Abner facilitates the transfer of Israel's loyalty from Ishbaal to David, 2 Sam 3.1–10. Whilst it is obvious that the narrative concerns the legitimacy of the Davidic monarchy I do not think the question is as simple as a *transfer* of the right to succeed Saul; the matter is at once more subtle and more persuasive.

⁴ Gordon, *Samuel*, 9. See also Cartledge, *Samuel*, 248–49.

⁵ Cf. Parry, *Story*, 4; John Barton, "Introduction," in *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2003), 1–11, especially 10.

love.⁶ As texts shared by today's readers the relevance of the Samuel narratives extends beyond their initial audience and individuals to the formation of contemporary reading communities. How they might do so is a separate question beyond the scope of the present discussion. What can be affirmed, however, is that studies such as the present one, whose methodology is in principle transferable to any other biblical narrative, provide new interpretative understandings that may help bridge the “troublesome gap”⁷ between biblical scholarship and ethics.

⁶ Cf. Civ. 19.24. For discussion see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community* (Grand Rapids / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 20–24.

⁷ Ogletree, *Use of the Bible*, xi.

APPENDIX A

Crime and Punishment in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20.1–23.33)

Punishment	Crime
Death	Ex 21.12 Mortal assault
	Ex 21.15 Striking parents
	Ex 21.16 Kidnap
	Ex 21.17 Cursing father or mother
	Ex 21.29 Of ox owner if ox has a history of goring and kills man or woman (plus stoning of ox)
	Ex 22.18 Of female sorcerer
	Ex 22.19 Bestiality
'Devoted to destruction'	Ex 22.20 Idolatry
Ransom	Ex 21.30 Of ox owner's life (in lieu of capital punishment) if ox has a history of goring and kills man or woman / boy or girl (plus stoning of ox)
	Ex 21.11 Denying first (slave) wife marital rights
Release of slave as a free person	Ex 21.26 Assault of slave leading to loss of eye, as compensation
Payment of bride price, marriage to virgin	Ex 22.16 Seduction of unengaged virgin
Compensatory fine / Restitution	Ex 21.19 Assault leading to loss of productive time whilst recuperating
	Ex 21.22 Miscarriage as result of injury to third party with no further injury
	Ex 21.33 If animal falls into uncovered pit
	Ex 22.12 Animal stolen whilst in safekeeping
Fixed fine	Ex 21.32 Payment of 30 shekels of silver by ox owner if ox has a history of goring and kills a male or female slave (plus stoning of ox)
	Ex 22.1 Theft of livestock subsequently killed or sold: 5 oxen per stolen ox; 4 sheep per stolen sheep; thief sold into slavery if unable to pay.
Deterrent fine	Ex 22.7 Theft of livestock subsequently found in thief's possession: double value of theft.
	Ex 22.9 Theft in case of disputed ownership determined by 'coming before God' [some sort of lot?]; double value of disputed item
'Eye for eye, etc.'	Ex 21.22 Miscarriage as result of injury to third party with further injury
Stoning of ox, with prohibition on sale of meat	Ex 21.28 Goring to death of man or woman
Bloodguilt	Ex 22.3 Bludgeoning to death of thief caught breaking and entering after sunrise (no bloodguilt if killed before sunrise)
No punishment specified	Ex 21.20 Slave-owner killing slave [Capital punishment assumed from context?]
No punishment	Ex 22.11 Animal killed, injured or carried off unseen whilst in safekeeping, provided guardian makes oath before the LORD

APPENDIX B

Crime and Punishment in the Holiness Code (Lev 17.1–26.46)

Punishment	Crime
Death through burning	Lev 21.9 For prostitute who is daughter of priest Lev 20.13 Marrying a woman and her mother (punishment for all parties)
Death	Lev 20.2 Giving offspring to Molech Lev 20.9 Cursing father or mother Lev 20.10 Adultery (punishment for both parties) Lev 20.11 Sex with father's wife (punishment for both parties) Lev 20.12 Sex with daughter-in-law (punishment for both parties) Lev 20.13 Homosexual sex (punishment for both parties) Lev 20.16 Woman who practises bestiality (punishment for both parties) Lev 20.27 For male or female medium or wizard Lev 24.16, 23 Blasphemy (punishment for both Israelite and alien) Lev 24.17 Murder
Cut off from God's presence	Lev 22.3 If any of Aaron's priestly descendants approach sacred donations whilst in state of uncleanness
Cut off from the people	Lev 17.4, 9 Sacrifice not at entrance to tent of meeting Lev 18.29 Sexual relations prohibited in Lev 18.6 – 19.23 Lev 19.8 Eating sacrificed meat on third day Lev 20.17 Incest (punishment for both parties) Lev 20.18 Sleeping with a woman during her menstruation (punishment for both parties)
'Bear their guilt'	Lev 17.15 Not cleansing themselves after eating animal with blood
Guilt offering of ram	Lev 19.21 Sexual relations with slave woman
Restitution	Lev 24.18, 21 Killing of animal
'Eye for eye, etc.'	Lev 24.19-20 Maiming of person
20% fine	Lev 22.14 If person eats sacred food destined for priests

APPENDIX C

Crime and Punishment in the Deuteronomic Code (Deut 12.1–26.19)

Punishment	Crime
Total destruction of town	Deut 13.15 Idolatry (punishment for whole town) Deut 17.5 Idolatry Deut 17.12 Disobeying judicial decision Deut 18.20 False prophet Deut 21.18 Rebellious son Deut 22.21 Non-virgin bride
Death	Deut 22.22 Adultery (punishment for both parties) Deut 22.24 Seduction of engaged woman in city (punishment for both parties) Deut 22.25 Seduction / rape of engaged woman in countryside (punishment for man only) Deut 24.7 Kidnap
'Eye for eye...'	Deut 19.19 False witness
Freedom for slave wife	Deut 21.14 Dishonouring unwanted slave wife
100 shekels to father / forfeit right to divorce	Deut 22.19 Slandering woman's presumed virginity
50 shekels to father / enforced marriage without right to divorce	Deut 22.29 Seduction / rape of unengaged woman if caught <i>in flagranti</i>
Shaming	Deut 25.9 Refusal to perform Levirate duties
Removal of hand	Deut 25.12 Woman who defends husband in fight by grabbing his opponent's genitals

APPENDIX D

Kinship relations in 1 & 2 Samuel

Perhaps [we] can try to imagine societies in which descent-groups are the basic political, religious, economic and possibly territorial units: not firms, or associations, or parties, or industries, or classes, or sects and denominations, but groups of people related to each other through common descent...So far removed is such a state of society from our own experience that a leap of the imagination is needed in order even to begin to understand it.¹

This Appendix demonstrates the importance of dynastic descent in 1 and 2 Samuel by presenting all kinship relations mentioned explicitly in the books of Samuel using anthropological kinship diagrams. Relationships merely implied, or mentioned in other sources but not 1 & 2 Samuel, are indicated by '?'.

One problem with such representations is that they are static; relevant changes to these relationships, for example, through separation and remarriage, are discussed in the main text. Another problem is that they view the family group from a particular perspective. For this reason, with the exception of Saul and David's kin groups, which are discussed more fully in the thesis, each diagram is based upon the ego mentioned in the portion of the biblical text where the family is described: thus, for example, Samuel's family is described apart from Elkanah's. Nevertheless, in order to give an idea of descent lines, as represented in the text, related families are described consecutively.

Robert Wilson argues that genealogies must be understood according to their political, religious and domestic functions, and that "all the versions of a genealogy may be accurate in the light of their functions".² In my opinion all the genealogies in the books of Samuel are 'political'. I disagree with Wilson that "if a society has a monarchical form of government, the political system is not likely to be organized along kinship lines, and for this reason segmented genealogies do not usually have political functions",³ since monarchs can *use* relationships between families for their own ends—which is very much the case in 1 & 2 Samuel. On the apparently impressive feat of reciting up to eleven generations of descent note the comment by Emrys Peters that this is similar to a British person recalling the details of his address. "The elaboration of a genealogical apparatus of this sort, a lineage system, does not rest on the chance of individual's powers of recall or names from the distant past. If memory comes into the matter at all, it is highly contemporaneous, for the names of dead ancestors survive in the daily lives of the people, who use them to serve as ready references for a limited and definable number of social relationships."⁴

¹ Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*, 52.

² Robert Wilson, "Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," *JBL* 94 (1975): 169–89, quote 186. For general discussion of biblical genealogies, including history of interpretation and historicity, see Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Internal Consistency and Historical Reliability of the Biblical Genealogies," *VT* 40 (1990): 185–206; Juan Manuel Tebes, "'You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite, for He is Your Brother': The Tradition of Esau and the Edomite Genealogies from an Anthropological Perspective," *JHS* 6 (2006); Robert Wilson, "Genealogy, Genealogies," *ABD* 2.929–32.

³ Wilson, "Old Testament Genealogies," 181

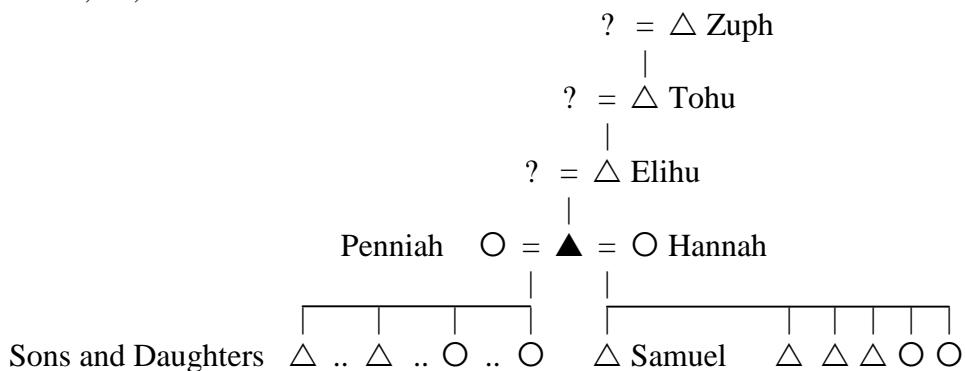
⁴ Emrys Peters, "Aspects of affinity in a Lebanese Maronite village," in *Mediterranean Family Structures* (ed. J. G. Peristiany; Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 27–79, quote 31.

KEY:

\triangle	Male	\circ	Female	\blacktriangle	Ego
=	Marriage		Descent	\sqcap	Sibling relationship
?	Not mentioned in text of Samuel			$\diagdown \diagup$	Deceased

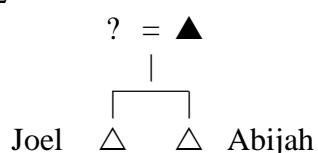
ELKANAH'S FAMILY

1 Sam 1.1–4, 20; 2.21



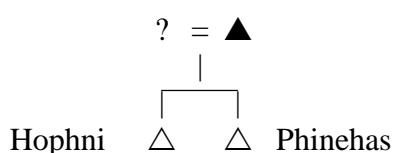
SAMUEL'S FAMILY

1 Sam 8.1–2



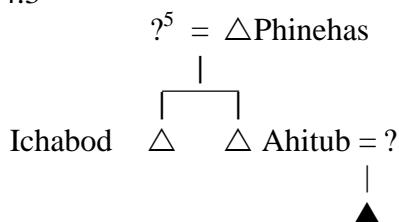
ELI'S FAMILY

1 Sam 1.3; 4.19–21



AHIJAH'S FAMILY

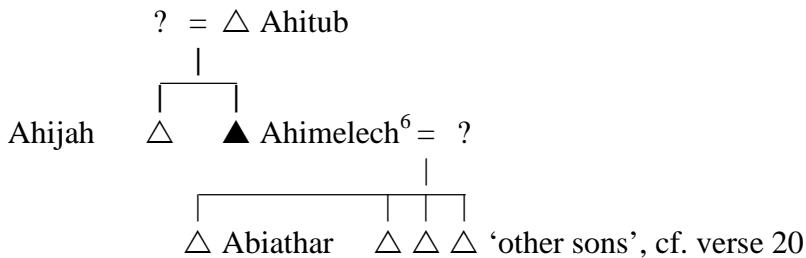
1 Sam 14.3



⁵ It is not clear whether Ichabod and Ahitub were brothers or half brothers, cf. 1 Sam 4.20–21.

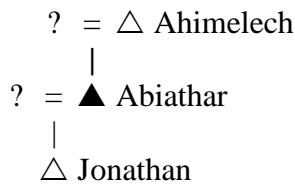
AHIMELECH'S FAMILY

1 Sam 22.9, 11, 12, 20



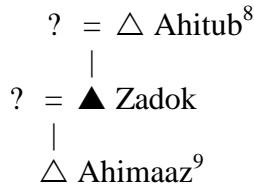
ABIATHAR'S FAMILY

2 Sam 8.17⁷; 15.27



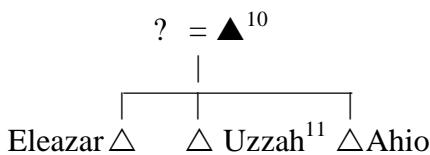
ZADOK'S FAMILY

2 Sam 8.17; 15.27



ABINADAB'S FAMILY

1 Sam 7.1; 2 Sam 6.3



⁶ Some commentators identify Ahijah with Abimelech on the basis that the former avoids suggestion of Molech and both have fathers named Ahitub, see e.g. Smith, *Samuel*, 105. However, they could just as well be brothers, as here, cf. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 135, who notes other priestly siblings: Hophni and Phinehas, and Ahitub and Ichabod.

⁷ Whilst according to this text Zadok and Ahimelech are high priests, the list of officials at 2 Sam 20.23 has Zadok and Abiathar, the pair also recorded in 2 Sam 15:24, 27, 29, 35; 17:15; 19:11; 20:25; 1 Ki. 2:35; 4:4; 1 Chr. 15:11. The only other instances of ‘Zadok and Ahimelech’ occur in 1 Chr 18:16; 24:6, thus I follow many commentators in emending this verse to read ‘Abiathar, son of Ahimelech’, e.g. Gordon, *Samuel*, 246 *pace* Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 137, who lets the text stand without resolving the issue, and Hertzberg, *Samuel*, 292, who follows Wellhausen in arguing that the verse does not refer to Zadok’s father, which has no textual support.

⁸ For discussion of Zadok’s ancestry and the relation to the genealogies in Chronicles see Gordon, *Samuel*, 246; Hertzberg, *Samuel*, 293–94.

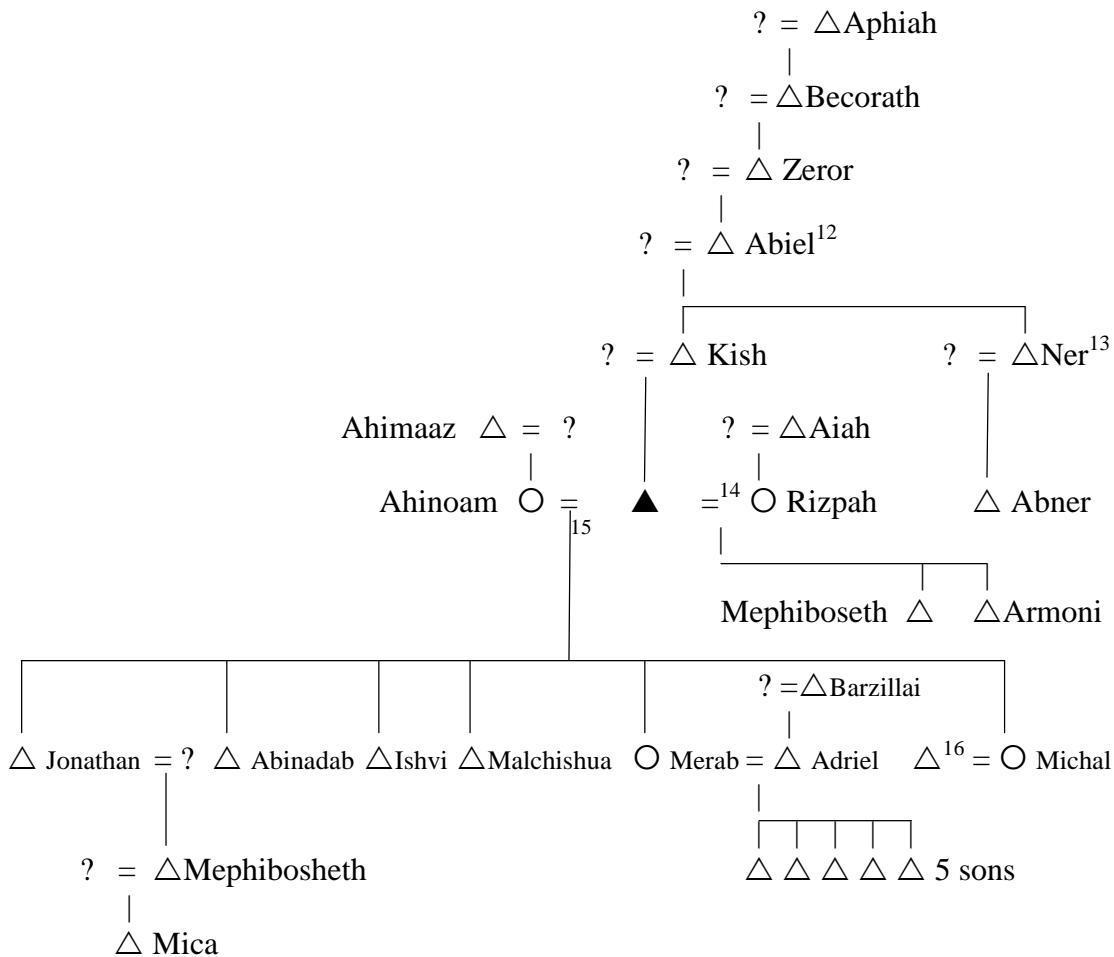
⁹ For a list of other descendants cf. 1 Chr 9.10–11.

¹⁰ The name Abinadab is also ascribed to one of David’s brothers (1 Sam 16.8; 17.13) and a son of Saul (1 Sam 31.2).

¹¹ For discussion and rejection of the proposal identifying Uzzah with Eleazar, plus other suggestions regarding the sons’ identities, see Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 102–103; Gordon, *Samuel*, 232.

SAUL'S FAMILY

1 Sam 9.1–2; 10.15; 13.22; 14.49–51; 18.19, 27; 31.2; 2 Sam 2.8–12; 3.15; 4.4; 9.12; 21.8



¹² Cf. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 86.

¹³ Abner (defective, the full spelling in 1 Sam 14.50, אָבִינָר, is a *hapax legomenon*, cf. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 254) is described as ‘son of Ner’ in 1 Sam 14.50; 26.5, 14; 2 Sam 2.8, 12; 3.23, 25, 28, 37; 1 Kgs 2.5, 32; 1 Chr 26.28. According to the genealogies in 1 Chr 9.36; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.129–30 Abner and Saul are cousins; in 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39, however, Abner is Kish’s brother, and thus Saul’s uncle. 1 Sam 14.50 is not decisive since either Abner or Ner could be the antecedent of נֶר. In the latter case Ner must be inserted between Abiel and Kish in this genealogy, but see 1 Sam 9.1; in the former, the position adopted here, נֶר must be emended to בְּנֵי in 1 Sam 14.50, so Josephus, cf. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 142; Driver, *Notes*, 121.

¹⁴ Rizpah is referred to as concubine in 2 Sam 3.7; 21.8, 10–11.

¹⁵ The names and number of Saul’s children are uncertain because of discrepancies between the five biblical lists, cf. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 256:

1 Sam 14.49
1 Sam 31.2 = 1 Chr 10.2
1 Chr 8.33; 9.39

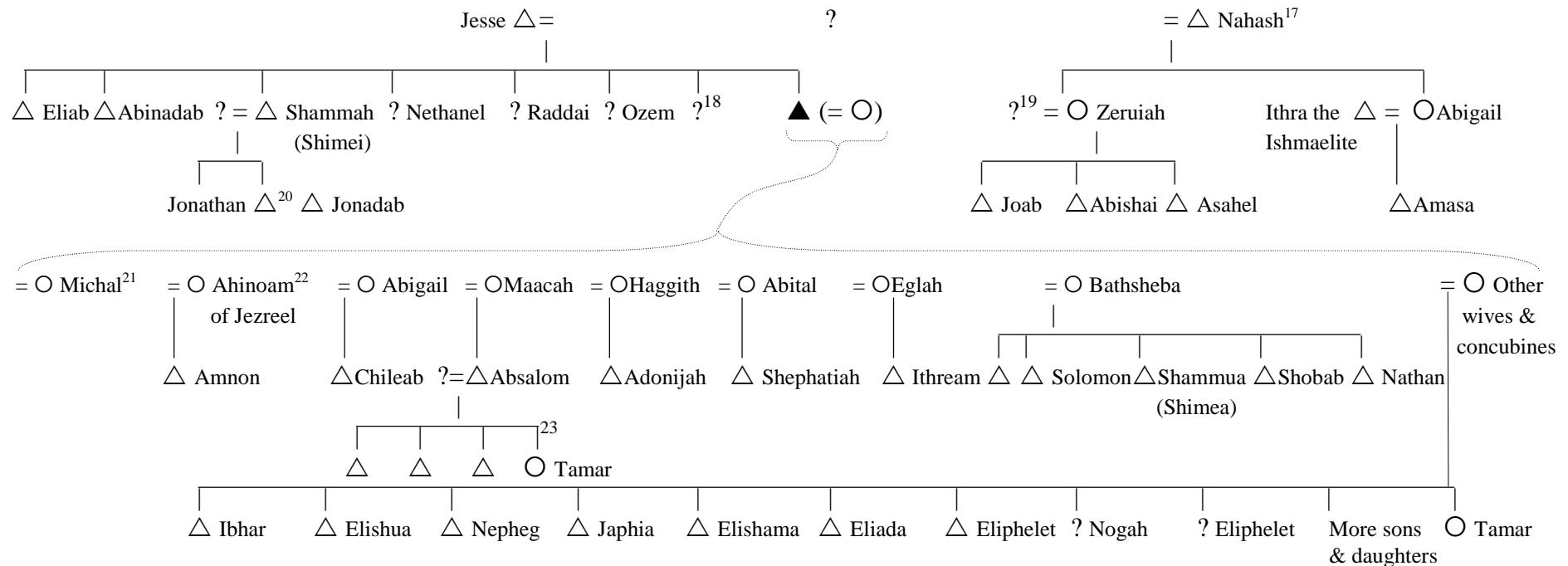
Jonathan, Ishvi, Malchishua
Jonathan, Abinadab, Malchishua
Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, Eshbaal

In addition 2 Sam 2–4 mentions that ‘Ishbosheth (NRSV: Ishbaal) son of Saul’ was installed as crown prince by Abner. For text critical issues and Qumran evidence regarding ‘Ishvi’ see McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 254. I concur with the majority of commentators that Ishvi = Eshbaal = Ishbosheth (= Ishbaal). Abinadab could be excluded from the list in 1 Sam 14 because he was the son of another wife, although probably not Rizpah since this does not fit with 2 Sam 21.8, *pace* Bergen, *Samuel*, 162. The exclusion of Ishbosheth from the second list is because he was not killed at Gilboa.

¹⁶ Michal is married both to David and Paltiel (or Palti), cf. 1 Sam 18.27; 25.44; 2 Sam 3.14–15.

DAVID'S FAMILY

1 Sam 16.5–11; 17.12–13; 18.27; 22.3; 25.44; 26.6; 2 Sam 2.2, 18; 3.2–5; 5.13–16; 14.27; 17.25; 21.21; 23.24



¹⁷ The identity of Nahash and his/her relationship to Jesse, and hence of Abigail and Zeruiah to David, is opaque. It is possible that Nahash is a female name and that she was another of Jesse's wives. More probably Nahash is male, meaning Zeruiah and Abigail were David's half-sisters though his mother, cf. 2 Sam 17.24–27; 1 Chr 2.16. Nahash is possibly to be identified with the King of the Ammonites, cf. Richard Nelson, "Nahash," *ABD* 4.996; Philip Davies, and John Rogerson, *The Old Testament World* (2nd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 27–29. If so, then an additional descendant, Haram, should be added to the kinship diagram, 2 Sam 10.2.

¹⁸ Jesse presents seven sons to Samuel before introducing David, cf. 1 Sam 16.11; 17.12–13. 1 Chr 2.13–15, however, enumerates David as the seventh.

¹⁹ From Bethlehem, 2 Sam 2.32.

²⁰ MT; LXX of 2 Sam 21.21 reads 'Jonadab'.

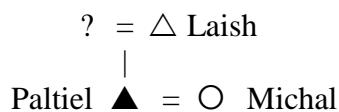
²¹ Michal was given to David in marriage, then to Paltiel, before David reclaimed her, cf. 1 Sam 18.27; 25.44; 2 Sam 3.12–16.

²² The only other Ahinoam mentioned in the Old Testament is Saul's wife. I do not accept the proposal that Saul's Ahinoam is to be identified with Ahinoam of Jezreel, nor that Abigail, widow of Nabal, was David's half sister, *pace* Jon Levenson and B. Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," *JBL* 99 (1980): 507–11.

²³ Absalom's monument (2 Sam 18.18) is erected because he did not have offspring, which appears to contradict 2 Sam 14.27, although they could have predeceased him.

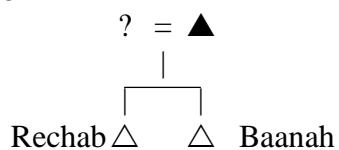
PALTIEL'S FAMILY

2 Sam 3.14–15



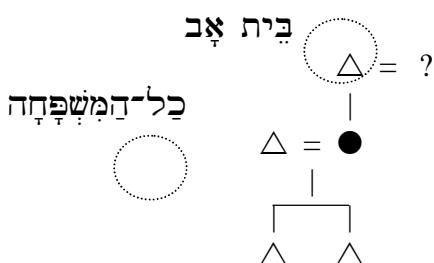
RIMON'S FAMILY

2 Sam 4.2, 5



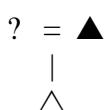
WOMAN OF TEKOAH'S (IMAGINARY) FAMILY

2 Sam 14.5–7



FATHER—SON RELATIONSHIPS

Father—son relationship where the father is the referent:



King Toi father of Joram 2 Sam 8.10

Zeba's 15 sons 2 Sam 19.17

Barzillai—Chimham²⁴ 2 Sam 17.27; 32–34, 39; 21.8

Father—son relationship where the son is the referent: the father's name is patronymic:



Jehosphaphat son of Ahilud 2 Sam 8.16; 20.24

Benaiah son of Jehoiada 2 Sam 8.18; 20.23; 23.22

Hanun son of Nahash 2 Sam 10.1–2

Abimelech son of Jerubaal 2 Sam 11.21

Shimei son of Gera 2 Sam 16.5; 19.18

Sheba son of Bichri 2 Sam 20.1–2, 6–7, 10, 13, 21–22

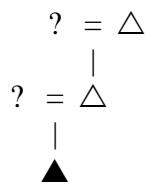
Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim 2 Sam 21.19, 21

Elhanan son of Dodo 2 Sam 23.24

²⁴ Father—son relationship only implied in 2 Samuel, but cf. Jos, *Ant* 7.275.

Ira son of Ikkesh 2 Sam 23.26
 Heleb son of Baanah 2 Sam 23.29
 Ittai son of Ribai 2 Sam 23.29
 Sons of Jashen 2 Sam 23.32
 Jonathan son of Shammah 2 Sam 23.32–33
 Ahiam son of Sharar 2 Sam 23.33
 Eliphelet son of Ahasbai 2 Sam 23.34
 Eliam son of Ahithophel 2 Sam 23.34
 Igal son of Nathan 2 Sam 23.36

Three generations as patronym:²⁵



Hadadezer son of Rehob of Zobah 2 Sam 8.3, 12
 Eleazar son of Dodo son of Ahohi 2 Sam 23.9

HUSBAND—WIFE RELATIONSHIPS

Husband—wife relationships only (without reference to wider kin group):

$$\triangle = \circ$$

Nabal—Abigail 1 Sam 25
 Uriah—Bathsheba 2 Sam 11
 Man at Bahurim—his wife 2 Sam 17.18–19

Late husband's name used instead of patronym:

$$\triangle = \bullet = \triangle$$

Nabal—Abigail 1 Sam 30.5; 2 Sam 2.2; 3.3

²⁵ Note that some of the two generation references ‘X son of Y’ also add a geographical or tribal reference that is not included in the above lists.

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