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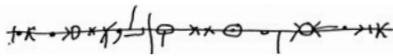
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# Making Sense of the Sapiential Body

## A reading of the sense organs in *Proverbs*



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### ABSTRACT

In the book of Proverbs, body metaphors are plentiful. Conceived as an invitation to an assumed literal reading of a text presenting a doctrine of wisdom in a language abounding in images of the body, this paper is a challenge to discern Hebrew mechanisms of representing corporeality by means of philologic investigation. The target is to set strategies of reading the body in the text by focusing on the sense organs. This exercise rewards by the approach to the human body it reveals and contributes to the reconstruction of the worldview encapsulated in the Old Hebrew language.

### KEYWORDS

body, wisdom, metaphor, sense, worldview

The body in academic literature is more of a cover name for our dilemmas than being one in itself. But, however misleading as an academic subject, the body pays a price big enough to be the “new historiographical menu of the day” (Roy 2001, 236), by “reflecting the intellectual world which has studied its meanings and contexts” long before its becoming an intellectual trend (Diemling 2009, 1).

The body in the book of *Proverbs* is itself a container of a worldview – which is undoubtedly best encapsulated in the original Hebrew language text. As a matter of fact, the approach to the *Proverbs*<sup>1</sup> put forward in the following pages has been inspired by contact with the language of the Hebrew original text in contrast with some of its different translations. But once the *presence of the body* has been noticed in the original language of the sapiential writing, representations of the body have turned into the subject of a stimulating analysis feeding upon a striking abundance of corporeal images in the Hebrew original text and reflected, to a higher or a lower

extent, by its translations<sup>2</sup>. I have practically embarked on a quest to capitalize the body in the corporeal metaphors abounding in the text.

My target, by focusing my investigation on the specific case of the sense organs, has been to decode the symbolic way in which the human body is represented within the frame of the particular cultural space of Hebrew sapiential literature. Admittedly, featuring such an exercise involves probing a space more generally associated with a mental horizon, which is ultimately a space gaining expression in a certain language and bearing the mark of a certain mental gear. So by its sense organs, the human body is looked at as a cultural artefact shaped by language, which in our case is the Hebrew language.

Of course, my analysis does not rely on interrogating an anthropologic doctrine which is thematically put forth by the text, as in the book of *Genesis*, but in discovering the body in the language of the text. Therefore, my paper does not raise questions about any doctrine about the body exposed by the old Hebrew sapiential

1) In this article the following list of abbreviations will be used:  
- Prov Proverbs  
- LXX Septuaginta  
- Sin The Bible (Synod Version)  
- KJ King James Bible  
- NAS New American Standard Bible

2) Some of which are made, as is well known, after LXX, as is the case of Sin.

literature, but rather discusses the teaching mediated by the *Proverbs* through its very expression. This study is about *initiating* the reader in self-knowledge, but this *initiation* – used in its strict epistemological meaning and without any religious colour – refers to accessing the knowledge about the human being (and, implicitly, about the human body) by reading the *Proverbs*, a book written in a very corporeal language and having an emblematic sapiential value. This value indicates, besides a strong didactic dimension at a thematic level, also an implicit didactic dimension, able to mediate the acquisition of the doctrine of wisdom expressed by the *Proverbs* as a handbook of such. So it is the corporeal language of the book which claims responsibility for its initiating value. Since the reader's access to the teachings about the human being and, implicitly, about the human body is made through the language of the book, the plentiful metaphors, especially in the original Hebrew, deserve to be considered as playing a role in the initiation of the reader in an anthropological doctrine.

Analysing the body in a text and, thereby, looking into the way the body acquires expression in a certain language – which, in its turn, functions as an ambassador of a particular mindset – is an exercise of body discourse analysis and, automatically, belonging to a tradition of research initiated by Foucault. Therefore, methodologically speaking, the exercise I am putting forth is post-Foucauldian<sup>3</sup>. However, being conceptually contained in a stage before the body-soul separation, a stage which would allow us to discover that the Bible man does not *have* a body, but rather he *is* a body while equally and simultaneously *being* a soul, my quest addresses a reality which is impossible to circumscribe to the post-Foucauldian mental stage<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, deriving a conception about the human body from a discourse which is about acquiring wisdom while being articulated in a language abounding in body metaphors means nothing but racing

after the real body by probing its metaphoric expression in the text. And this is a matter of figurative language. In a way, the approach to metaphor may be seen as the very stake of the entire quest, the expectation being that the Hebrew mechanism of metaphorization, which is making abundant use of the human body parts, should initiate us into a new way of thinking about the body, introducing a different corporeal mindset.

The materiality of the Bible language and, generally, of the biblical horizon of representations has received enough attention in literature, a lot of stress having been laid on the fact that “the pronounced physicality of the image indicates that the biblical writers perceive no split between body and soul. Greek philosophy aims to *rise above* the body and its needs. By contrast, Israelite wisdom imbues the whole person: body, mind and spirit (see 14:30, 17:22)” (Davis 2000, 40). What has definitely not been stressed upon so far is that the *language of the Bible itself is the very vehicle transporting this particular mentality about the body*. The target of my approach is to explore this vehicle. For this reason, the linguistic coordinates of the source will be heavily exploited, the core of my approach being centered on discussing the use of metaphor and stereometry – a literary device related to metaphor and considered a specificity of the biblical style.

A source of everlasting debate among interpreters of the Bible, the question of the choice between a literal reading and one in a figurative key is practically a fundamental issue for all readers of the Bible (Macky 1990, 1). But looking into a few examples related to the parts of the mouth: “In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them” (Proverb 14:3 KJV), or “A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment” (Proverb 16:10 KJV), one can easily see that, when tackling the issue of the body in the text, it is invariably metaphors we are talking about. And speaking about

3) The body being studied as a reality structured by language starting from Michel Foucault's book translated by Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 1977. London: Penguin.

4) Roger Cooter outlines the research directions in body studies following Foucault's somatic turn in historical scholarship in his article “The Turn of the Body: History and the Politics of the Corporeal” published in 2010 in *Arbor Ciencia, Pensamiento y cultura*.

a sapiential text, hinged on the general theme of acquiring wisdom, a text in which access to the body is made almost exclusively through the metaphoric images containing it, one can automatically range the metaphoricalizing mechanism among the instruments employed for working out the sapiential theme. The parts of the body are most of the time vehicles of metaphors speaking about the acquisition of wisdom, so the challenge we are taking upon ourselves involves discussing a body whose presence is *in the vehicle* of the metaphors contained in the text and *not in its tenors*; in the text discussed, the body is rather the image by which a reality is hinted at and not the reality hinted at itself.

Far from aiming at giving a definition of metaphor<sup>5</sup>, we just need to highlight a standpoint defended, from different perspectives, both by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur in his *Métaphore vive* (Ricoeur, 1975) and by the American linguists Georges Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their *Metaphors we live by* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), i.e. that the metaphoric is a category involved in shaping systems that structure our perception of reality and influence our worldview. The way in which a metaphor rewrites reality can disclose something essential about how this is structured in the mental horizon which has produced it.

Metaphor has long been debated between linguists whose dealing with the problem has been confined to semantics. Important contributions in this area have been made either in favour of the theory of substitution in metaphor (in the sense that the meaning of a word is transferred to another one based on their similarity), with researchers insisting on the distinction between tenor or target (what is hinted at, the subject to which attributes are ascribed) and vehicle or source (the image through which one makes the hint or rather the object whose attributes are borrowed) or in favour of the theory of tension in metaphor, with researchers focusing mainly on the importance of the context in revealing the

meaning of a metaphor, which cannot be traced otherwise than by circumscribing it to a certain context<sup>6</sup>. But there is an intersection point of the two theories and that is Paul Ricoeur's *living metaphors*<sup>7</sup> – expressions which re-create or re-describe reality through fiction. According to his integrating definition, metaphor is a discourse strategy serving the poetic function of language; through metaphor, language gets rid of its plain descriptive function and reaches the mythical level. Metaphor liberates the revealing function of language. Thereby, we can take the risk of using the term *metaphoric truth* to designate the realistic intention involved in the power of poetic language (Ricoeur 1984, 380).

This creative, reality-moulding power of metaphor has also been referred to by linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book about *dead metaphors* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). By analysing the words of these literalized metaphors which have become conventional (which most people do not even accept to call metaphors), Lakoff and Johnson hold that albeit used unconsciously, such dead metaphors constitute principles of structuring thinking. And they are strongly backed by arguments coming from today's cognitive research to confirm that literalization of a metaphor does not mean it no longer influences thinking, but rather, on the contrary, it actually shapes it (Lakoff and Turner 1999). Just as Paul Ricoeur, though referencing a completely different kind of metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson consider the metaphoric category as a moulder of systems which structure our perception of reality and influence our worldview.

Without using Ricoeur's or Lakoff and Johnson's *living* or *dead metaphors*, we will just retain this idea of metaphor being a linguistic technique addressing the very core of a worldview. This is also the meaning we will henceforth give to the notion of metaphor, analysing it as an expression able to re-describe or re-create reality through fiction, having the power to structure our

5) According to Oxford dictionary online, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>, metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. It is used about a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else.

6) See more on this Ana-Maria Dudu's article "Metafora – între inerția tradiției și modernitate" in: *Agata Literară* Nr. 1/2014. Botoșani: Editura Agata. Online: [www.agata.ro/arhiva-agata-literara](http://www.agata.ro/arhiva-agata-literara).

7) See the translation by Irina Mavrodin of Paul Ricoeur's *Métaphore vive*. Paul Ricoeur. 1984. *Metafora vie*, București: Ed. Univers.

thinking. The body metaphors analyzed in this article will serve to probe the way these re-create, through the text, the skeleton of a worldview, i.e. the old Israelites' view on the body.

The *Proverbs*, a text whose theme is sapiential, but whose *flesh* is thick with body metaphors, grants the body the role of a vehicle and not of a tenor, the body being contained in the text as an image serving for discussing a sapiential reality. Considering that this vehicle, by the way it gets expression in the language, reveals something essential about the conception of the author upon the human body, I advocate a literal reading of the body in the text, drawing special attention to the fact that the lexical preferences of the original Hebrew text always support a certain materiality of the image, whereas several of its translations either psychologize or spiritualize the text.

The assumed literal reading I am hereby putting forward of the corporeal representations behind the body metaphors is by no means a reductionist interpretation. The exercise is not to disregard and place constraints and limitations to the interpretative richness of the text; on the contrary, capitalizing the literal reading of the body involves enriching the interpretation of the text with a measure of corporeal awareness; it basically means taking the body into account when discussing the human experiences which make the thematic substance of the text. Actually, the use of the proposed hermeneutic approach serves no other purpose than to help acknowledging that human beings ultimately participate *in the body* or rather in their unity of living material entities in all the actions and events of their *being* in the world, according to the way these actions and events are described by *Proverbs*.

More often than not, the body in the language has been overlooked on behalf of stereometry, which is a mere literary device representing an aesthetic preference of Bible authors. Stereometry, which represents a

synthesis of metonymy and synecdoche defined as the use, based on a common denominator, of another term from the same lexical family, is often invoked by interpreters of the Bible to explain the fact that, in most of the cases where parts of the body are present in the text of the Bible, what is actually hinted at is the human being as a whole.

In his *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, a reference work in the field of Bible Studies, Hans Walter Wolff counts stereometry among the hallmarks of Hebrew poetry; it is typical of the Hebrew imagination in its effort to catch in very few words the infinite nuances of human experience to use, within Bible parallelisms, some parts of the body in the place of others or of the body as a whole: "Stereometric thinking, thus, simultaneously presupposes a synopsis of the members and organs of the human body with their capacities and functions. It is *synthetic* thinking, which by naming the part of the body means its function" (Wolff 1974, 8). This gets manifested, according to Wolff, "not by the use of terms which are clearly differentiated one from the other, but by the opposite means, namely by the juxtaposition of words related in meaning. This stereometric thinking pegs out the sphere of man's existence by enumerating his characteristic organs, thus circumscribing man as a whole" (Wolff 1974, 8).

Under the influence of this stereometric and synthetic thinking which is a hallmark of Bible expression, all textual reconstructions of a human being have, by naming the characteristic organs, the effect not of an abstract image, but of a whole, of a complete radiography, even in the concrete cases when reference is made to just one part of his or her body:

גַּמְלַת בָּפֶשׁוֹ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְעֵבֶר שְׂאֵרוֹ אֲכַרִּי: *Mashal 11:17*

The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh. (KJV)

Arguably, this explanation completely disregards the preference of the text for

one or another of the body components in the text, thereby completely ignoring a whole series of implications which the respective representation has upon the general message of the text. Of course, in over 90% of these cases, the body parts in the *Proverbs* are used metaphorically and metonymically. But saying that the meaning behind all these uses is purely aesthetic would involve disregarding a great deal of the richness of the sense. It would ultimately mean ignoring the fact that behind all these literary means there is something being said about the wisdom relative to human beings represented through the components of their physical body. It is by no means accidental that what is being said is being said through different, concrete, corporeal images, images full of *bones, hands, legs, livers, lips, kidneys* and *hearts* – something which is absolutely fundamental for the way in which the reader perceives the message of the Bible. The materiality of this message is saying something essential about the significance of the real body, which in the old Israelites' mindset is irreducible, being *the human person himself or herself*.



### The Mouthparts

The mouthparts with their double, digestive and verbal function offer a unique opportunity of confronting Bible stereometry. Through their digestive function, more exactly by evoking the sense of taste which is the primary association of the mouthparts, references are more often than not made to the verbal function. The fact that the references to the verbal function are very frequently hidden behind references to the digestive one allows us to signal a certain centrality of the corporeal element in the discharge of both functions. Attention upon the verbal function being drawn by the common topos of both functions, i.e. the mouthparts, awareness

of their fundamental inter-relatedness is raised in the reader, who is thereby challenged to see the body as a common denominator and a manifestation ground for both functions. By insisting in such a manner upon the mouthparts as a topos of both functions, the body is revealed as a primary and irreducible reality and as a topos for the manifestation of human acts.

כי נפת התפנה שפתי זרה וחלק משמן חכה *Mashal 5:3*

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. (KJV)

For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and smoother than oil is her speech. (NAS)

Nu te uita la femeia lingușitoare, căci buzele celei străine picură miere și cerul gurii sale e mai alunecător decât untdelemnul. (Sin)

The text in Hebrew maintains a semantic coherence keeping the term *khek* (palate) for references related to the sense of taste and introduces another component of the mouthparts for imagining its verbal function; the transformation of sweetness into bitterness is hereby transferred from the sensorial level to that of the mouth as a whole, which turns from an abode of sweet words into a sharp two-edged sword. The sense of taste and this strategy of invoking transformations at a perceptive level are not only vehicles of an allegory describing the mechanism of seduction, but also models able to show how the process of seduction functions, a seduction involving mind and body alike. Following the beguiling of Adam and Eve described in Genesis 3:6<sup>8</sup>, the seduction process engages the human being as a whole; starting with the level of the body, all levels are touched. The senses, nevertheless, play an essential role.

To reinforce the role played by the body element in the act of seduction, the verse 22:14 compares the alluring mouth with a deep hole of the kind used in hunting – a comparison meant to portray the deceived as a prey. Judging from the strongly moralizing

8) "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen 3:6 KJV).

perspective of the verse, the victimization of the deceived is double, the final causality being reported, as always in the Bible, to God. The man who lets himself seduced by the foreign (harlot) woman<sup>9</sup> is punished directly by God, the assigning of final causalities (good or bad) to Divinity being a very important step in formulating a monotheistic conception by the Old Israelites.

**Mashal 22:14** שׂוֹחָה עֲמָקָה כִּי גְרוֹת וְעוֹם יְהוָה (פּוֹלֵ-יָפֶלֶ) :  
[יפלה]אם:

The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein. (KJ)

The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; He who is cursed of the LORD will fall into it. (NAS)

O groapă fără fund este gura femeilor străine; cel ce este lovit de mânia Domnului cade în ea. (Sin)

But the words of the foreign female seducer are not the only sources of deception. Many other verses refer to the lies, falsehood and slyness produced by the mouth, lips and tongue of the wicked and the foolish; the lack of truth and perversity – as distortion of meaning or its erroneous use – is often mentioned, many of the terms used in describing the mouth of the wicked laying even more emphasis on the idea of perverting the truth.

**Mashal 4:24** הַסֵּר בְּמִדָּה עֲקוּשׁוֹת בָּהּ וְלִנְיֹת שִׁפְתֵי־הַרְגָה  
הַרְתֵּם מִמֶּנּוּ:

Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. (KJ)

Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put devious lips far from you. (NAS)

Leapădă din gura ta orice cuvinte cu înțeles sucit, alungă de pe buzele tale viclenia. (Sin)

**Mashal 20:17** עֲרֵב לְאִישׁ לֶחֶם שֶׁקֶר וְאֶחָד יִמְלֵא־בִיהוּ הַחֶזֶץ:

Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel. (KJ)

Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a

man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. (NAS)

Bună e la gust pâinea agonisită cu înșelăciune, dar după aceea gura se umple de pietricele. (Sin)

Verse 4:24 above contains two metaphoric descriptions, in which the genitive constructions of the *status constructus* type discuss the falsity of the mouth and perversity of the lips. Verse 20:17 is the result of a larger metaphorizing scheme capitalizing the anatomic element through more potent stylistic preferences. Semantically, the image is created by two highly suggestive visual coordinates: *bread* and *stone*. Their joining together, in the context of the symbolism of the mouth, opens the perspective of a sudden break at a perceptive level, announcing an ontologic experience later capitalized by Christian symbolism. This will offer a reversed image of the symbolic representation of the mouth which by the sweet taste of bread is tempted into swallowing the stone; the representation of the mouth of hell likewise defeated through Christ's resurrection receives a positive value.

The rod contained in the mouth of the foolish, itself a metaphor for the words pronounced by the lips of the foolish, and which are turning against himself accusing him on the ground of his own words, that is another example confessing the materiality – of an extremely high variety in the *Proverbs* – of the *mouth metaphors*:

**Mashal 14:3** בְּפִי־אֵוִיל תֵּשֶׁר גְּאֹנָה וּשְׁפִתַי תִּכְלְמוּ  
תִשְׁמְרוּם:

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them. (KJ)

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back. But the lips of the wise will preserve them. (NAS)

În gura celui nebun este varga mândriei lui; buzele pe cei înțelepți îi păzesc. (Sin)

The geography of the body is gradually

9) The Hebrew word is *foreign*, but in the old times the mere fact of women travelling alone would point to a libertine behaviour.

pieced together, in agreement with the specific style of sapiential antinomies, by drawing two opposed portraits – that of the foolish and that of the wise. Following the same procedure at a lower scale, the mouthparts are likewise represented:

**Mashal 10:31** פִּי צַדִּיק יָנוּב חֲכָמָה וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפְּכוֹת תִּפְרָת:  
תִּפְרָת:

The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. (KJ)

The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom, but the perverted tongue will be cut out. (NAS)

Gura celui drept rodește înțelepciune, iar limba urzitoare de rele aduce pierzare. (Sin)

Interhuman relations stand proof for the parallel functioning of the two portraits, the mouth being a topos of the verbal meeting with the other. Basically, the verbal activity – one of the two major functions of the mouthparts – is the onset of communication. Mouth, tongue and lips alike – all are directly involved in bringing forth a reality, that of verbally meeting the other. Just like in the case of the ear, this attaches a huge responsibility to the mouthparts:

**Mashal 16:10** קֶסֶם עַל־שִׁפְתַי־מֶלֶךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא יִמְעַל־פִּיו:

A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment (KJ)

A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment. (NAS)

Hotărâri dumnezeiești sunt pe buzele împăratului; la darea hotărârii să nu se înșele gura lui. (Sin)

A verse introducing a sort of minitreatise on the king – interpreted by Evagrius as a symbolic figure representing Christ, whose judgement knows the hearts of humans – the example above contains a most powerful expression of the responsibility

born by the words produced by the work of the lips and mouth. Their destructive and curative capacity is the subject matter of the next verses as well, where the mouth and lips are *a tree of life* or *a breach in the spirit*, they can *feed many*, *pierce like a sword or deliver*; words have the power to bestow life and death.

**Mashal 15:4** מִרְפָּא לְשׁוֹן עֵץ חַיִּים וְקֶלֶף הָא עֲקָר  
קְרוֹת:

A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit. (KJ)

A soothing tongue is a tree of life, But perversion in it crushes the spirit. (NAS)

Limba dulce este pom al vieții, iar limba vicleană zdrobește inima. (Sin)

**Mashal 10:21** שִׁפְתַי צַדִּיק יִרְעוּ רַבִּים, לְאֹוֹלָיִים  
בְּחֶסֶר־לֵב יָמִיתוּ:

The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom. (KJ)

The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of understanding. (NAS)

Buzele celui drept călăuzesc pe mulți oameni, iar cei nebuni mor din pricină că nu sunt pricepuți. (Sin)

**Mashal 12:18** יֵשׁ בֹּטָה בְּמִדְקָרוֹת תָּרַב וּלְשׁוֹן  
חֲכָמִים מִרְפָּא:

There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health. (KJ)

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword,

But the tongue of the wise brings healing. (NAS)

Cei nechibzuiți la vorbă sunt ca împunsăturile de sabie, pe când limba celor înțelepți aduce tămăduire. (Sin)

**Mashal 18:21** מָוֶת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד־לְשׁוֹן וְאֹהֲבָיָהּ יֹאכְל פְּרִיָהּ:

Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. (KJ)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its



fruit. (NAS)

În puterea limbii este viața și moartea și cei ce o iubesc mănâncă din rodul ei. (Sin)

In Evagrius' allegorical interpretation, the mouth and tongue represent the passionate part of the soul and the intellect (LXX 2006, 469). But the corporeal reading behind the speech metaphor is equally prone to highlight the responsibility of the human being, who is, thereby, revealed as being present as a whole in all his or her deeds manifested through all the functions of his or her body.

**Mashal 18:7** פִּי־רָסִיל מִחַתָּת־לּוֹ וְשִׁפְתָיו מִזִּקְשׁ נַפְשׁוֹ:

A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul. (Pro 18:7 KJV)

A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul. (NAS)

Gura celui nebun este prăbușirea lui și buzele lui sunt un laț pentru sufletul lui. (Sin)

Speaking about the relation of the mouthparts with other anatomic elements on a map of human physiology, the *Proverbs* have them directly connected to the heart:

**Mashal 16:23** לֵב הַחֲכָם יִשְׁפָּטֵל פִּיהוּ וְעַל־שִׁפְתָיו יִסְרֵי לִקְחָ:

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. (KJ)

The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds persuasiveness to his lips. (NAS)

Inima celui înțelept dă înțelepciune gurii lui și pe buzele sale sporește știința. (Sin)

This relation of the wise with his own lips, a mirror of the human being's relation to God, was often quoted by Origenes as a reference to an Old Testament prophecy (LXX 2006, 454). Apparently, prophecy would be in the first place hinted at by verse 16:1, a verse missing in *Codex Vaticanus*, and which seems to contradict the one above:

**Mashal 16:1** לְאָדָם מֵעֵר־כִּי־לֵב וּמִיָּהוָה מַעֲנֵה לִשׁוֹן:

The preparations of the heart in man,

and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD. (KJ)

The plans of the heart belong to man,

But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. (NAS)

În putere stă omului să plăsmuiască planuri în inimă, dar răspunsul limbii vine de la Domnul. (Sin)

But the reference behind the hint is actually a completely different function of the heart: the preparation or devising of plans. This is what is opposed here to God's plan manifested through the work of the tongue. The gap between man's plan and God's plan is reflected by the gap between the purely subjective relation between the human person's rational and volitive functions and the objective reality, which starts when meeting the other.

Hence the urge to keep silent unless the relation with wisdom works in the heart:

**Mashal 30:32** אִם־נִבְלַתְּ בְהִתְנַשֵּׂא וְאִם־זָמַיְתָ יָד לְפִי:

If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth. (KJ)

If you have been foolish in exalting yourself

Or if you have plotted *evil*, *put your* hand on your mouth. (NAS)

De ești așa de nebun ca să te lași mânat de nebulie, bate-te cu mâna peste gură. (Sin)

To conclude, the mouthparts are, before anything else, essential as the topos of speech, where "the capacity for language provides the essential condition for the humanity of man" (Wolff 1974, 78). Making speech happen and, therefore, being fundamentally involved in the manifestation of the quintessential feature of the human condition, the mouthparts are automatically a topos of meeting otherness, thereby having an ontic, reality-creating dimension. Thus, by opposedly describing the mouth of the wise and of the foolish, one actually probes human relations considering that the reality



created by the lips can be redemptive or destructive, for both the others and the self.

But the mouthparts are equally a topos of digestion and the strategy of mixing the two functions by making use of stereometry is a specificity of the Hebrew text. References to the verbal function are more often than not hidden behind references to the digestive one. This is a process by which the sense of taste attached to the digestive function is evoked as a substitute for the verbal one. By mentioning this twofold dimension of the mouthparts – a topos of both speech and digestion – what is reminded is the involvement of the whole body in all processes theoretically associated with mind or soul. Hence the necessity of an assumed literal reading of the text.

Following – on a further detailed map of human anatomy and physiology – the relation between the sense organs and other organs, while the mouthparts are connected to the heart, I will address the relation of the wise’s heart with his or her ears which mirrors the relation between humans and God.

• • • • •  
**The ear (ozen)**

Starting from Eliphaz’s speech in *The Book of Job* (Job 4:12-15<sup>10</sup>), *Anthropology of the Old Testament* shows that the ear, the first function of which is purely aesthetic, connected to jewellery adornment (Genesis 35:4<sup>11</sup>), and the second social, related to ratifying the act of fixing lifelong possessions (Deuteronomy 15:17<sup>12</sup>) may be associated with the change of the whole state of the body (Wolff 1974, 75). Considered “the root of true humanity” (Wolff 1974, 74), the ear plays an essential role in man’s self-knowledge, which in the Hebrew worldview – developed by both Christianity and Judaism – is initiated by listening and continued by following the divine call. In this tradition, founded by the prophetic calls and especially by that of

Moses (Exodus 3:4<sup>13</sup>), there is a preeminence of hearing over sight (Wolff 1974, 76). Listening involves hearing so the ear plays, in the Hebrew worldview, a higher role than the eye and the sight, which are central in Greek philosophy in its focus on knowing yourself through self-reflection.

But sight is crucial in keeping a sound relation to the self all along the process of answering the divine call. The eye and the sight mirror both self-referentiality and man’s relation to wisdom. But hearing hints at the first moment of the call – a particular, unique, specific call addressed by God to everyone and reiterated during his or her becoming a human person. Many of the proverbs containing the term *ear* insist upon this perspective by exploring the relation between (the words of) wisdom (instruction, teaching) and the ear of the apprentice.

Practically, the ear offers the opportunity of contemplating the most direct conjunction between body and wisdom:

**Mashal 4:20** בְּנֵי לִדְבָרֵי הַקְּשִׁיבָה לְאָמְרֵי הַטֹּאֲהָרָה:

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. (KJ)

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. (NAS)

Fiul meu, ia aminte la graiurile mele; la poveștele mele pleacă-ți urechea ta! (Sin)

Following the original Hebrew, all translations seem to retain the image of the ear centered on its inclined position. The gesture of inclining or bowing the ear to receive the words of wisdom is clearly predominant in the book of *Proverbs*, being repeated in many verses. It strikes back in extremely similar formulas in the following verses, where words of wisdom are only changed in the first part of the verse:

**Mashal 5:1** בְּנֵי לְהִקְמֹתִי הַקְּשִׁיבָה לְתַבְנִיטֵי הַטֹּאֲהָרָה:

My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding. (KJ)

My son, give attention to my wisdom,

10) Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. When a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up (KJV)

11) And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. (KJV)

12) Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise. (KJV)

13) And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. (KJV)

Incline your ear to my understanding.  
(NAS)

Fiul meu, ia aminte la înțelepciunea mea și la sfatul meu cel bun pleacă urechea ta. (Sin)

Sometimes, the terms of wisdom are stylistically enforced by comparisons containing ornaments and precious stones, which have always offered a good ground to allegoric interpretations. Gold is, however, the most preferred:

*Mashal 25:12* גָּם זָהָב וְחֵלֶבֶתָם מוֹכִיחַ חֹכֵם עַל־אָזְנוֹ  
שִׁמְעֵת:

As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprover upon an obedient ear. (KJ)

*Like* an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear. (NAS)

Inel de aur și podoabe de aur de mult preț este povățuitorul înțelept la urechea ascultătoare. (Sin)

Along with its vertical relations with the words of wisdom, the ear is involved in horizontal relations with other organs, among which the most prominent and most recurrent is the heart, but the sense organs (mouth, lips or eyes) are also present. The relation with the heart is always one of synonymy:

*Mashal 2:2* לְהַקְשִׁיב לְחַכְמָה אֲזַגֵּד תִּפְנֵה לִבְךָ לְתַבְנֵה:

So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding. (KJ)

Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding. (NAS)

Plecându-ți urechea la înțelepciune și înclinând inima ta la bună chibzuială. (Sin)

*Mashal 22:17* תִּט אֲזַנְךָ וְשָׁמַע דְּבַרֵי חֲכָמִים וְלִבְךָ תִּשְׁעִית  
לְדַעְתִּי:

Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. (KJ)

Incline your ear and hear the words of

the wise,

And apply your mind to my knowledge.  
(NAS)

Pleacă urechea ta și ascultă cuvintele celor iscușiți și inima ta îndreapt-o spre știința mea. (Sin)

The two proverbs above make reference to a three-step process of human self-knowledge based on listening to the call containing the voice of God: the first step is the leaning of the ear, the second one, the hearing of the words, and the third is storing them into the heart. In Evagrius' interpretation, one cannot speak of any true listening to the divine words unless one puts them into practice (LXX 2006,472).

Even looked at in reversed order, the process stays the same. The heart of the wise acquires wisdom to the extent that his or her ear is searching for it. In other words, man himself can be the initiator of the process of self-knowledge to the extent that he or she defines himself as a wisdom searcher. The next verse completes the teaching about self-knowledge in the Hebrew perspective: one never passively waits for the call. The active meaning of a human waiting for God's call can easily be read out in the thirst for wisdom, in man's continuous search for it:

*Mashal 18:15* לֵב גְבוּר יִקְנֶה־דָּעַת וְאָזְנוֹ חֹכְמִים  
תִּבְקַשׁ־דָּעַת:

The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge. (KJ)

The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge,

And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.  
(NAS)

O inimă pricepută dobîndește știința, și urechea celor înțelepți umblă după iscusință. (Sin)

The sense of the search mentioned above is turned upside down by the relation of the ear with the false lips and the naughty tongue:



**Mashal 17:4** מִרַע מִקְשִׁיב עַל־שִׁפְתֵי־אָוֹן שֶׁקֶר מִזִּיז  
עַל־לִשׁוֹן הַדָּת:

A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips;  
and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.  
(KJ)

An evildoer listens to wicked lips,

A liar pays attention to a destructive  
tongue. (NAS)

Făcătorul de rele ia aminte la buzele  
nedrepte, mincinosul pleacă urechea la  
limba cea rea. (Sin)

There are verses whose reading opens  
up a social dimension as well. Used  
metonymically, instead of the human person  
as a whole, the ear may even function as a  
trigger of promotion in the social hierarchy  
(the world of the sapiential writings knowing  
no gaps between the political, economic and  
spiritual dimensions, so the social class of  
the wise is the same as that of the rich and  
of social leaders). Verse 15:31 for example  
contains a typical case of stereometry  
which, looked upon more closely, conveys  
several ideas: those who hear the reproof  
of life get to abide among the wise, this  
learning is life-giving (a feature extending  
automatically to those coming into contact  
with it), and last, but not least, it involves  
the sense of hearing, so it is all based on the  
activity of the ear (LXX 2006, 452).

**Mashal 15:31** אֵזֶן שְׁמַעַת תּוֹכַחַת חַיִּים בְּקֶרֶב חֲכָמִים  
תִּלְוֶה:

The ear that heareth the reproof of life  
abideth among the wise. (KJ)

He whose ear listens to the life-giving  
reproof

Will dwell among the wise. (NAS)

Urechea care ascultă o dojană folositoare  
vieții își are locașul printre cei înțelepți.  
(Sin)

Other verses contain ortopraxy ele-  
ments, telling us how the ear and the sense  
of hearing should be used in relation to our  
fellow human beings.

**Mashal 21:13** אָטָם אָזְנוֹ מִזְעַקְתֵּי־דָל גַּם־הוּא יִקְרָא וְלֹא  
יִשְׁמָע:

Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the  
poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not  
be heard. (KJ)

He who shuts his ear to the cry of the  
poor

Will also cry himself and not be  
answered. (NAS)

Cine își astupă urechea la strigătul celui  
sărman, și el, când va striga, nu i se va  
răspunde. (Sin)

**Mashal 23:9** בְּאֲזְנֵי בְּסִיל אַל־תְּדַבֵּר כִּי־יָבוֹז לְשִׂכְלֵךְ מִלִּיד:

Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will  
despise the wisdom of thy words (KJ)

Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,

For he will despise the wisdom of your  
words. (NAS)

Nu grăi la urechea celui nebun, căci el nu  
va băga în seamă iscusința graiurilor tale.  
(Sin)

Interestingly, the relation with the others  
does not automatically involve feeding  
the others' ears with words of wisdom.  
In other words, transmission of wisdom  
does not ultimately suppose an automatic  
transitivity. In his explanation of the verse  
above, Evagrius makes reference to Mathew  
7:6<sup>14</sup>, the verse on *throwing pearls to pigs*  
(LXX 2006,474). As if to avoid the risk of  
letting the message deviate along the way,  
wisdom brightens everyone directly. Since  
wisdom and the law are one and can only be  
had together, deviations are always possible,  
even with those attached to God by prayer if  
they interrupt their relation to the law and  
break it.

**Mashal 28:9** מִסִּיר אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמַעַת תּוֹרָה גַּם־תִּפְלְתוּ תוֹעֵבָה:

He that turneth away his ear from  
hearing the law, even his prayer shall be  
abomination. (KJ)

He who turns away his ear from listening  
to the law,

Even his prayer is an abomination.  
(NAS)

14) Give not that  
which is holy unto  
the dogs, neither  
cast ye your pearls  
before swine, lest  
they trample them  
under their feet, and  
turn again and rend  
you. (KJV)

Cel ce își oprește urechea de la ascultarea legii, chiar rugăciunea lui e urâciune. (Sin)



**The eye (*ayn*)**

Being located on the face, the eyes are the organ of sight, one of the human’s main channels of communication with the exterior. What a man turns to another when they turn their face to each other is ultimately the sense organs involved in communication, which all have their seat in the head. True, for the Bible man, only the mouth, ear and eyes are important (Wolff 1974, 75), the nose being mentioned just once in the *Proverbs* (in verse 30:33, where *scratching the nose* is compared with arousing scandal). The eyes, as we are told in the book of *Proverbs*, are made by God for people to be able to see the light and this capacity is equally given by God to the poor and to the deceitful.

**Mashal 20:12** אֵזוֹן שְׁמַעַת וְעֵינֵי רֹאֵה יְהוָה עָשָׂה גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם:

The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them. (KJ)

The hearing ear and the seeing eye,  
The LORD has made both of them. (NAS)

Urechea care aude și ochiul care vede, pe amândouă le-a zidit Domnul. (Sin)

**Mashal 29:13** רֵשַׁע וְאִישׁ תְּהַכְּכִים נִפְגְּשׁוּ מֵאִיר־עֵינָי שְׁנֵיהֶם יְהוָה:

The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes. (KJ)

The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:

The LORD gives light to the eyes of both. (NAS)

Săracul și cel ce asupește pe cei săraci se întâlnesc; cel ce luminează ochii amândurora este Domnul. (Sin)

The creation of the eye in the first

example above is rendered by a synecdoche or – considering that both the eye and the ear actually stand for the human person as a whole, just as the eyelids stand for the eyes – rather by a stereometry, since synecdoche and metonymy have been reclassified by specialists in Bible poetry as stereometry. But such an explanation can hardly also cover the meanings of a verse like 29:13. By choosing to say that God bestows sight to the poor and his oppressor alike, this verse invests the context of the poor meeting the deceitful with additional meanings, which are overlooked when only considering the meeting of the two persons as a whole and disregarding the meeting of their eyes. The eye is one of the three major organs of communication having the seat in the head and one of the two to be found on the face. The face, in its turn, is the seat of communication by excellence. It has a plural form in Hebrew, which contributes to identifying it as a topos defined by the many ways in which people can pay attention to and communicate with one another. Therefore, the meeting of two people referred to in the verse above is above all a meeting of the eyes. And the fact that those taking part in the meeting described in proverb 29:13 are none but the poor and the deceitful contributes to doubling the moral dimension hinted at by the very fact that God Himself is governing their meeting. This could make a mystical or eschatological reading (made in a spiritual key, where all the events of this world are invested with salvation-related meanings) acquire ontic significances: what God is bestowing by bestowing the eyelight to both the poor and the deceitful is the capacity to exchange looks with the other, so creating the eye and bestowing the capacity of sight ultimately means creating a reality. We are hereby faced with a typical case where a corporeal reading, i.e. one paying attention to the corporeal dimension of the text, can enrich the meaning of the verse not only with moral, spiritual and eschatological meanings, but also with ontic dimensions;

the verse may invite a reading from the perspective of the ontology of the person.

Proverb 27:20 provides the ultimate definition of the eye as a sense organ: they are never satisfied. There is an avidity pertaining to the eyes, which is as big as the depth of hell:

**Mashal 27:20** שְׂאוֹל (וְאַבְדֹן) לֹא תִשְׂבַּעַנָּה וְעֵינֵי הָאָדָם לֹא תִשְׂבַּעַנָּה:

Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. (KJ)

Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,

Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied. (NAS)

Iadul și adâncul nu se pot sătura, tot așa și inima omului e de nesăturat. (Sin)

The comparison between the eyes and *sheol*, the abode of the dead, reiterated by its partial synonym *Abaddon* (rooted in the verb *avad*, meaning to destroy and, therefore, hinting at a topos of annihilation and destruction) opens the way for a rich theology of sin. This perspective is no doubt partially lost through the translation made, under the justification of stereometry being used there, by replacing *the eye* with *the heart*. By comparing the greediness of sight (which can be extrapolated to all the senses) with hell, one implies that for a good, wise and blessed functioning of the senses, they need to be subordinated to thought (which in Hebrew anthropology belongs to the heart) – which, in its turn, needs to be subordinated to God’s words and fenced by His law. Man’s inborn greediness reflecting his being created in the image of God and wrongly investing the depth of his structure in the senses is a consequence of him not adequately subordinating the senses to the heart and the heart to God. This would ultimately be the complete theological chain. Once omitting its first link by replacing the eye with the heart, the very component defining the sensuous dimension of man is lost.

Verse 23:26 shows the relation of the eye with the heart without even putting the two

of them into direct contact:

**Mashal 23:26** תַּגִּיד לִבִּי לֵבִי לֵי וְעֵינֵי דַרְבִּי (תַּרְצֶנָּה) [תַּרְצֶנָּה]:

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. (KJ)

Give me your heart, my son,

And let your eyes delight in my ways. (NAS)

Dă-mi, fiule, mie inima ta, și ochii tăi să simtă plăcere pentru căile mele. (Sin)

On the other hand, each of the two is directly related to God, even though the structure of the verse does not allow for a triangular reading (made possible by the laws of transitivity) but rather, by the imperfect tense of the verb *raʿa* (literally meaning “will find pleasure”, “will accept favourably”), indicating succession: if the heart is given to God, the eyes will also find pleasure for the ways of God.

The necessity to fence the eyes (as sense organs) and put them into relation with learning and the ways of wisdom is the message of many other verses (as, for example, Prov 3:21, 7:2, 4:25, 4:20-21). Interestingly, the chain is re-built, but in reverse order (to which special significance can be attached) in Prov 4:20-21:

**Mashal 4:20** בְּנֵי דַרְבֵּי הַקְּשִׁיבָה לְאִמְרֵי הַטִּיאוּגָד:

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings! (KJ)

Fiule, ia aminte la cuvintele mele, pleacă-ți urechea la vorbele mele! (Corn)

Fiul meu, ia aminte la graiurile mele; la povețele mele pleacă-ți urechea ta! (Sin)

**Mashal 4:21** אַל-יִלְחֲזוּ מֵעֵינֶיךָ שְׂמֵרִם בְּתוֹךְ לִבְךָ:

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. (KJ)

Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. (NAS)

Nu le scăpa din ochi, păstrează-le înlăuntrul inimii tale. (Sin)

Therefore, the contact with wisdom is guarded by the senses, the eyes being one of





the major ways in and out of man's contact with the exterior. As such, they occupy a vulnerable position between the outer and the inner world, being at the same time very powerful and influential upon other organs. The relation of the eyes with the mouth and especially the relation of both of them with the heart are hinted at in several places. For example, a context referring to excess of wine consumption is followed by one in which the deviation or perversion of the eyes also attracts the deviation or perversion of the heart, which, in its turn, becomes a source of perverted words:

**Mashal 23:33** עֵינַיִךָ יִרְאוּ נָרוֹת וְלִבְךָ יִדְבֵּר תְּהַפְּכוֹת:

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. (KJ)

Your eyes will see strange things,

And your mind will utter perverse things. (NAS)

Dacă ochii tăi vor privi la femei străine și gura ta va grăi lucruri meșteșugite. (Sin)

Since the perverted words brought to the heart by the works of sight are uttered through the mouth and the mouth is not mentioned in the Hebrew text, the translations enjoy here again the freedom of choosing, under the justification of following stereometry, which of the three components (eyes, mouth and heart) to mention in the perversion chain.

The eye is mostly related to man's rational side / judgement (which, in the Hebrew worldview, belongs to the heart). Thus, the look of the emperor who is fair in his judgement will also be right.

**Mashal 20:8** מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא־דָוִד מִזְרָה בְּעֵינָיו כְּלִרְעָה:

A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes. (KJ)

A king who sits on the throne of justice Disperses all evil with his eyes. (NAS)

Un rege care stă pe scaunul de judecată deosebește cu ochii lui orice faptă rea. (Sin)

Sinful judgement and evil doings are associated with eyes partially closed, as described in the Hebrew text, which increases the plasticity of the image:

**Mashal 16:30** עָבָה עֵינָיו לְהַשִּׁיב תְּהַפְּכוֹת קִרְיָן שִׁפְתָיו כְּלָה רָעָה:

He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass. (KJ)

He who winks his eyes *does so* to devise perverse things;

He who compresses his lips brings evil to pass. (NAS)

Cel care închide din ochi urzește viclenii; cine își mușcă buzele a și săvârșit răul. (Sin)

The maximum perversion of the way the eye functions is measureable in their self-referentiality, which can be interpreted as loss of discernment. Once a deviation obtains autonomy by interrupting all relations with an outer (transcendental) world, by the loss of which there is no reference point left, there is no stop to the fall. The eyes, created for man to see his way in God's light, come to show the foolish his way in the light of his own madness.

**Mashal 16:2** כָּל־דְּרָכֵי־אִישׁ טוֹר בְּעֵינָיו וְתַכּוּ רוּחֹת: הַקֹּה:

All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. (KJV)

All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight,

But the LORD weighs the motives. (NAS)

Toate căile omului sunt curate în ochii lui, dar numai Domnul este cel ce cercetează duhul. (Sin)

Unfortunately, the reference to the body is not capitalized by all the translations of the verses containing it in Hebrew, the eyes often being translated as "discernment" etc. But the Hebrew way of expressing the loss of discernment through insistence on the eyes is far from being insignificant and should

not be overlooked. Being the first gate of communication with the outer world, the eyes may be perceived as representative for the whole sensorial dimension of the human person. Therefore, perverting the eyes involves losing the mental compass. This being the full meaning of the text, any translation losing any mention of the body and failing to render all the anatomic and physiological terms in the Hebrew original implicitly loses meaningful dimensions of the text.

אֶת־פְּנֵי מַבִּין הַחִמָּה וְשִׁנְיָ לְסִילִי **Mashal 17:24**  
בַּמַּעֲהָ אֶרֶץ:

Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth. (KJ)

Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding,

But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. (NAS)

Omul priceput are înaintea ochilor lui înțelepciunea, iar ochii celui nebun se uită la capătul pământului. (Sin)

In the verses making the definition of the foolish a theme in itself, some stereometry cases making heavy use of the *eyes* are employed to introduce the arrogant:

דֹר מִהֲרָמוּ עֵינָיו וְנִפְעָפוּ יַנְשָׂאָה: **Mashal 30:13**

*There is a generation...*, O how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. (KJ)

There is a kind – oh how lofty are his eyes!

And his eyelids are raised *in arrogance*. (NAS)

Un neam... O, cum ridică ochii lui sus și cât se înalță de sus genele lui! (Sin)

Even among those with lofty eyes, the most foolish of all is he who sees himself clean and pure. He who, in his haughtiness, is self-sufficient, cuts himself off God. In God's eyes, the dirtiest is he whose only point of reference is himself, or who calls his own dirt purity:

דֹר טָהוֹר בְּעֵינָיו וְיִמְצָאֵהוּ לֹא רִחַץ: **Mashal 30:12**

*There is a generation that are pure* in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness. (KJ)

There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes,

Yet is not washed from his filthiness. (NAS)

Un neam căruia i se pare că e fără prihană în ochii lui și care nu e curățit de necurăția lui. (Sin)

To conclude, the eyes and the sight are essential in the self-knowledge process although their importance is secondary to the ear and hearing. The Hebrew perspective upon man's destiny being substantiated by the idea of the divine call, as a first step, or as ontic initiative by excellence, self-knowledge in the Hebrew worldview is founded in listening to a call, not in self-reflection – the cornerstone of Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, the eye and sight play a crucial role in keeping a correct relation with the self throughout the process of answering the call. Man is permanently faced with two choices: self-reference on one side, and bondage with wisdom on the other, his choice being mirrored by the look in his eyes. This is a matter of significance, easily overlooked unless assuming a literal reading of the body in the text.

In a way, the body and metaphor are two issues mirroring each other, the relation between the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor being the same as that between the soul and the body. A metaphor is built on a logical relation or rather of a common denominator between its two terms. Considering the stereometries analysed above, this logical relation has its starting point in the objective reality of the body – by a component which is referenced to by another function of that component. The element referred to is still an element belonging to the same reality of the body, the body becoming the common denominator of the analyzed metaphors. Hence the impossibility to leave the body out from any discourse about man and a

human being's actions.

Before concluding, two brief references to cognitive psychology are to be mentioned in support of the elements of corporeal hermeneutics contained in my plea for an assumed literal reading of the corporeal language of the book of *Proverbs*. Echoing the interest in the body in today's cultural and philosophical research, a research line called *embodiment thesis* is being born in cognitive psychology and linguistics, following Thomas Aquinas' "there is nothing in the mind that was not previously in the senses" and holding not only that the "process of human cognition is mediated by our physical experiences", but also that it "views the more abstract target domains of cognition, e.g. those of thought, emotion and language, as based on concrete source domains such as the human body and the conceptualizations of the internal body parts" (Shariffian 2008, 7).

Moreover, according to American cognitive linguist Raymond W. Gibbs, embodied activities shape human cognition: "People's subjective, felt experiences of their bodies in action provide part of the fundamental grounding for language and thought" (Gibbs 2006, 9). Practically, Raymond Gibbs too explores a line about which Shariffian writes: "in Lakoff and Johnson's framework metaphor and metonymy are not purely imaginative leaps for the purpose of mere aesthetic sense-creation, they are rather more fundamentally rooted in and motivated by the bodily experiences of humans" (Shariffian 2008, 8). Speculations can be made here on the presence of corporeal elements in any discourse about the surrounding reality, which is due to the fact that mental processes are conceptualized by appealing to corporeal realities, so the presence of the body in the language is a consequence of the fact that the parts of the body are automatically recorded, at a mental level, as sources of access to reality. The invitation I have launched to give an assumed literal reading to the corporeal

images making the substance of a sapiential text resonates with this theoretic line. Similarly to the impossibility of conceiving knowledge without the mediation of matter, no wisdom can be acquired without the mediation of the body. Wisdom acquisition is complete only when involving the human person as a whole. Wisdom is attained in the body as well.



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