Moral Values in Ancient Egypt

Lichtheim, Miriam

Abstract: In ten chapters the author works out the ancient Egyptian's understanding of himself as a moral human being. As soon as the literate person had begun to sum up his life and his personality in the form of an "autobiography" inscribed in his tomb, he included in it statements on his moral personhood. In the course of the centuries these statements grew into rounded self-portraits in which he reported on his doing what he recognized as right actions and his shunning what he judged to be evildoing. He understood his knowledge of right and wrong as an innate capability which was articulated by himself as a thinking person, an "I". Altogether, he thought of himself as a person shaped by innate traits which were fostered by growth, education, and experience. The process of moral growth he viewed as a learning process in which parents and teachers exemplified moral precepts which he, the thinking person, worked out in his daily life. The Egyptian viewed his gods as ultimate judges of people's moral actions; but he did not ascribe a teaching function to the gods. An intense lover of life, he felt sure that rightdoing brought success and happiness, whereas evildoing was bound to bring failure. His moral thought added up to a social ethic which encompassed all members of society. Family, friends, neighbors, village and town, the nation as a whole and foreign peoples too – one and the same rules of righdoing applied to all. Fair-dealing and benevolence were viewed as the leading virtues; greed was deemed the most pernicious vice. In sum, the ancient Egyptian recognized the brotherhood of mankind.

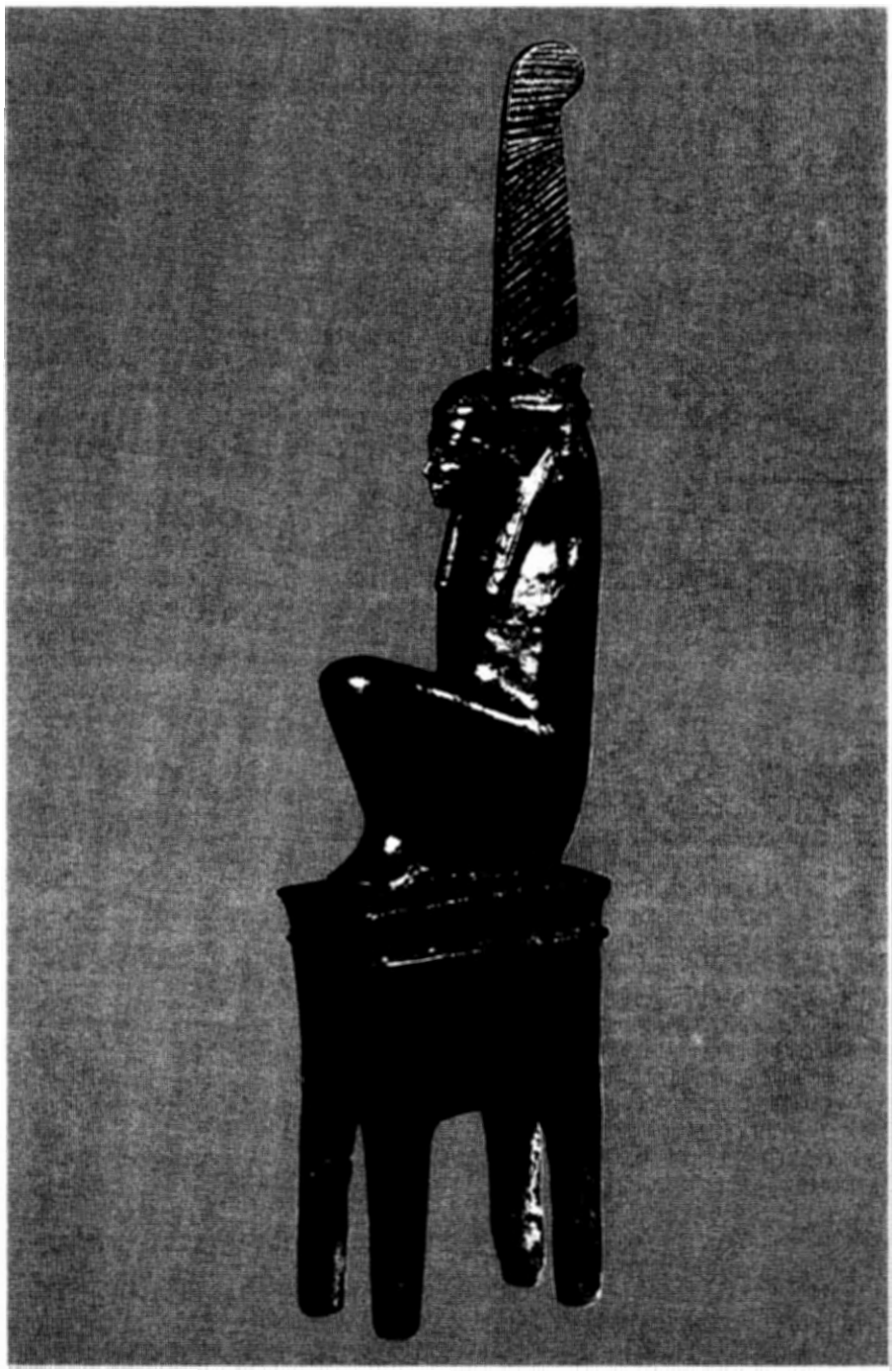
Originally published at:
Lichtheim, Miriam (1997). Moral Values in Ancient Egypt. Fribourg, Switzerland / Göttingen, Germany: University Press / Vandenhoeck Ruprecht.

ORBIS BIBLICUS ET ORIENTALIS

Published by Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger
on behalf of the Biblical Institute
of the University of Fribourg Switzerland,
the Egyptological Seminar of the University of Basel,
the Institute for Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology and Languages
of the University of Berne,
and the Swiss Society for Ancient Near Eastern Studies

The Author:

Miriam Lichtheim grew up in Berlin. She studied Semitic languages, Egyptology, and Greek at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, finishing with a M.A. degree in 1939. Continuing at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, she obtained a Ph. D. in Egyptology in 1944. Subsequently she became a professional librarian, working first at Yale University and later at the University of California, Los Angeles. There, until her retirement, she held the dual position of Near Eastern bibliographer and lecturer in ancient Egyptian history. Apart from articles, her publications include: Demotic Ostraca from Medinet Habu, 1957, the three-volume Ancient Egyptian Literature, 1973–1980, Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context, OBO 52 (1983), Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom. A Study and an Anthology, OBO 84 (1988) and Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies, OBO 120 (1992).



The goddess Maat. 21st-22nd dynasty.

Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 155

Miriam Lichtheim

Moral Values in Ancient Egypt

University Press Fribourg Switzerland
Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Lichtheim, Miriam:
Moral Values in Ancient Egypt / Miriam Lichtheim. – Fribourg, Switzerland: Univ.-Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1997.
(Orbis biblicus et orientalis; 155)
ISBN 3-525-53791-3 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht)
ISBN 3-7278-1138-2 (Univ.-Verl.)

The photographs in front of the title-page and at the beginning of chapter IV are from: André B. Wiese / Madeleine Page-Gasser, Ägypten. Augenblicke der Ewigkeit. Unbekannte Schätze aus Schweizer Privatbesitz (Ausstellungskatalog Antikenmuseum, Basel), Mainz, Philipp von Zabern, 1997, p. 212, no. 137, Maat, private ownership, and p. 132, no. 97, servant holding offering basin, private ownership.

Publication subsidized by the Fribourg University Council

Camera-ready text
submitted by the author

Paulusdruckerei Freiburg Schweiz

ISBN 3-7278-1138-2 (University Press)
ISBN 3-525-53791-3 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht)

Digitalisat erstellt durch Florian Lippke, Departement
für Biblische Studien, Universität Freiburg Schweiz

For Aleida and Jan Assmann

CONTENTS

PREFACE

The number four indicating completion, this fourth book of mine published in the OBO series is my final one. All four are attempts to make the ancient voices speak to us in their own way. My approach is like that of W.G. Lambert, from whose *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* I quoted parts of his page 1 on page 1 of my Chapter 1. I now add a citation from his page 2:

> "The modern mind inevitably tries to fit ancient cogitations into the strait-jacket of twentieth century thinking, and any attempt to present the old *Weltanschauung* in modern terms can at best be an inadequate introduction. Only by immersing oneself in the literature is it possible to feel the spirit which moves the writer."

I agree with this approach, for I am averse to sociological models as tools of interpretation. Such models do not set aside the subjectivity of each of us. The positive side of our individual subjectivities, it seems to me, is that all of us obtain what we are looking for: the long view into a human past that is dead and yet relevant. Sociological models hinder rather than aid that view because they build a conceptional scaffold which, imposed upon the ancient sources and presuming to explain, conceals rather than reveals the ancient way of thinking. Yet we all view history by means of a frame of reference, and mine is: evolution. I find ancient Egyptian morality to be a particularly clear example of evolution visibly in action, evolution as worked out by Darwin in his *Descent of Man* (1871) and as understood now.

Note: For each Egyptian text cited, mostly only one convenient edition or translation is mentioned. Full bibliographies can be found in my three AEL volumes.

Omer, Israel, October 1996 Miriam Lichtheim

1. A TERMINOLOGICAL MUDDLE

W.G. Lambert's *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* begins as follows:

> " 'Wisdom' is strictly a misnomer as applied to Babylonian literature. As used for a literary genre the term belongs to Hebraic studies and is applied to Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Here 'Wisdom' is a common topic and is extolled as the greatest virtue. While it embraces intellectual ability the emphasis is more on pious living: the wise man fears the Lord. This piety, however, is completely detached from law and ritual, which gives it a distinctive place in the Hebrew Bible. Babylonian has a term 'wisdom' *(nēmequ)*, and several adjectives for 'wise' (*enqu, mūdû, ḫassu, etpēšu*), but only rarely are they used with a moral content (perhaps, e.g., *Counsels of Wisdom* 25). Generally 'wisdom' refers to skill in cult and magic lore, and the wise man is the initiate. ... Though this term is thus foreign to ancient Mesopotamia, it has been used for a group of texts which correspond in subject-matter with the Hebrew Wisdom books, and may be retained as a convenient short description. The sphere of these texts is what has been called philosophy since Greek times, though many scholars would demur to using this word for ancient Mesopotamian thought."

In 1981 the editors of *JAOS* brought out a distinguished number of the Journal devoted to "Oriental Wisdom." Of the six weighty contributions I here cite the two that deal with Egypt and Mesopotamia.

l) R.J.Williams, "The Sages of Ancient Egypt in the Light of Recent Scholarship" (*JAOS* 101, 1981, 1-19) said for Egypt what Lambert had said for Mesopotamia: "It has frequently been pointed out that the term "Wisdom" employed to designate this class of literature is not native to Egypt but has been adopted from biblical studies." Like Lambert he has no objection to using the term "wisdom" when he has defined its scope. He distinguishes the large class of "instructions" from the "laments" and other "political propaganda", calling the latter kinds "wisdom in the broader sense." To these three groups of texts he adds "the tomb biographies from the later Old Kingdom right down to the Hellenistic period." (p.1) Such a delineation of the scope of Egyptian "wisdom literature" is now standard practice, only modified in recent years by German scholars' substitution of the term "Lebenslehren" for the earlier

"Weisheitslehren." But though the newer term is more accurate, it has not been used consistently, and there has been no general retreat from the "wisdom" terminology.

2) For Mesopotamia, however, Giorgio Buccellati's article "Wisdom and Not: the Case of Mesopotamia" (*JAOS* 101, 35-47) proposed more precise thinking on the meaning of "wisdom." Summing up its current use as denoting both a literary genre and an intellectual trend, the two aspects together yielding "a canon of wisdom literature" (p.35f.) he proposed instead to examine Mesopotamian *perceptions* and *attitudes*, notably: the acquisition of knowledge and the quest for self-understanding. From these endeavors there resulted "wisdom themes" (p.38), which are present in many categories of Mesopotamian texts, e.g. texts that stem from folk tradition, and those that derive from the schools. Together, their intellectual efforts amounted to:

> "the first chapter in a documented history of human introspection, one which leads eventually to systematic philosophy on the one hand, and to lyrical poetry on the other." (p.42)

Thus, to the question, what is the phenomenon called "wisdom", Buccellati proposed the answer that "wisdom" in Mesopotamia is neither a particular literary genre, nor a specific intellectual/spiritual movement, nor should we speak of "wisdom literature." He concluded:

> "Wisdom should be viewed as an intellectual phenomenon in itself. It is the second degree reflective function as it begins to emerge in human culture; in Mesopotamia, it takes shape in a variety of realizations and institutions, from onomastics to literature, from religion to the school. It provides the mental categories for a conscious, abstract confrontation with reality, from common sense correlations to higher level theory. It did not lead to a deductive systematization of the reasoning process - a major innovation which was left for classical Greece; but it went beyond empirical observation and primary classification. On the arc of progressive differentiation which characterizes the evolution of human culture, wisdom marks the first explicit attempt to gain some distance from one's own inner self, and to cast the particular in a universal mold which can be described rationally ... Thus it can be said that wisdom has an internal coherence of its own, but as a dimension or attitude, not as an institution ..." (p.44)

I found this analysis liberating. Since then I noticed that such major works on Mesopotamian culture as A. Leo Oppenheim's *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1964), Thorkild Jacobsen's *The Treasures of Darkness* (1976), and Jean Bottéro's *Mesopotamia* (1992) make no reference at all to "wisdom", except for a single dismissive remark by Oppenheim about "rather platitudinous concoctions of practical 'wisdom'" (p.19).

However, the two essays on Mesopotamian "wisdom" by B. Alster and C. Wilcke in the volume *Weisheit,* ed. Aleida Assmann (1991), follow the traditional approach of applying "wisdom" to moral instruction and to a variety of intellectual endeavors.

As for Egypt, two recent egyptological studies were devoted to the topic of Egyptian "Wisdom." One is the essay by Jan Assmann, entitled "Weisheit, Schrift und Literatur" in the volume *Weisheit* (1991) mentioned above. The other is the large monograph by Nili Shupak, entitled *Where can Wisdom be found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian literature* (1993) .

Shupak's work is a detailed lexical comparison of Egyptian and Hebrew terminology specific to the "wisdom works" of the two literatures. I shall examine the Egyptian lexemes discussed in her chapter vi. Thereafter, I comment on Assmann's essay.

In her chapter vi, entitled "The consequences of acquiring wisdom: wise and wisdom", Shupak assembled seven major Egyptian terms "relating to the semantic field of 'wise' and 'wisdom'". She began with the root *rḫ* and remarked:

> "The most common root in the semantic field of 'wisdom' is *rḫ*, meaning 'to know', 'to recognize ' (*Wb*. II 442). Its antonym is *ḫm*, 'know not ', 'to be ignorant of' ... As a verb *rḫ* has the general sense 'to know' and is not limited to the wisdom vocabulary. Therefore, the discussion below is restricted to those applications of *rḫ* that are characteristic of the Egyptian wisdom sources."

There follow examples of *rḫ* as verb and noun in the senses of "knowing", "being skilled", and "knowledge". As for the adjectival use of *rḫ,* she states: "The active participle *rḫ* is used adjectivally for "wise" beginning in the Middle Kingdom (Wb. II 445)".

The fact, however, is that throughout its discussion of *rḫ* the *Wörterbuch* (*Wb*. II, 442-447) shunned the translations "weise", "Weisheit". Its definitions are limited to "wissen", "erkennen", "verstehen", "gelehrt sein",

and to the nouns "der Wissende", "der Gelehrte", "der Bekannte". The absence of the rendering "weise" is characteristic of the judicious and cautious approach of the outstanding scholars who produced the Wörterbuch - its editors and their collaborators.

Raymond Faulkner in his *Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (1962) included the renderings "wisdom" and "wise man" for the *nouns* *rḫ* and *rḫ-ḫt.* One of his cited examples is *rḫ-ḫt* in *Lebensmüder* 145-6, which he rendered (in *JEA* 42,30) "Verily he who is yonder will be a sage". I did the same in my translation in *AEL* I, 169: "Truly, he who is yonder will be a wise man". Today I would render: "Truly, he who is yonder will be a knower of things" - less smooth but more accurate.

The first maxim of the Instruction of Ptahhotep (P. Prisse 52/54) advises the listener: *m ʿ ib.k ḥr rḫ.k / nḏnḏ r.k ḥnʿ ḫm mi rḫ*. In *AEL* I,63 I rendered it:

> Do not be proud of your knowledge,
> Consult the ignorant and the wise.

H. Brunner's rendering in his *Weisheit* (1988), 111, comes to the same:

> Sei nicht eingebildet auf dein Wissen,
> Sondern besprich dich mit dem Unwissenden so gut wie mit dem Weisen.

Thus both of us translated the noun *rḫ* as "knowledge" but the noun *rḫ* "knower" as "wise one / sage". Today I would render:

"Consult the ignorant one as well as the knowing one" - less smooth but more precise.

G. Burkard in his recent Ptahhotep translation (*TUAT* III/2, 1991) has:

> Sei nicht hochmütig wegen deiner Bildung,
> berate dich mit dem Ungebildeten wie mit dem Gebildeten.

That rendering has the good point of avoiding the vagueness of the "wisdom" terminology.

Shupak next examined the terms *sʾʾ* and *sʾr*, for both of which she posited the meanings "wise" and "wisdom". In this she is supported by Faulkner's *Dictionary*: "be wise, prudent" (pp.208, 211) and partly by the *Wörterbuch*: *Wb.* IV.16: *sʾʾ* "weise sein, verstehen", "der Verständige,

der Weise". For *s3r*, however, *Wb.* IV.18 gives only "verstehen, Verstand, Klugheit".

For the fourth term in her survey, *si3*, she adds to the meanings "perception / knowledge / insight" the notion of "charismatic wisdom pertaining to gods and kings." Faulkner gives some support: *si3-ḫt*, "wisdom" (p.212). There is no support from the *Wörterbuch*: *Wb.* IV.30: "Erkenntnis, Einsicht, Verstand".

To the remaining three terms, *šs3*, *ḥmw*, *ʿrq*, Shupak assigns the traditional renderings "skill" and "expertise"; but Faulkner expanded: *šs3*, "be wise, conversant with", "wisdom, skill" (p.271); and to *ḥmw* he added "*ḥmw-ib*, ingenious" (p.170). As for *ʿrq*, Faulkner gave it a wide range including "be wise".

If these definitions fortify the readers' belief that classical (pre-Demotic) Egyptian possessed the concepts of, and the lexemes for, "wise / wisdom", I urge them to open their Liddell & Scott to the entry "*sophia*". I quote from the 7th edition, 1883: "Properly *cleverness* or *skill* in handicraft and art, as in carpentry ... in music and singing ... in poetry ... in medicine or surgery ... 2. *skill* in matters of common life, *sound Judgment, intelligence, prudence, practical* and *political wisdom* such as was attributed to the seven sages ... 3. *knowledge of the sciences, learning, wisdom, philosophy* ... often in Arist. *the supreme science, the science of causes, philosophy, metaphysic* ..."

Does *sophia's* rise from the humble origin of "skill" to the heights of "wisdom" not suggest that in Egypt, a millennium earlier, the lexemes for "skill", "knowledge","understanding", etc. eventually may, or may not, have yielded the concept of, and the lexemes for, "wise / wisdom" in senses comparable to the *sophia* of the philosophers and/or the *hokhma* of the biblical "wisdom" books ? And does it not stand to reason that when egyptologists render the terms *rḫ, s3, s3r,* etc. by "wise" and "wisdom" they are taking a liberty which comes easily, the more so since in contemporary usage "wise" is a vague and debased term which covers a great variety of attitudes.

Ptahhotep's aphorism *nn msy s3w* (P. Prisse 41) is usually and easily rendered "No one is born wise." But this does not prove that *s3w / s3rw* meant "wise." Similarly, for Merikare, 33 *[ʿimdr] pw n srw s3*, the translation "the wise man is a [⌜rampart⌝] for the officials" comes easily. But "One competent is a [⌜rampart⌝] for the officials" would be more to the point. As for Neferti, line 6, where the king asks his courtiers to bring him a person who is *m s3 m iqr*, so that he might entertain the king with

choice sayings, what is the quality of *sꜣꜣ* desired here? Lefebvre, *Romans* (1949), rendered "un qui soit plein d'esprit." The current English expression for this capacity is "to be brilliant." In sum, the dictionary listings of *sꜣꜣ*, *šsꜣ*, etc. as "wise" reflect the practice of translators to use "wise" as an all-purpose label by which to avoid the polysyllabic and unrhythmic terms "knowledgeable","intelligent", "instructed", "learned", "perceptive", "sensible", and other.

If I were to revise my translations, I would remove *all* renderings by "wise / wisdom" and substitute more precise terms. Only for the "Instructions" of the Late Period would I allow "wise/wisdom" to stand.

It is interesting to observe how the absence of indubitable terms for "wise" and "wisdom" has led some of our distinguished scholars to equate the "wise man" with the "silent man" - *grw* - that lexically sound paragon of Egyptian ethics. H. Frankfort equated the two in his *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (pp. 66-70); J. Leclant did it in *SPOA* (1963) p. 13:

> "En ancien Egyptien, de façon curieuse, il n'y a guère de termes pour exprimer à proprement parler la "sagesse". Celle-ci se dit *śꜣt*; le 'sage' est appelé *śꜣꜣ* (Wb. IV,16,1-2) ... En fait, ce ne sont pas ces termes auxquels se réfèrent les textes de sagesse, lorsqu'ils veulent définir le type humain répondant à leur idéal. La désignation la plus caractéristique, c'est *gr*, proprement le 'silencieux' ..."

And J. Assmann did it in his essay "Weisheit" named above, where one-half of his page 490 is devoted to the equation. I quote the beginning and the end of his paragraph:

> "Auch der Begriff des 'Weisen' als des innerlich vollkommenen Menschen ist eine Schöpfung des Mittleren Reiches. In wörtlicher Übersetzung bedeutet er 'der Schweigende'. Gemeint ist ein verantwortungsvoller Gebrauch der Rede, aber nicht nur der Rede. ... Der Begriff des Schweigens verweist auf *Zurückhaltung* als den Inbegriff weisen Verhaltens gegenüber der Gesellschaft, der Welt und Gott."

The equation is, however, at best half valid, only insofar as the "wise man" would possess the qualities of the "silent man": patience, calm, and control over feelings and passions. But the reverse does not hold: the "silent man" need not be a "sage". Because any simple person who was modest and controlled qualified as a "silent man", but not as a "sage". For the "sage" - as the term implies, and as we shall see if we find him -

meant an exemplary person. The type of "silent man" was characterised by such lines as Amenemope's "But all the silent in the temple, they say 'Re's blessing is great'" (chap. 5); and "The boat of the greedy is left in the mud, while the bark of the silent sails with the wind" (chap. 7). And elsewhere: "You are Amun, the lord of the silent, who comes at the voice of the poor." (stela of Nebre, Berlin 20377). In sum, the Egyptian "silent man" was a cousin of the Greek *sophron*, not of the *sophos*. In P. Insinger the terms "silent / silence" have shrunk to their litteral meaning, and the concept of "restraint / moderation" is expressed by *ḏnf*, "right measure", a term which matches *sophrosune*.

Now back to the beginning. The term "wisdom literature" has been taken over from biblical studies because Egyptian didactic texts did not offer an inclusive term that would cover the four main branches of the genre: Instructions, Autobiographies, Laments and related discourses on right and wrong (e.g. Eloquent Peasant, Lebensmüder). "Lebenslehren" is good for the Instructions but not right for the other three. For although the topic of all four branches is "the right way to live", only the Instructions address it directly. Thus the traditional label "wisdom literature" could be viewed as the best one available, were it not for the fact that it misleads. It misleads because of muddled scholarly usage by which "wisdom" means "wisdom literature" and means "morality" and evokes the biblical model of "wisdom" to the point where "Egyptian Wisdom" acquired so firm a body that it could even undergo a crisis, as it does e.g. in H.H. Schmid's *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit*, where the dialogue between father and son at the end of the Instruction of Any is interpreted as a crisis (pp. 74-78 "Die Krise der Weisheit").

Jan Assmann's essay "Weisheit, Schrift und Literatur" in the volume *Weisheit*, ed. Aleida Assmann (1991), attempted a sorting-out. He tried to prove two things. One, that Egypt had a "wisdom" concept without having a "wisdom" lexeme. Two, to establish the specific meaning of that concept by working out the difference between "wisdom" and "morality" in Egyptian thought. He argued that the Ramesside list of "classical authors" in Papyrus Chester Beatty IV verso amounted to a list of "Klassiker der Weisheitsliteratur". "Damit wird ein genuin ägyptischer Begriff gefunden, zwar nicht als Lexem, sondern als Liste oder Kanon ... Die Liste der unsterblichen Klassiker ... verbindet Weisheit mit Literatur und Literatur mit Schule. Die Liste nennt acht Autoren paarweise ... Diese Wissenden *(rḫw iḫt)* waren weniger Weise als vielmehr Gelehrte, Experten, Literati; ihre Schriften lehren; sie selber sind Vorbilder." As for the absence of a "wisdom" lexeme: "Wir müssen uns von der Vorstellung freimachen, dass Begriffe ausschliesslich auf

Wortrang realisierbar seien." (p.476). Thus, Assmann conceded that *rḫw iḫt* did not mean "wise men"; but, maintaining that there could be concepts without lexemes, he insisted that the concept "wisdom" was embodied in the persons and teachings of those "learned men" who taught how to live rightly and were venerated by later generations.

His second point is a lengthy attempt to distinguish Egyptian morality from Egyptian wisdom. "Morality" dealt with good and evil, and was recognised by its results of success and failure. Whereas "wisdom" was the principle of constancy, right, and truth - in short, the idea of Maat.

But hardly had "wisdom" been constructed as located within Maat, when it got deconstructed along with Maat: For at the end of the New Kingdom, there came the Instruction of Amenemope, through whose teaching of the "Will of God" both "Maat" and "Wisdom" were absorbed by "Piety" - and so also in Assmann's *Ma'at* book {1990) in the section entitled "Ausgänge aus der Ma'at."

In my opinion, the concept "wisdom", abstract, variable, and vague as it is, cannot exist without the body of a lexeme. In fact, it came into being - in the middle of the first millennium B.C. - when the old lexeme *sophia*, meaning "skill", was endowed with new, spiritual content by the sayings and writings of Herakleitos, Pindar, Plato, and others, and when biblical "wisdom", *hokhma*, posted herself on a street-corner in the Book of Proverbs (Prov 8).

Whether Egypt acquired a comparable concept of "wisdom" will be examined here in the final chapter.

2. PERSONHOOD

In the early years of the Old Kingdom, when an all-powerful kingship had created the unified state of Egypt, and with it an organized society, that society underwent a clearly observable process of mental growth. In the mature Old Kingdom (dynasties 3 to 6) the society performed gigantic tasks of creative labor. And as early as the third and fourth dynasties, some outstanding portraits in sculpture and relief convey the individual's sense of achievement and pride of self.

Literary recordings of the sense of self begin in the fourth dynasty, in tomb inscriptions of royal officials. In the fifth dynasty, these inscriptions acquired the particular shape of "autobiographies" of the tomb owners. The autobiographies developed three topics. 1) Adjurations to protect the integrity of the tomb. 2) Major events in the tomb owner's career. 3) His moral self-portrait.

Here are two samples of the earliest formulations of these concerns from private tomb inscriptions in the time of the fourth and fifth dynasties.

1) A son's dedication inscription for his father's tomb:
I made this for my father,
when he had gone to the West,
upon the good ways whereon the revered-ones go.
(*Urk.* I 9.13-16)

2) A blanket denial of wrongdoing:
I never did an evil thing against anyone.
n sp ỉr.ỉ ḫt nb ḏw r rmṯ nb
(*Urk.* I 72.2)

The two declarations formulate two major topics of moral concern. One, the filial duty to complete and maintain the parental tomb. Two, a general disclaimer of wrongdoing, which could substitute for specific disclaimers.

Now consider three autobiographies of officials in the fifth dynasty from tombs located at Giza or Saqqara.

3) False-door inscription of Ptahshepses, high-priest of Memphis (Saqqara. *Urk.* I 51-53; HTBM I^2 Pl. xvii, No. 682 - Outer panel, right side, four columns)

1 [Child whose mother bore him in] the time of Menkaure,
he was schooled among the royal children,
in the king's palace, within the king's harem,
valued *(špss)* by the king more than any child - Ptahshepses.

2 [Youth who bound the headband in] the time of Shepseskaf,
he was schooled among the royal children,
in the king's palace, within the king's harem,
valued by the king more than any youth - Ptahshepses.

3 [As his majesty esteemed him] *(ḥs.n sw)* his majesty gave him
the eldest royal daughter, Khamaat, to be his wife,
his majesty wishing her to be with him
rather than with any other man - Ptahshepses.

4 [Greatest of the master-craftsmen of Userkaf]
valued by the king more than any servant,
when he went down to any ship of the palace,
when he entered the ways of the sanctuary
on all feasts of appearance - Ptahshepses.

In the matching columns of the left-hand panel, Ptahshepses recalls his services to four more kings, having thus witnessed seven reigns. In mentioning king Neferirkare, he recorded for posterity that he was permitted to kiss the royal foot rather than the ground.

Most significant in this poetic autobiography is the interconnection of self-abasement with self-esteem. The official's humility before the divine king is matched by the king's regard for him. The end product is: a high self-esteem.

4) In his large Giza mastaba of mid-fifth dynasty date Rawer recorded a singular event which occurred in the reign of king Neferirkare (*Urk.* I 232; Roccati, Litt. No. 19). Standing next to the king in a sailing of the divine bark, Rawer was suddenly struck on the leg by the royal scepter. There followed a quick royal apology:

Said his majesty to him, "Be well!" So spoke his majesty.
His majesty has said, "My majesty wishes he be very well!"

And the king ordered the event recorded in Rawer's tomb. The king's quick apology signifies his understanding that not to apologize would be a grave insult to his minister. Hence this event, too, conveys that king and official were mutually supportive of their respective dignity.

5) The army-scribe Kai-aper, owner of an unidentified Saqqara mastaba of the early fifth dynasty, has been resuscitated by the study of H.G. Fischer (in *JNES* 18, 1959, 233-272). Kai-aper's many titles indicate numerous tasks in expedition work and regional control. The texts reflect a matter-of-factness in his self-view quite different from the lyricism of Ptahshepses. All the more interesting is item no.17 in Fischer's list of his titles: *ḏ'(r) m3't n nb.f*, "Who seeks out *maat* for his lord." That means, it was the initiative of the official that produced competent administration. In actuality this could not have been otherwise. But the concept of divine kingship simulated an all-encompassing royal initiative. In fact, since the fifth dynasty, and consistently throughout the sixth, the officials extolled *their* initiative, and their competence in planning and executing the manifold tasks of construction, irrigation, expeditions, etc.

It became standard practice of the autobiographers to present themselves as knowers and doers of Maat. And no Old Kingdom text gives to the king the role of teacher of Maat. Rather, the autobiographies of officials declare that kings and gods desire that Maat be done.

6) I went from my town,
I have descended from my nome,
having spoken Maat there,
having done Maat there.
(*Urk.* I 46.8ff. Werhuu. Late 5th dyn.)

7) I have come from my town,
I have gone from my nome,
I am buried in this tomb,
having spoken Maat, the god's wish, daily,
It is the good.
(*Urk.* I 57.11ff. Seshem-nefer. Late 5th dyn.)

8) I am one who spoke truly, reported fairly,
in the way the king loves;

for I wished to stand well through it
with the king and with the great god.
(*Urk.* I 195.11-12. Kagemni. 6th dyn.)

In all cases, the proud "I" of the official is the speaker and doer of Maat. If he had been taught about Maat, the teaching would have come from family and community, and from those leading men who wrote "Instructions". As for the gods, they were viewed as powerful and just, but as remote beings with whom one was not intimate. Thus it was in himself that the Egyptian found the knowledge of Maat, the sense of an underlying rightness in all things to which he anchored his understanding of right and wrong. The awesome king stood for righteous government, for he desired that Maat be done; but knowledge of Maat belonged to every man.

In the course of the 6th dynasty there took place the decisive filling-out and shaping of the tomb owners' autobiographies, and with it the large growth of moral declarations:

I have gone from my town,
I have descended from my nome,
having done Maat for its lord,
having contented him with what he loves.

I spoke truly (*m3ʿ*), I did right (*m3ʿt*),
I spoke the good (*nfr*), I repeated the good (*nfr*),
I grasped what was best (*iṯ.n(.i) tp-nfr*),
for I wanted the good for people (*mr(.i) nfr im n rmṯ*).

I judged two trial partners so as to content them,
I saved the weak from one stronger than he as best I could;
I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked,
I landed one who was boatless.

I buried him who had no son,
I made a ferry for him who had none;
I respected my father,
I pleased my mother,
I brought up their children. (*Urk.* I 198f. Nefer-seshem-re).

Three other sets of declarations from sixth dynasty private tombs are almost identical with this one. All four were studied by E. Edel, *Hiero-*

glyphische Inschriften, 77ff. The four parallel texts indicate the *presence* of a repertoire of moral thought that tended to standardization, and the *absence* of any fixed body of ethical commands. The whole process of moral thinking, teaching, and declarations was evolving, pragmatic, and responsive to the social context.

We have now identified three sources of the Egyptian's understanding of right and wrong, and of his declared desire to act in accord with right. One, his self-esteem. Two, his sense of interconnectedness with other persons. Three, his recognition of an underlying right order (*maat*) which it behooved him to implement by his actions. In addition, and this is the cornerstone of his selfknowledge, he spoke of himself as having been "good since birth."

1) I never let anyone spend the night angry with me about a thing since my birth." (*Urk.* I 46.14; fifth dynasty).

2) The same phrase in *Urk.* I 262.1 (sixth dynasty).

3) "Never did I make anyone unhappy since my birth."
(Kaplony, *Grab des Methethi*, pl.7, p.34; sixth dynasty)

4) "I am a well-loved scribe, friendly (*nfr-ḥr*), peaceable (*ḥr st-ib*), with whom none spent the night angry."
(*Urk.* I 186.16f.; late sixth dynasty)

In its initial form (exx. 1-3) the declaration is awkward, because, designed for actions of an adult, it does not fit childhood behavior. By the end of the sixth dynasty, the phrase was replaced by the assertion of having a pleasant disposition (ex. 4). That was a gain in clarity; but dropping the phrase "since birth" also entailed a loss, because it was no longer clear that the friendly behavior was "innate". The Middle Kingdom formulations clarified by restoring the phrase "since birth" or, "from the womb", and spoke of "innate" good traits more than of actions. Thus, the nomarch Sarenput called himself "One who came from the womb knowing and skilled" (*pr m ḫt iw.f m rḫ wḥ'-ib*; *Urk.* VII 6.6).

The recognition that moral and intellectual traits are "innate" endowments was a crucial one. Having discovered it in the Old Kingdom, the Egyptian kept reaffirming it in all subsequent periods. The recognition also applied to kings, with suitable hyperbole. Thus, the chief physician

Niankh-sakhmet (5th dynasty) thanked and praised king Sahure for a gift to him of a false door for his tomb:

> Whatever comes forth from his majesty's mouth
> comes about immediately,
> for the god gave him knowledge in the womb
> and esteem above other gods. (*Urk.* I 39.13-16)

The writer who composed the "Instruction addressed to King Merikare" put it thus (line 115):

> The Lord-of-the-two-shores is a knower of things,
> not ignorant is a king who has courtiers.
> As one keen (*s3wd-f*) did he come from the womb,
> from a million men the god singled him out.

This formulation expounds the additional insight that "innate" intelligence is enlarged by the practice of kingship.

Altogether - the two citations of royal innate intelligence notwithstanding - the sources indicate that the concept of innate good traits was discovered not by and for kings, but by the men of the Old Kingdom who found the words to describe their individual selves and put their discoveries to work in "autobiographies."

Here are some further examples of "good since birth":

1) A minor priest at Abydos,who made his living chiefly by farming, provided the most precise recognition of individual human nature as the source of mental and moral dispositions:

> One well-disposed, taught by his nature,
> like a child grown up with a father,
> but behold, I had become an orphan!
> *nfr qd sb3.n bi3t.f*
> *mi ḥrd ḫpr m-ʿ it*
> *iw sk(.w)i grt wʿ-kwi r nmḥ*
>
> (Stela of Mentuhotep, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Mus. E 9.1922; 11th dyn. I gave the full translation in my *Autobiographies*, No. 27).

2) King Sesostris III charges Ikhernofret with directing the Osiris festival at Abydos and declares his trust in him:

> My majesty made you a Companion when you were a youth of twenty-six years. My Majesty did this because I saw you as one of excellent conduct, keen of tongue, who had come from the womb as one intelligent *(pr m ḫt s;')*. (Stela Berlin 1204.8).

3) Among the New Kingdom scribes who visited and admired the Middle Kingdom tomb of Antefoker (TT 60, Davies-Gardiner, *Tomb of Antefoker*) the scribe *R'-ms-nfr* left a well-preserved graffito in which he described himself as a "scribe righteous from his mother's womb", *sš m;'ty m ḫt mwt.f.* I cited the whole text in my *Maat*, p. 40).

4) Tombstone of Paheri (*Urk.* IV 111-123). The third part of the 5-part text ends with the summation:

> I was the model of kindness,
> One praised who came praised from the womb. (*Urk.* IV 120.5-6)

Thereafter, this version became a cliché among 18th dynasty officials (exx. *Urk.* IV 1459.3; 1803.16; 1883.1; 1899.3).

5) Huyshery, treasury-scribe of king Seti I, tells posterity that he had Maat in his heart since birth (*KRI* I 333.1):

> When I came from the womb she joined my heart
> *pr.n.i m ḫt ;bḫ s m ib.i*

6) & 7) On two statues of priests of the 22nd/23rd dynasties (Jansen-Winkeln, *Biographien*, nos. B 28 & B 29) their owners declare:

> I am one silent since I came from the womb,
> I came forth as child of good character.
> *ink grw ḏr pr.i m ḫt*
> *iy. i m nḫn ḫr qi nfr*

Altogether, the many statements of having been born with good character traits reflected the basic insight that every person is born with a particular endowment. And while its good features were stressed in the

autobiographies, the "Teachings", from Ptahhotep onward, also recognized the innate nature of evil traits - Maxim no.12 of Ptahhotep portrays the evil son "whose guilt was fated in the womb." Thus, while knowing nothing of heredity, the Egyptians yet understood every person's "innate" endowment to be one major feature of personhood, the second major feature being the environment in the shape of parents, training, education, and the experience of living in a community. In short, they recognized, just as we do, "nature" and "nurture" as the two forces that shape the human personality.

Now, whereas they described the role of "nature" by means of the single "good/bad since birth" formula, the role of "nurture" was discovered by continuous observation and yielded a variety of insights. In addition, they were conscious of their own mental process of observation and deduction, as the well-known passage from the epilogue of the "Instruction to Kagemni" makes clear:

> The vizier had his children summoned after he had understood the nature of people, their character having become clear to him. Then he said to them: "All that is written in this book, heed it as I said it."

Their many observations on human behavior also produced the insight that a small child was an incomplete person because it lacked knowledge and understanding. Whence came the formulaic expression of "being a child / youth lacking understanding." Gunn, *Studies* (1924) p.196 cited five examples of the phrase, of which I cite two here, Gunn's numbers (b) and (c).[1]

l) Statue of Minnakht from western Thebes (*Urk.* IV 1182.17). Praying to Amun for afterlife benefits, Minnakht presents himself as a royal official who had performed his earthly tasks to perfection, and had even been "a noble person while still a youth without understanding", *šps m nḫn n sḏt.f.*

2) The Turin statue of king Haremhab (Gardiner, *JEA* 39, 1953, p.14 & pl. II.3 = *Urk.* IV 2113.18) has the phrase:

> Food in abundance attended him
> while he was (still) a child without understanding.
> *Qrḏ.n sw kꜣw ḏfꜣw*

---

[1]See also J. Assmann, "Die Unschuld des Kindes", in: Stricker Fs, 19-25.

ỉw.f m ḥwn nn sḫrt.f

The observation that a child lacks understanding did not contradict the "good since birth" insight. Rather, it signified the perception that growth was the link between the native endowment and the mature possession of one's faculties. But when one wished to characterise a person as an outstanding one, he could be described as "mature when still a child." Thus, "I found him old when young", (*gm.n.ỉ sw tn(ỉ) m ḥ(y)*, says the priest of Amun, Bakenkhons, on his statue CG 42213, in speaking of his son.[2] Altogether, the thoughtful person possessed a large measure of self-awareness. He viewed himself as owner of a heart (*ỉb, ḥ'ty*) that thought, felt, drew conclusions, and initiated actions. His second source of feelings and thought was the belly/body/womb (*ḫt*). Its feelings were liable to turn into desires and passions, hence into greed and lust. Its thoughts, too, could be good or bad. The Instruction of Any taught it graphically:[3]

A man's belly is wider than a granary,
and full of all kinds of answers.
Choose the good one to say it,
while the bad is shut in your belly.

Who did the choosing? The "you", that is to say the "I" of the integrated person who ruled over his parts and judged. His total dispositions formed his character/behavior (his *qd* and *bỉ't*). His whole person, his "nature", as we would say, was termed *ỉwn*, *ỉrw*, *sḫr*, and *qỉ*, lexemes that partly overlapped with *qd* and *bỉ't*..

The heart was viewed by the observing "I" as being primarily a positive force. But it could turn obstreperous or sluggish, in which case it had to be called to order.[4] Mostly, the heart was well-behaved and gave good counsel. A Middle Kingdom proverbial saying put it thus:

---

[2]Jansen-Winkeln, *Ägyptische Biographien*, text A7, p.484, left side, line 2.
[3]Cited according to Quack's new edition of Any as B 20,9-10, p.106.
[4]See Brunner's article "Herz" in *LÄ* II, 1158-68.

It is the heart that multiplies traits,
a mighty teacher for shaping qualities.[5]

This saying assigns to the heart the leading role in self-understanding and initiative. Both the "heart" and the "I" were also viewed as recipients of divine guidance. Thus, the Abydene priest Rudjahau called himself "A knower of things, one guided by Thoth."[6] And since the 18th dynasty, when piety became explicit, the feeling of being divinely guided was often articulated.

Like the heart, "character" or "nature" also had the potential for badness. In Chapter 5 we shall sample Amenemope's typology of bad character. The Autobiographies, naturally, abound in praises of good character as the end-product of self-governance, working on innate disposition and guided by instruction and experience. In sum, ever since the Old Kingdom, the Egyptian understood himself as the maker of his morality.

---

[5]Barns, *Five Ramesseum Papyri*, Pap. II, pl.8 verso, 1.5 & p.13.5.
[6]HTBM 159, Faulkner, *JEA* 37, 1951, 47-52; Lichtheim, *Autobiographies*, No.29.

3. KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL

As early as the fourth dynasty, individual occurrences of *nfr* and *ḏw* can be gleaned from private tomb inscriptions, e.g. the "good ways of the West", cited in Chap. 2. There is also the phrase "Every person who shall do something *evil* against my tomb, etc." (See Edel, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 2-3, with one 4th dynasty example and many later ones). The 5th dynasty being the time when Maat appears as the prescribed principle of right action, it is not accidental that autobiographies of 5th dynasty officials begin to formulate disclaimers of evildoing and affirmations of rightdoing. In the 6th dynasty comes the worked-out contrasting of the polar good / evil pair.

1) The architect Nekhebu ended his autobiography with:
I am one who speaks the good, repeats the good,
I never said an evil thing against anyone.
ỉnk ḏd nfrt wḥm nfrt
n sp ḏd(.ỉ) ḫt nb ḏw r rmṯ nb
(*Urk.* I 219; 6th dyn.)

2) The overseer of scouts Pepinakht-Heqaib began his main text thus:
I am one who speaks the good, repeats what is liked,
I never told a potentate an evil thing about anyone,
I wished to stand well with the great god.
(*Urk.* I 132-3; 6th dyn.)

3) Inti of Deshasha ended his text with the quatrain:
I am one honored by the king,
I am one honored by the great god,
I am lover of goodness, hater of crookedness,
doing what is right *(ḫt mꜣʿ)* is what the god loves.
(*Urk.* I 71; 6th dyn.)

The contrasting of good and evil, having become a standard pattern in moral declarations, could also be applied to a morally neutral context, as in Ptahhotep's famous description of the evils of old age (P. Prisse 18-20):

4) *bw-nfr ḫpr m bw-bỉn* (etc.)

Good has become evil,
All taste is gone,
What old age does to people
is evil in all respects.

And note the two abstract lexemes *bw-nfr* and *bw-bin*, and the replacement of the older term *ḏw* by the recent *bin*. The First Intermediate Period, the time when absolute royal autocracy had been replaced by local potentates who supported the two rising monarchies of North and South, gave scope to local initiative, including that of the average person. In consequence, autobiographic self-praises now mirror a wide spectrum of rank and self-views.

5) In the central portion of his frontal tomb inscription, the nomarch Kheti of Siut tomb no. 4 asserted:

I turned my back on the lover of lies,
I judged not one innnocent by another's charge;
I answered evil with good,
and did not seek evil.[7]

Thus, in the texts cited as 1,2,3, the royal officials placed saying-the-good at the top of their rightdoing and viewed calumny as its most noxious opposite - it being designed to prevent another man from obtaining, or holding, a position. And in text 5 the nomarch, from his position of rulership, confirmed and implemented their judgment by rejecting calumny and, moreover, seeking conciliation. While pride in the productive and beneficent governance of his nome was the hallmark of a nomarch's self-presentation, for his subordinates it was pride in the efficient and helpful performance of their administrative duties.

6) Here is the nome-official Ḏḥwti-nḫt-ʿnḫ of the Hare nome (Anthes, *Hatnub*, Graffito 12, pp. 28ff.; Lichtheim, *Maat*, pp. 27f.):

I am son to the aged, father to the child,
protector of the poor in every place.
I have fed the hungry, anointed the unkempt,
I have given clothing to the naked.
I have exorcised the ailing face and fought the smell,

[7]For text-restorations and comments see Edel, *Inschriften der Grabfronten*, 105ff.

I am also one who buries the departed.
I judged a case by its rightness *(wp.n(i) mdt r m3ʿ.t.s)*
and made the trial partners leave contented.
I have spread goodness (*bw-nfr*) throughout my nome,
I did what my lord desired. (lines 11-16)

In the southern kingdom, a liegeman of king Intef III named Megegi erected a tomb stela on which he spoke thus (MMA 14.2.6; *TPPI* §22; Schenkel, *Memphis* no. 77):

7) I have spent a lifetime <great> in years
in the reign of Horus *Nḫt Nb-tp-nfr*,
delighting his heart each day
with all that his *Ka* desired.
I am lover of good, hater of evil,
who employs the day as befits.
I did not reduce the time of a day,
I did not shorten a good hour.
I made use of the years on earth
to tread the paths of the graveyard,
and made all the tomb equipment
that is made for the revered ones.
I am one who used his day, followed his hour
in the course of every day.

Here, love of life and the pursuit of happiness are integrated with personal service to the king and attending to one's own affairs. Together, the four aspects yield the self-portrait of a happy man.

In the latter part of the eleventh dynasty, Rudjahau, high priest of Osiris at Abydos, spoke pridefully of his knowledge of ritual matters, of his high standing, and of his goodness (BM 159; Faulkner, *JEA* 37 (1951) 47-52; Schenkel, *Memphis* no. 497). Here is the concluding section, lines 10-12:

8) I am a magnate who bends the arm,
who knows his rank among the grandees.
I am a magnate in his town,
a rich man in his house,
a great pillar of his kin.
I am one who loves good, hates evil,
with whom none stayed angry overnight.

No falsehood came from my mouth,
no evil was done by my hands.
I am one who made his repute *(qd)*
whom people loved throughout each day.

In the growth of the moral vocabulary during the 11th dynasty the stress was on traits of character rather than on actions performed. The men of the 6th dynasty had said "I did", those of the 11th dynasty said "I am." The 12th dynasty harvested the vocabulary and added generalisations on what it meant to be "good."

9) Stela of Mentuhotep (London UC 14333, Stewart, *Egyptian Stelae* II, no.86 & pl.18; Goedicke, *JEA* 48, 25-35; Schenkel, *JEA* 50, 6-12). After a lengthy self-laudation stressing his loyalty and popularity, Mentuhotep sums up by a quatrain of maxims (lines 15-16):

A man's good character is better than doing a thousand deeds.
Peoples' testimony is that saying on the lips of commoners:
His goodness is a man's monument,
The evil-natured is forgotten.

No, H. Stock did not teach us that *nfr*, "good", is only "eine abgeleitete sekundäre Bedeutung."[8] Stock's argument (in his *Ntr nfr = der gute Gott?*) leads up to the claim that to render the Old Kingdom's *ntr nfr* as "guter Gott" was "unmöglich, undurchführbar und anachronistisch", because both the king and the great gods Horus and Re were called *ntr ʿ3* "der grösste Gott." "Hiesse also *ntr nfr* "der gute Gott", dann wäre diese Benennung aus unerfindlichen Gründen nur dem lebenden König zugekommen." (pp.l0f.). I find his whole line of reasoning unsound. To me, *ntr nfr* = "good god" makes good sense as epithet of the king, because in contrast with the "great gods" in heaven the divine king was on earth, he was human, he was mortal, he talked to his entourage, and his entourage could even talk to him. No "great god" in heaven spoke to man. The king was the "good god" because he was approachable.[9] Alto-

---

[8]So H. Buchberger, *Transformation*, I, p.361. Buchberger's denigrations of the leading scholars of the past generation (pp.296ff.) are ill-judged.

[9]See Kees, *Ägypten* (1933) p.197: "Der entscheidende Bruch liegt hier zweifellos am Ende der 4. Dynastie, die nicht nur das Ende der Geltung des Königs als "grosser Gott", sondern der absoluten Monarchie auf patriarchalischer Grundlage bedeutet. Es ist darum mehr als eine Äusserlichkeit, dass von der 5. Dynastie an die Bezeichnung "grosser Gott" dem lebenden König nicht mehr eingeräumt wird, er ist im wesentlichen der "gute Gott" geworden."

gether, *nfr* meant "good" in at least 90% of all cases, the other meanings bringing up the rear. It is salutary to study the *Wb.* pages on *nfr* and the 26 pages devoted to *nfr* in the *Belegstellen*. Question: Is there an ancient literary language that lacked the binary pair of "good/bad"?

Those four sentences of the Mentuhotep stela are an early generalisation on "goodness" as an enduring value. Thereafter the"saying" was often repeated with variations; a few samples:

a) sḏ;w pw qd nfr: Good character is remembered. (Merikare, 141)

b) sḏ;w pw n s im;t: Kindness is a man's remembrance. (P. Prisse, 487)

c) iw qd nfr r sḏ;w: Good character is for remembrance. (P.Prisse, 494)

d) mnw pw qd: Character is a monument. (Barns, *Five Ramesseum Papyri,* p.6)

e) mnw pw n s w;ḥ-ib: Benevolence is man's monument. (Posener, *Enseignement*, §13.3)

f) iw sw;ḥ.n.i mnw n bit nfrt: I have erected a monument to good character. (Jansen-Winkeln, *Biographien*, A20, p.562.2-3)

While the Autobiographies have served as our first source of moral concepts, the genre "Instructions" was the main vehicle for teaching rules of conduct. It is very lucky that we possess the great Papyrus Prisse with its Instruction of Ptahhotep (ed. Žába, 1956) which, regardless of its precise dating, stands for the expounded moral guidelines of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. The Instruction focused on the three types that constituted society. One, the "leader" or "great man"; two, the average man, the "you", to whom the teachings are addressed; three, the "poor man." The leader / great man *(sšmy/wr)* must act justly and kindly at all times in order to implement Maat, for "Maat is great and lasting" - maxim no. 5 sets the tone. The "leader" has authority, rank, and wealth; he is *nb ḫt, wsr, s n qnbt.* However, the justice and kindness required of him may not always be present, wherefore the "you", his subordinate, must help him to exercise these virtues by your loyal, obedient, and discreet service (maxims 7, 8, 15-17, 25-28).

The average person, the "you", can himself rise to a position of leadership, and thus become a "worthy man" (*s iqr*). Maxims 10, 12, 14, 21, 24 describe the process, and how to act as a "man of worth." The difference between him and the "great man" is that he is a self-made man, one who had no background of privilege. This social mobility, and complete absence of a caste system, made the society an equitable one with an ethic valid for all.

What of the "poor man"? His existence was taken for granted, but his poverty was neither ordained nor inevitable. "You" were told to always help, and never harm, a poor man (maxims 4, 10, 17, 30, 34, 35). Also he, just like you, could overcome his poverty; thus in maxim no.10:

If you are weak, serve a worthy man *(s iqr)*,
that all your conduct be good before the god.
Do not recall he once was lowly *(nḏsw)*,
do not be arrogant *(ʿ;-ib)* toward him,
because you know his former state.
Respect him for what accrued to him,
for wealth comes not by itself.
(etc.)

Thus, the maxims made it incumbent upon the "great man" to practice justice and benevolence, upon the "worthy man" to deal loyally with superiors, inferiors, family, and neighbors, and upon "everyman" to shun the vices, the greatest of which is greed. And the overall thrust of the teachings is that none of the virtues and vices are specific to a class. The clearest demonstration of this is given by maxims nos. 2-4 which deal with the "aggressive quarreler" *(ḏ;ysw m ;t.f)*:

If the quarreler is a powerful man, keep silent; for opposing him will harm you, and his evil speech *(ḏd bin)* will reveal his ignorance.

If the quarreler is a poor man, keep silent, do not oppose him, for "vile is he who injures a poor man."

If the quarreler is on your level, keep silent while he speaks evilly, and the listeners will recognize your worth.

Silence, then, is an active virtue which stops quarrel and combat. Right silence and right speech have equal value. On the latter see especially maxims 24, 25, 28, and the Epilogue.

The Epilogue expounds that the teachings are lessons that must be learned. He who listens and learns will gain a successful life.

Man's heart being the organ that absorbs lessons, only a fool refuses to learn, acts evilly, and is bound to fail. Here appears the contrasted pair of "fool" *(wḫ;)* and "man of knowledge" *(rḫ)* (lines 573-75).The "man of knowledge" *(rḫ, rḫ-ḫt, s;;)* had been introduced earlier, in lines 523-26. Now contrasted, the two types stand for success and failure.

* * *

Branching out from the personal to the political sphere, the genre "Instruction" yielded two Royal Testaments known as "Instruction to King Merikare", and "Instruction of King Amenemhet I." The former work, rich in historical allusions to the time of the dual monarchy in the First Intermediate Period, has usually been understood as a fact-based account of the reign of king Merikare, composed at a time close to the events related in it, whether the speaker was truly the king's royal father, or, as is more likely, a court writer of king Merikare.[10]

In wording that is concise, powerful, and impassioned, the speaker lays down rules of good government:

Honor your nobles, sustain your people,
strengthen your borders, your patrols ... (38)

Advance your officials, so they will act by your laws,
one rich at home will not be partial ... (42)

Do Maat, then you will last on earth,
Calm the weeper, oppress not the widow ... (46)

Enrich the young men who follow you,
Provide with goods,
Endow with fields,
Supply with herds. (61)

Prefer not the wellborn to the commoner,
By his skills select a man ... (61)

And in the midst of his counsels on statecraft, the speaker gazes up to heaven and envisages a wholly ethical (non-magical) "Last Judgment" which culminates in the justification of the good man:

He who reaches them without having done wrong
will exist there like a god,
free-striding like the lords everlasting. (56)

---

[10]The prevailing view is summarized by G. Posener in *LÄ* III, 986-89. For text ed. see Helck, *Lehre für König Merikare*. J.F. Quack's proposal (1992) to redate the work to the 12th dynasty reopens the question. On the Instruction of Amenemhet I see Blumenthal in *LÄ* III, 968-71.

In sum, a man's qualifications for kingship were knowledge, insight, and piety (115ff.). God and man had a pact of mutual understanding: "Work for the god, he will work for you likewise." (129). There follows the splendid hymn to the creator god, "Well tended is mankind, god's cattle ..."

Treason was the principal crime, punishable by death. And treason resulting in regicide was the theme of the "Instruction of Amenemhet I to his son Sesostris I." In a tightly structured account the king narrates his vigorous and beneficent reign, and how he was repaid by an attack on his life, an attack that evidently succeeded, so that he speaks from the beyond. In the New Kingdom, a scribe of P. Chester Beatty IV attributed the "Instruction" to the famed Middle Kingdom author Khety, thereby showing that he knew the historical reality behind the fictional form. The overall message of the text was not to trust anyone...

Thus the two royal testaments reflect historical realities, while displaying kingship in its most thoughtful form, as human leadership without pretensions of divinity. The Old Kingdom concept of divine kingship had fostered an absolutism which achieved great results in nation-building. But it could not last; human dignity stood up against it.

"Die religiöse Stellung des Königtums war ja im Laufe des späteren alten Reiches immer mehr abgeschwächt worden und schliesslich mit diesem zusammengebrochen. Die neuerliche Herstellung einer zentralen Königsmacht durch die Herrscher der 12. Dynastle - nach vorausgegangenen Versuchen der Herakleopoliten (9. / 10. Dynastie) und der thebanischen 11. Dynastie - hatte praktisch nur die weltliche Gewalt der Pharaonen zu restaurieren vermocht; die religiöse Stellung blieb eine rein äusserliche Tradition, der im Volksglauben keine Wirklichkelt mehr entsprach." (J. von Beckerath, *Untersuchungen* (1962) p.89).

Civil war was the ultimate disaster. In the illustrious reign of Sesostris I, and in the stable reigns that followed, the thinkers reflected on the troubled times of the past and drew some conclusions. Three literary works, now called "Laments", that are long on rhetoric and short on historical facts, decry civil war as the upside-down reversal of the social order: the undermost is uppermost, nobles are needy, beggars are rich men, etc. While differing in all details, the three works imply the same lessons: The nation requires firm kingship, one that is powerful and just and can inspire the loyalty of the governed.[11]

---

[11]The three Laments": "The Prophecy of Neferti"; "The Complaints of Khakheperresonb"; "The Admonitions of Ipuwer". For no.l see Posener, *Littérature*, chap. 1, and Blumenthal, *LÄ* IV, 380f.; No.2: Kadish, *JEA* 59(1973), 77-90, and Otto, *LÄ* I, 896f. No.3: Gardiner (1909 & 1969).

Two Middle Kingdom "Instructions" spell out answers to the "Laments". Known as the "Loyalist Instruction", and the "Teaching of a Man for his Son", both works hail the presence of an all-powerful king and urge their public to serve him with devotion.[12] It is interesting that both works also deal with the interpersonal relations of the people. The "Loyalist Instruction" makes the point that the peasant population must be treated equitably; for on their labor depends the welfare of the nation! The second "Instruction" discusses right and wrong speach; it urges to shun calumny and advises how to avoid quarreling. Thus both Instructions emphasize that the peaceful life of the nation has two sources. One, a strong kingship that governs by just laws administered by honest officials. Two, a people that practices honesty and peaceable attitudes.

The people are given the last word. The "Tale of the Eloquent Peasant" (ed. Vogelsang & Gardiner; ed. Parkinson) has the great merit of treating a simple case of robbery as paradigm of the requirement that the appointed judiciary must render fair judgments. Failure to do so drives Maat from her seat and spreads iniquity, as the aggrieved Peasant points out in his nine eloquent speeches.

"The Man who was Tired of Life" (P. Berlin 3024, Faulkner, *JEA* 42, 1956, 21-40) has despaired of life owing to his witnessing lawlessness at large. The missing beginning portion of the work must have expounded the circumstances. As it is, we lack the key to a full understanding. Even so, the discussions between the Man and his *Ba* contrast two attitudes toward life's troubles which amount to despondency versus acceptance. In the end the two are reconciled. And the four concluding poems give the work a place in the world's great literature.

Altogether, the writers of the Middle Kingdom worked out the main lines of moral thought:

1. Justice is the cardinal requirement of good government.
2. Loyalty of the people toward the king, and loyalty of inferiors to superiors, are the essential attitudes that enable the society to function coherently and peaceably.
3. The fellowship of friendliness must govern interpersonal relations.
4. Superiors who oppress inferiors are enemies of the people. To mistreat the peasants and serfs who work the land brings ruin to all.
5. Quarrelsomeness is everyone's enemy, and so is calumny.
6. Greed is the inclusive vice that engenders dishonesty and violence.

---

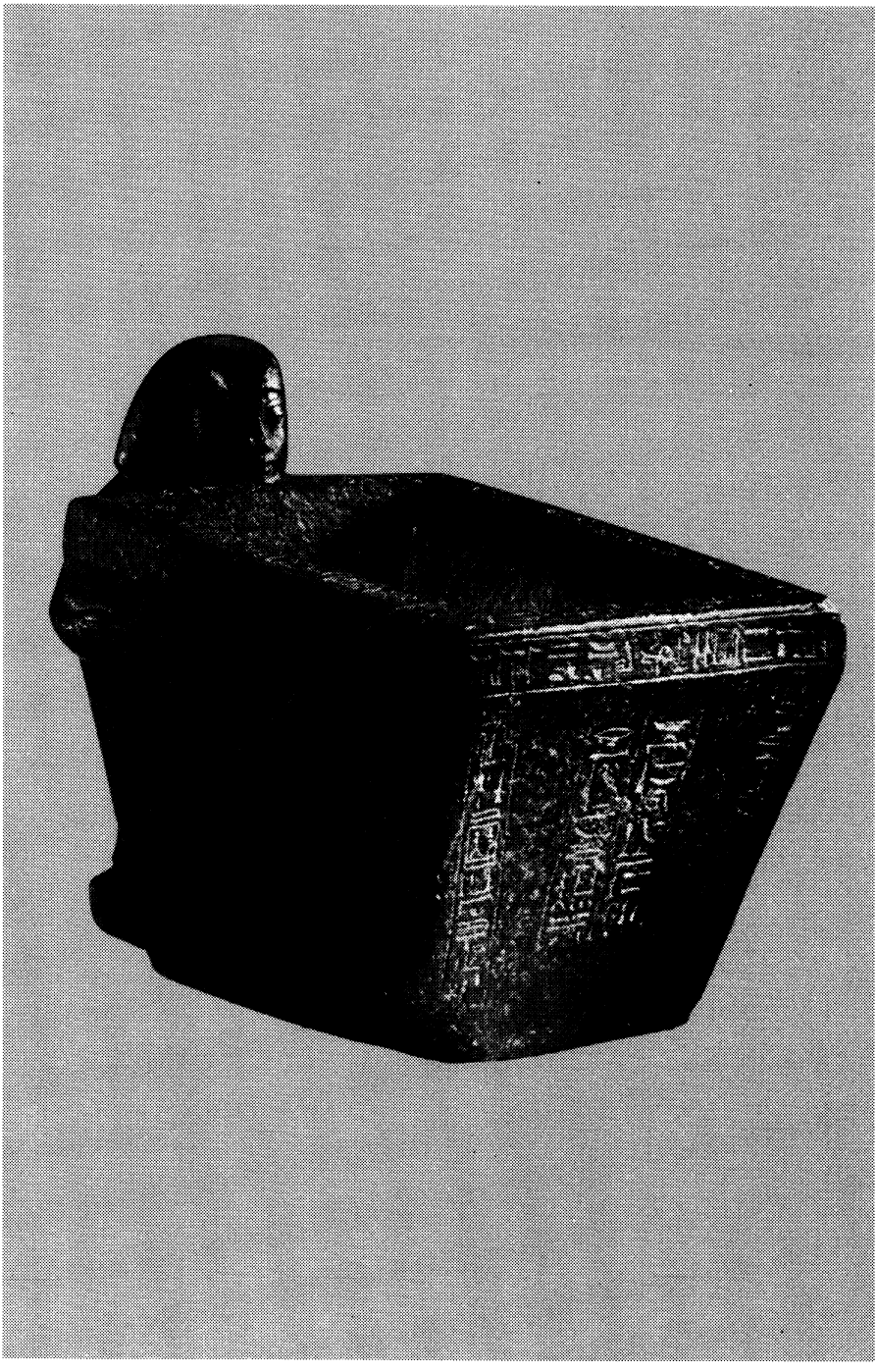
[12]Posener, *L'enseignement loyaliste*, and *LÄ* III, 982-84 & 984-86.

The high point of Middle Egyptian literature is of course the Story of Sinuhe. Like all ancient, and even many modern, works of narrative fiction, it is a morality tale. A tale of flight in fear of turmoil and punishment, of success abroad but of longing for home, of return in forgiveness and happiness. The keynote is conciliation. And that, I think, is the essence of Egyptian moral teachings.

The latest Sinuhe translation notwithstanding,[13] Sinuhe is an excellently wrought prose tale, inlaid with three little gems of poems. A prose that flows with varying speeds to a slowed-down, quiet ending. Sinuhe is Egypt's major contribution to the genre *Kunstprosa* (one reads with profit Eduard Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, Leipzig, 1898, ^{5}1958).

---

[13]Blumenthal, in: TUAT III/5, *Mythen und Epen* (1995). The "Perikopen-Gliederung" is not a guide to style. Nor did Assmann claim that it was. Rubra are aids to copying scribes, and learning devices.



The servant Ptahankh holding offering basin. 18th dynasty.

4. NEW KINGDOM MORAL THOUGHT, I: TEACHING THE WAY-OF-LIFE

The moral self-portraits of 18th dynasty officials, as formulated in their autobiographies, are direct sequels of the Middle Kingdom ones as regards affirmations of rightdoing and denials of wrongdoing, with that difference that they have a wider vision and vocabulary. And one expansion amounts to an innovation: the appearence of the gods as closely felt presences. In the private tombs the gods are now depicted as worshipped by the tomb owner and his family. Piety has become a visible and verbalized partner of the individual's morality, one that shapes a person's thoughts especially concerning the hoped-for afterlife and its Judgment of the Dead:

> Spirit in heaven, power on earth,
> justified in the necropolis,
> and revival after being death-cold,
> these are the gifts to the faultless man.
> A righteous one is he who receives them,
> he will be counted among the ancestors,
> his name will remain as monument,
> his deeds not effaced on earth.
> (Sa-tep-ihu, *Urk.* IV 518.7ff.)

The Instruction of Any, for which Quack in his very good new edition now proposes an early 19th dynasty date,[14] relates to the new closeness to the gods by instructions on proper worship of the god in his temple and during processions. Such cultic teaching had been a feature of the "Instructions to Merikare"; but there they were meant for the king, while in Any's text their addressee is everyman, the middle class man, who is now, as he was before, the prime recipient of teachings. As for the "great man", the qualities required of him are layed out in a new branch of Instructions, the king's "Instructions to the Vizier."[15] There the chief requirements for lawful governance turn out to be just what they had been since Ptahhotep: true and firm justice for all, and compassion toward the weak and lonely. Any's teachings differ from those of Ptahhotep chiefly by their refined sensibility. Compare for instance

---

[14] J. F. Quack, *Die Lehren des Ani* (1994) p.62.

[15] Tomb of Rekhmire, TT 100, and Faulkner, *JEA* 41 (1955) 18-29; and G.P.F. Van den Boorn, *The Duties of the Vizier* (1988).

Ptahhotep's teaching on how a man should treat his wife (maxim 21) with Any's teachings on respecting women in their status of wife and mother.[16] Any's middle class man should learn how to increase his earnings, so as to build a house, plant a garden, and work his plowland. And to share your food with others is the proper thing to do. It is also useful, because: "Should you come to be in want, another may do good to you." For reversals of fortune are normal occurrences They belong to the contingencies of life, and they should be borne with patience:

When last year's watercourse is gone,
another river is here today.
Great lakes become dry places,
sandbanks turn into depths.
Man does not have a single way ...
(B 21.8-9)

Ptahhotep had spoken in the same vein (maxim 22):

Sustain your friends with what you have,
you have it by the grace of god.
...
One plans the morrow but knows not what will be.

Any's principal theme, one that he expounds from several angles, is that everyman must act with friendliness, care, restraint and tact. A few samples:

Conquer malice in yourself,
a quarreler does not rest till the morrow.
Keep away from a hostile man,
do not let him be your comrade.
Befriend one who is straight and true,
one whose actions you have seen.
(B 18.6-8)

Do not rush to attack your attacker,
leave him to the god.
Report him daily to the god, tomorrow being like today,
and you will see what the god does,
when he injures him who injured you.
(B 21.14-16)

---

[16]Any text B 22.3-5 and 20.18-20.

Do not enter into a crowd,
if you find it in an uproar,
and about to come to blows
.....
(B 21.16-20)

Do not talk back to an angry superior,
let him have his way.
Speak sweetly when he speaks sourly,
it is the remedy that calms the heart.
(B 22.7-8)

Clearly, in Any's teachings on right behavior, the practice of restraint, i.e. the ability to suppress one's own aggressive responses, was a leading feature in the cluster of virtues that added up to "goodness."

The concluding discussion between father and son - the son objecting that the teachings are too difficult - treats the objection seriously. But the father rejects it by the counter argument that training and teaching are known to be appropriate and effective. Even animals can be trained, and foreigners can be taught Egyptian. In short: *the crooked stick can be made straight*. The son's principal argument, "Each man is drawn by his nature" *(ỉṯḥ s nb r ỉwn.f)* was repeated in other Ramesside texts that dealt with the question whether teaching and training could eradicate evil inclinations. While Any had said, yes they could, the teachings on the Petrie Ostracon no.11 upheld the opposite view.[17]

Do not straighten what is crooked,
then you will be loved.
A man is drawn by his character
as by a limb of his.
(recto 4)

And in application of this view, the writer recommended forgiveness of small faults:

Do not denounce a wrong if it is small,
a mast that lies prone looks like a foot.
Do not denounce a small wrong lest it grow large,
a shipwright could raise it up like a mast.
(verso 3-4)

---

[17]Černý-Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, I, pls. l-lA, and Gardiner, *WZKM* 54, 1961, 43-45.

In the whole sequence of sixteen vetitives there reigns a spirited pragmatism.

In P. Chester Beatty IV (ed. Gardiner) in a Miscellany of teachings, the thesis that everyone is compelled by his nature is again cited, but now in order to be rejected as a bad argument:

Beware of saying:
'Everyone is according to his nature (*bi.t*)
ignorant and learned ones alike.
Fate and fortune are graven in the nature
in the god's own writing.
Everyone is as he was made,
and his lifetime lasts an hour.'
It is good to teach unceasingly,
till the son replies with words of his father!
If I let you know right in your heart,
you will do what seems straight to you. (verso 6,5ff.)

Observe that the pupil's objections are anticipated, hence his right to object is recognized. A dialogue between teacher and student on those grave matters has become an accepted form. This is again illustrated by another Ramesside Instruction, that of Amennakht, which was assembled from ostraca and published by Posener in *RdE* 10 (1955), 61-72. Unfortunately, the assembled ostraca contain only the Prologue of the Instruction. Since the Prologue is most relevant to the topic of teacher-student dialogue, I cite it in full.

Here begins the guidance-teaching *(sb.yt mtrt),*
maxims for the way of life,
made by Amennakht, the scribe,
for his pupil Horimin, he says:

You are a man able to listen to words,
to distinguish good from bad.
Be attentive, hear my words,
do not slight my sayings!

It is pleasant to be thought a man
who is fit for every task.
Make your heart a mighty dam,
that the waters pound against!

Take my counsel as a whole,
Do not refuse to heed it!
Let your eyes observe all callings,
and all the works of writing.
Then you will fully realize:
the counsel I give you is worthy!
Do not disdain my discourse!

No long reply, it is not fitting,
calm your heart in its haste!
You may speak later when called.
Be a scribe, frequent the house-of-life,
Become alike to a coffer of books!

The Prologue tells precisely what Instructions are about: they are teachings on "the way of life" *(ṯsyw n wꜣt n ʿnḫ)*. Three other Instructions tell the same. the "Loyalist Instruction" (Posener, 1976) introduces its lessons as "course of right living" *(sšr ʿnḫ mꜣʿw)*. The teachings of P. Chester Beatty IV (verso 6.5ff.) are offered as lessons on "the way of life" *(wꜣt n ʿnḫ)*. The Instruction of Amenemope is introduced as "Instructions for life, counsels for well-being" *(sbꜣyt n ʿnḫ mtrw n wḏꜣ)*. Together, the four titles tell that Egyptian Instructions did not teach "wisdom"; they taught "the way of life" or "right way of life." And that tells us that the expression "way of life" is a true precursor of the terms *ta ethika* and *moralia*.

In his forceful decree of reorganisation, king Haremhab declared that he appointed new people as administrators, persons of competence and good character (*Urk.* IV 2155.9ff.). Making them magistrates for Upper and Lower Egypt, he gave them suitable incomes and instructed them in the laws of the land. Thus he taught them "the way of life" and guided them to rightness: *mtr.n.i st r mṯn n ʿnḫ sšm.i st r bw mꜣʿ*. In particular, he instructed them not to fraternize with other persons, and not to accept presents, i.e. bribes: *m snsn kywy n rmṯ m šsp fkꜣw n ky*. At issue is the ethic of the public servant. There could be no better example for the equivalence of "way of life" to *ta ethika*.

In *BIFAO* 93, pp.31ff., S. Bickel and B. Mathieu published an excellent article entitled "L'écrivain Amennakht et son enseignement", in which they integrated all known sources on Amennakht's person and career. Born at Deir al-Medina, Amennakht, son of Ipuy, played a major

part in the life of the community during much of the 20th dynasty. Starting as draftsman, he was promoted to "scribe of the Tomb" (*sš n pr Ḥr*) by the vizier To in year 16 of Ramses III, a function he fulfilled for more than thirty years. He also served as "scribe of the vizier" and "royal scribe." He was, moreover, a scribe of the House-of-life. Amennakht had a younger colleague and friend named Hori. And Amennakht's younger son, the draftsman Amenhotep, was a friend of Hori's son, the draftsman Horimin.

It is almost certainly to this Horimin that Amennakht addressed his "teaching" the prologue of which has just been translated here. After the death of Amennakht, his colleague Hori also composed a "teaching", and he addressed it to Horisheri, the elder son of his deceased colleague. The prologue of this teaching is preserved on Ostracon Gardiner No. 2, recto (= HO I, p.2 & pls. VI-VIa). Its text and translation are given by Bickel & Mathieu. They are also available in Fischer-Elfert (1986) 1-4. Thus, each of the two senior scribes composed a teaching which he addressed to a son of his colleague. Here is Hori's prologue:

Here begins the guidance-teaching,
made by scribe Hori who says:
Set your heart on writings, greatly,
a calling that profits its doer!

When your father toiled at writings,
he was greeted in the street.
He was in good health through it,
years like heaps of sand were his!

He was wealthy in his earth days,
till he reached the western shore.
Be a scribe, become his like,
then will riches grow around you!
--- ---
that your name be like his name.
You obtain your father's ---
and you prosper upon earth.

The results of skilled and diligent labor are success, honor, and wealth. The straightforward teaching is appealing; but its special interest lies in the *biographical* sketch of the father, the scribe Amennakht, whom his son should emulate. With all the wealth of autobiography that Egypt

produced, there was no biography, i.e. no telling the life story of a person other than one's own. It is a mistake that the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* entered its article on "Autobiography" under the heading "Biographie", and that so many scholars use this inaccurate term. In Greece, the two genres appeared almost simultaneously; but that was in the modern world, the middle of the first millennium B.C. Hori's sketch of Amennakht is a first step in biography. There may have been others. In the collective volume *Der Mensch des alten Ägypten* (ed. S. Donadoni) A. Roccati cites the "Grabrede" of the scribe Herwennefer on his colleague, the scribe Shepmin: "Er war Vorsteher der Geheimnisse der Gottesworte, ein Gelehrter der Papyruskästen des Lebenshauses..., höchster Lehrer für die Kinder der Gottesdiener..., Schreiber der heiligen Bücher." (p.94) This may qualify as a biographical eulogy.

As for the famous "Praise of ancient writers" in P. Chester Beatty IV (verso 2.5-3.11), it too bears witness to a biographical impulse, in addition to settling the question "Who were the authors of Instructions?" As Roccati puts it in the chapter just cited: Whereas in the Middle Kingdom the scribes were profiled as administrators, in the New Kingdom the scribes constituted "eine echte Intellektuellenschicht, die kulturschaffend tätig war, und dies nicht mehr nur im Auftrag des Hofes, sondern auch für ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse, die Bedürfnisse eines privilegierten Standes." (p.98). Thus in addition to holding administrative positions, the scribes now identified themselves as authors of Instructions, as did Any, Amennakht, and Amenemope.

Most of all, the "Praise of ancient writers" deserves esteem for being a victory of realism over make-believe by its acceptance of transitoriness. I here cite only its key quatrain in order to match it with a medieval counterpart:

Man decays, his corpse is dust,
all his kin have perished.
But a book makes him remembered
through the mouth of its reciter.

And here is Hrabanus Maurus: "To Eigilius, on the book that he had written" - in the English version of Helen Waddell, *Medieval Latin Lyrics* (London, 1929 & many reprints):

No work of man's hands but the weary years
Besiege and take it, comes its evil day:
The written word alone flouts destiny,

Revives the past and gives the lie to Death.
God's finger made its furrows in the rock
In letters, when He gave His folk the law.
And things that are, and have been, and may be,
Their secret with the written word abides.

* * *

In listing six basic principles of Egyptian moral thought, as developed in the Middle Kingdom, at the end of chapter 3, I omitted the *do ut des* principle of reciprocity, because it requires an extended discussion. Egyptian writers expended much thought on it and so have the scholars who studied it.

The earliest formulations of the reciprocity principle occur in the "Appeal to the living", used in autobiographic tomb inscriptions since the 6th dynasty, and in the "Address to visitors", found there since the 4th dynasty. In the "Appeal" the tomb owner requests an offering from visitors and promises a reward. In the "Address" the tomb owner warns against desecration of the tomb and threatens punishment. While basically distinct, the two types are often merged. Such is the case in the final "Appeal" of the architect Nekhebu (*Urk.* I 215-221; 6th dynasty; *Dunham, JEA* 24 (1938), 1-8):

O you who are alive on earth,
who shall pass by this tomb!
If you wish to be favored by the king,
and honored by the great god,
Say: 1000 bread, 1000 beer for Nekhebu the honored one !
Not shall you destroy a thing in this tomb,
I am spirit potent and equipped!
Anyone who destroys a thing in this tomb -
I will be judged with them by the great god!
I am one who speaks the good, repeats the good,
I never spoke evil against anyone.

The reciprocity principle invoked here was built upon the basic conviction, shared by all ancient civilisations, that doing what is right and good has good consequences, while doing something evil creates more evil and brings failure. It seems to me evident that, to the Egyptians, this moral causality - what German scholars call the "Tun-Ergehen Zusammenhang" - was an aspect of natural causality.

Recall Merikare, 123:

A blow is repaid by its like,
To every action there is a response.

Observe the understanding that a person's evil disposition turns against him quite automatically:

Your laziness misleads you,
Your greed befools you,
Your rapacity makes enemies for you!
(Eloquent Peasant, B1 281-2)

For Ankhsheshonqi, moral and natural causality are clearly the same:

There is no tooth that rots yet stays in place.
There is no Nubian who leaves his skin.
There is no friend who goes by alone.
There is no wise man who comes to grief.
There is no fool who finds profit.
(21/4-8) (Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature,* p.86)

In the Middle Kingdom, the request of the deceased that those who passed by his tomb should recite the prayer for offerings was often accompanied by one or another of the following observations: (1) The prayer was mere "breath of the mouth," needing no effort and causing no hardship. (2) Performing this good deed would yield benefits to the doer. (3) The doer would profit even more than the recipient. First of all, he could expect that the service he now rendered would eventually be rendered to him. This prediction then yielded the generalized formulation of reciprocity: "One who acts will be one for whom one will act", *wn ir r irw n.f.*[18]

The speeches of the Eloquent Peasant yielded the reciprocity principle as a command: "Act for one who acts for you", *ir n ir n.k* (B2 108).

In the 18th dynasty, the versions of the "Appeal to the living" elaborated the benefits that would accrue to the reciter of the prayer for

[18]On reciprocity and retribution see: de Meulenaere, *BIFAO* 63 (1965) 33-36; Vernus, *RdE* 28 (1976) 139-45 and *GM* 84 (1985) 71-79; Assmann, *Ma'at* (1990) chap. 3.

offerings. In one way or another he would be recompensed for this good deed:

I have come here to the town of eternity,
having done what people love and gods praise.
I have joined earth as a noble one,
a lord of those praised by the good god,
I have bent the hand for their name.
Do you for me "A royal offering"
as when I did it on earth!
I am one noble for whom one should act,
who spoke the good, repeated what is liked.
It is good to do for what was done!
nfr pw ỉrt ḫr ỉryt.
(Duaerneheh, *Urk.* IV 1481.13-19)

I now recapitulate the three versions of the reciprocity formula that I have cited:
1) *wn ỉr r ỉrw n.f*, One who does will be one for whom one does.
2) *ỉr n ỉr n.k*, Do for one who does for you.
3) *nfr pw ỉrt ḫr ỉryt*, It is good to do for what was done.
The three versions mark a progression of thought: from statement to command, and from command to evaluation in moral terms.

As for the many Late Period statements on reciprocity, requital, and retribution, they often, but by no means always, make the deity the requiter of deeds. Ankhsheshonqi, for instance, has numerous sayings on the requital of deeds, including his use of the "golden rule", that do not assign to the deity the role of requiter of deeds. Throughout all periods, the *do ut des* principle remained firmly anchored in the sense of human interconnectedness and the need for reciprocation. Only vengeance became unacceptable, was advised against (e.g. in Any and Amenemope) and judged to be best left to the god. I am now coming to the point where the *do ut des* principle, as discussed above, added to its soundly practical outlook a spiritual note. On pp. 108-9 of his *Ma'at* book (1990 & 1995) Assmann made the point that *mrwt.ỉ* meant "love of me" and not "my love", and he explained:

"Entsprechend der ägyptischen Affektenlehre, die Affekte nicht in der empfindenden, sondern in der auslösenden Person lokalisiert, fordert die Ma'at vom einzelnen nicht, dass er liebt, sondern dass er Liebe

einflösst. ... Uns steht der Satz 'Liebe deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst' ... näher."

Yes. But the lengthy segments of miscellaneous moral teachings, that procede and follow the famous 'Praise of ancient writers" in P. Chester Beatty IV verso, hold surprises. I cited one such miscellany on p.32 of this chapter. Here are three more. First, a sequence on how to be good:

1) If you are wealthy and power is yours,
   - your god having built you up -
   do not ignore someone you know,
   salute one and all!
   Release one whom you find bound,
   Be a helper to the needy!
   'Good' is called he who acts not the know-not!
   ḏd-tw nfr r pꜣ nty bn sw ḥr irt ḫm
   (verso 1,13-2,2)

A few lines later, helpful action is judged to be obligatory:

2) A man built up by his god should foster many!
   ir s qd sw nṯr.f ḥr sʿnḫ.n.f qnw
   (verso 2,4-5)

Much later, after the "Praise of ancient writers", when the Miscellanies resume at verso 4,6, we read:

3) Do not sit down before your superior,
   Respect another, that you be respected,
   Love people, that people may love you!
   m-ir ḥms m-bꜣḥ ʿꜣ r.k
   tri ky tri.tw.k
   mry rmṯ mry tw rmṯ
   (verso 4,6-7)

Here, then, we have the "Love your neighbor" command! Thus, from having formulated the principles of mutual help and respect, the writer rose to the "love your neighbor" summons.[19]

---

[19]It is often asked whether "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19.18) should not rather be rendered "Be useful/helpful to your neighbor as to yourself." A recent questioner is A. Malamat in *Fs Rendtorff* (1990) 111-115.

5. NEW KINGDOM MORAL THOUGHT, II: CONTINGENCY, CHARACTER, PIETY, AND MODERNITY

Contingency, a topic in the Instruction of Any, is elaborated by the Instruction of Amenemope (ed. H.O. Lange) in the vein of Any: Change is a part of life, and it should not be feared. The thought is developed in chapters 5, 18, and 25. Chapter 5 describes changes in nature along the lines of Any's depiction, and it counsels acceptance of reversals of fortune in a spirit of confidence, as do "the silent ones in the temple" (*gr nb m ḥt-nṯr*). Chapter 18 carries forward: Now that you know that today is not like tomorrow, you should also learn that man is imperfect; only the deity is perfect. Chapter 25 draws the conclusions. Here are the main lines of chapter 18:

Do not lie down in fear of tomorrow:
"Comes day, how will tomorrow be?"
Man ignores how tomorrow will be.
God is ever in his might (*mnḫ*),
Man is ever in his lack (*wḥ*).
Words men say are one thing,
Deeds of the god are another.

Chapter 25:
Laugh not at the blind,
nor tease a dwarf,
nor cause hardship for the lame.
Tease not a man in the hand of the god,
nor be angry with him for his failings.
Man is clay and straw,
The god is his builder,
He tears down, he builds up daily.
He makes a thousand poor by his will,
He makes a thousand men into chiefs,
when he is in his hour of life.
Happy is he who reaches the west,
when he is safe in the hand of the god.

Thus, tersely, the two chapters formulate the thought that man should realize the limitations of his being and his understanding. Nevertheless,

all Egyptian pronouncements on the human condition - except when reflecting on the evils of civil war - convey the sense of being in harmony with life, and of wishing to live forever. From the beginning, the people trusted in the justice of the gods and the rightness of all forms of life. Moral thought could rise to the height of Merikare. Magical thought could sink to sorcerer's gibberish. Literate reflection, on the whole, advanced in pragmatic equanimity.

Contingency, then, was now a fixed element of thought. And the answer to it was to face the unknown tomorrow with confidence. Hence the formula now employed in letters: "I am alive today; tomorrow is in the hand of the god."[20] Changes of fortune reinforced man's obligation to do right, an obligation which derived from his knowledge of good and evil. The men of the Old and Middle Kingdoms had kept asserting that they "loved good and hated evil." The men of the New Kingdom added that they "knew" good from bad. Not to know good from bad was a sign of malice or of ignorance.

a) Letter of a husband to his dead wife, accusing her of harming him:

But behold, you do not know good from evil!
ḫr ptr bn tw rḫ.tw nfr r bỉn
(Gardiner-Sethe, *Letters*, p.9, P.Leiden 371)

b) Tale of Two Brothers: The young brother in his parting speech:

If you recall an evil thing, will you not recall a good one?
ỉst ỉr sḫ3y.k w' n bỉn ỉst bw ỉr.k sḫ3y w' n nfr
(P. D'Orbiney 8.2, Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Stories*, p.17)

c) Reflecting on good and evil stimulated the portrayal of good and bad character types, as in the "Loyalist Instruction" of the Middle Kingdom (Posener, 1976, §12):

An evil-doer's wealth does not endure,
His children find no remnant.
The hostile man destroys his life,
His children are not at his side.

---

[20]Černý, *Late Ramesside Letters* (1939) p.l: P. Leiden I 369, lines 5-6; p.34: P. Geneva D 192, lines 6-7.

Now, in the fullness of Ramesside modernity, the Instruction of Amenemope drew the portraits of two kinds of evil-doers. One, the "heated man" *(p; šmm, p; t;-r')*. He is the quarrelsome, aggressive, and violent person. Several chapters (2-4, 9-10, & 12) describe him and advise how to deal with him: Avoid him, do not befriend him. And if exposed to him, keep quiet. He will be destroyed by his own iniquity, as all evil-doers are. Storm and flood will carry him away, unless you take pity on him and save him. It may be that your forgiveness will make him repent (chap. 2). Altogether, the advice to "you" is to cling to the "silent man" *(gr, gr m;')* who is his opposite. Even worse than the "heated man" is the "greedy man" (chap. 6). He is the oppressor of the weak, and he is everyone's enemy. His rapacity includes destroying the border markers of fields, so as to obtain more land (chap. 6 lines 8.1-8):

Recognize him who does this on earth!
He is an oppressor of the weak,
a foe bent on destroying your being,
the taking of life is in his eye!
His house is an enemy to the town,
his storage bins will be destroyed,
his wealth seized from his children's hands,
his possessions will be given to another !

Thus "you", the responsible official, must above all shun lying and cheating. Such abstinence is easy, especially if you "do not set your heart on wealth", as is taught in chapter 7, and taken up again in chapters 11-13 & 15-17. Altogether, Amenemope has four clusters of teachings:

1. Do not desire wealth. Abstain from all forms of cheating. Do the good and you will prosper.
2. Avoid all quarrel, contention, and provocation.
3. Respect elders and superiors. Be kind to the poor. Tell the truth in the law court.
4. Do not fear the morrow:

You shall pray to the Aten when he rises,
Saying "Grant me well-being and health!"
He will give you your needs for this life,
and you will be safe from fear. (chap. 7 lines 10, 12-15)

In sum, Amenemope teaches the traditional values in the spirit of New Kingdom piety, with unimpaired confidence in the right order

(Maat) by which, despite reversals of fortune, the good succeeds and evil-doing brings failure.

A particular manner of expressing confidence in the future was the claim voiced by some 18th dynasty officials, that owing to their intelligence and insight, they could plan for the morrow. I cite just one of them, the royal butler Tehuti:

I planned the time, foretold the coming,
skilled in espying the future,
versed in yesterday, planning tomorrow,
expert in what will be!
(TT 110; N. de G. Davies in *Griffith Studies*, 279ff.)

It may be that this confident optimism reached its peak in the 18th dynasty. Even so, confidence in the future and enjoyment of life remained the declared attitudes of Ramesside thought. Amenemope's motif of confident piety - "The boat of the greedy is left in the mud, while the bark of the silent sails with the wind" (chap. 7) is reflected in Ramesside hymns and prayers, where it appears in three distinct contexts. I. In hymns of praise of a deity, primarily Amun-Re. II. In prayers for help and protection, mostly addressed to Amun. III. In prayers of contrite confession of sins.

I. The following hymn forms part of a long sequence of hymns to the sun-god. Here are its first four strophes (P. Chester Beatty IV, recto 7.5ff. ed. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri* (1935), p.32 & pl.15):

Praise to you, Amun-Re-Atum-Harakhti,
by whose words beings began,
mankind, gods, cattle, game of all kinds,
and all that flies and alights!

You made lands and islands, settled with towns,
fertile fields made pregnant by Nun,
thereafter to sprout good things in endless number,
as sustenance for the living!

Valiant herdsman herding them ever!
Bodies are filled with your goodness.
Eyes behold through you, all are in awe of you,
their hearts turned to you.

Good are you ever,
all live by sight of you!

Everyone says "we are yours",
the strong and the weak together,
rich and poor with one voice,
and all things likewise.
Your sweetness pervades all hearts,
no body lacks your goodness.

II. Prayer to Amun for protection in the law court. (P. Anastasi II 8,5-9, Gardiner, *LEM*, p.17 no.9):

Amun, lend your ear to a lone one in court,
he is poor, he is not rich!
For the court presses him:
"Silver, gold for the clerks,
clothes for the attendants!"

Might Amun appear as vizier,
to let the poor man go free!
Might the poor man be justified,
and poverty overcome wealth!

III. Prayers with confessions of sins are few in number. There are five well-known ones, all from the workmen's village of Deir al-Medina, all inscribed on votive stelae dedicated by craftsmen. All five are translated in Assmann's *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete* (Nos. 148-151 & 159). They leave the impression that confession of sins, inscribed on stone monuments, were a local and short-lived phenomenon. A variant of the confessional hymn, a scribe's hymn to the sun-god, which is also a prayer for guidance and an admission of sinfulness, has all the marks of being "literature", i.e. fine writing conveying a mode and a mood. (P. Anastasi II 10,1-11,1, Gardiner, *LEM*, pp. 18-19 no .11):

Come to me, O Re-Harakhti,
May you counsel me !
You are he who acts,
No one acts without you,
You alone act with him.

Come to me, Atum, every day,
You are the august god !
My heart goes south to On
--- ---
My heart is gay, my heart rejoices
Hear my praises,
my prayers by day,
My adorations by night!
My appeals wax in my mouth,
May they be heard today!

O Sole one, Re-Harakhti,
like whom none other is here!
Protector of millions,
who saves hundred-thousands,
Helper of him who calls to him,
Lord of On!

Reproach me not my many crimes!
I am one ignorant of himself,
I am a man who lacks his heart!
I wake to go after my mouth,
like an ox after grass.

The scribe's self-accusation attributes his failings to his lack of good sense, called "not having one's heart." That is also how the penitents of Deir al-Medina viewed their transgressions. Thus Neferabu (Turin 50058) called himself *s ḫm n ỉwty ḥ.ty.f bw rḫ nfr r bỉn*, "an ignorant man lacking his heart who knew not good from evil." That is to say, the scribe of the hymn and the craftsmen of Deir al-Medina, who recorded their transgressions on votive stelae, viewed their failings as resulting from ignorance rather than from evil disposition. And such failings could be overcome by divine help and divine pardon. This personal turning to the deity for help is what is new in New Kingdom piety. The men of the Old and Middle Kingdoms had not prayed for divine guidance. In studying the working of the reciprocity principle (chap. 4) we found that, along with requital and retribution, came the advice to practice forgiveness for small faults. And earlier we had encountered the attitude of forgiveness in the statement of the nomarch Khety (chap. 3): "I answered evil with good." Any and Amenemope are outstanding in teaching to leave retaliation to the god. For Any I cited "Do not rush to

attack your attacker ..." Amenemope goes the whole way to forgiveness in his chapter 2: When the wicked man is foundering in storm and flood, you should rescue him:

Lift him up, give him your hand,
leave him in the hands of the god.
Fill his belly with bread of your own,
that he be sated and weep.

Egyptians, Mesopotamians, and Israelites, all three had the same approach to retaliation, vengeance, and forgiveness. The Babylonian "Counsels of Wisdom" have the following quatrain:

Do not return evil to the man who disputes with you;
Requite with kindness your evil-doer,
Maintain justice to your enemy,
Smile to your adversary.[21]

As for Israel, the quatrain of Prov 25.21-22 combines forgiveness with a fine-spun punishment, and adds the bonus of divine reward:

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat,
If he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
Thus you heap live coals on his head,
and the Lord will reward you.

Altogether, the Egyptian sources indicate a growing admission of human weakness and the need for forgiveness. Man's actions were manifestations of his character. And whether a faulty character could be improved was a topic of serious debate. Often, forgiveness was judged the best course when faced with moral failings. The more so since the wrongdoer was bound to founder eventually.[22] For success and happiness were bound up with goodness. "A good character is a man's heaven" said the wise author of the Instruction to Merikare (l. 30).

---

[21]Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature,* p.101, lines 41-44.

[22]Hornung drew my attention to the precise separation of maat-doers from evil-doers in the "second hour" of the Book of Gates, where the blessed receive their rewards and the evil ones are assigned to perdition. See Hornung, *Ägyptische Unterweltsbücher*, pp. 201-207.

Ramesside autobiographic inscriptions in tombs and on statues now have three audiences: gods, human visitors, and posterity. And in recording a man's career, facts concerning family and upbringing were stressed. In all respects, the 19th dynasty was a vigorous age both politically and intellectually. And with Memphis once again the principal capital, the newly excavated private tombs of Memphis are shedding new light on the themes of tomb decoration, which included such telling activities as refining gold and crafting weapons.[23]

"For one golden century (c.1300-1200 B.C.), the Ramesside kings of the 19th dynasty governed a prosperous realm with much show of outward magnificence at home and prestige abroad. Sethos I and Ramses II restored a respectable part of Egypt's empire in Syria and sought to develop Nubia." (Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*, §206).

"Prestige" is also the trademark of the high clergyman, who comes to the fore at this time. Of Bakenkhons, high priest of Amun at Thebes in the reign of Ramses II, we possess two temple statues. One, the famed beautiful Munich statue (Gl. WAF 38); two, the Cairo statue CG 42155 (Legrain, *Statues*, II, 21-23 & pl.18).[24]
While the Munich statue has an unusually precise account of his training and the stages of his advance to the high-priesthood, the Cairo statue has a complementary presentation of his career and of his moral person. I translate its main portion (text *KRI* III, 295.13-296.12). After recommending himself to the Theban triad of Amun-Re, Mut, and Khons-Neferhotep, Bakenkhons declares:

(13) I am 'the overseer of works in Thebes'
for all the splendid works,
the worthy trusty of his lord
who guides the work on each monument
which he makes for his father Amun.

(15) The god's father of Amun, third prophet of Amun,
second prophet of Amun, overseer of priests

---

[23]See G.T. Martin, *The Hidden Tombs of Memphis* (1991), pp. 131 & 197; and altogether his interesting account of finds and prospects.
[24]TT No.35. For his career and family tree see M.L. Bierbrier, *The Late New Kingdom in Egypt* (1975), pp. 2-4. For the Munich statue see the translation by Plantikow-Münster, *ZÄS* 95(1969) 117-135; and on the stages of his career see K. Jansen-Winkeln, *JNES* 52(1993), 221-225.

of all the gods of Thebes,
first prophet of Amun, Bakenkhons, justified, he says:
(1) I am a man of Thebes from my father and my mother,
son of the second prophet of Amun in Ipet-sut;
I came out of the scribal school a good youngster *(nḏs iqr)*
in the temple of the mistress of heaven.
(2) I was then taught to be priest in the house of Amun,
as son in the charge of my father.
He praised me, knowing my qualities,
for I followed him truly.
(4) When I became 'father of the god',
and witnessed all his appearances,
I served usefully in his temple in all established tasks.
I committed no crime in his house,
I did not neglect my duties to him,
(6) I stepped bowed on his ground in awe of his might.
I did not get angry at his trainees,
I was a father to them.
I judged the wretched and the mighty,
the powerful like the weak.
(8) I gave goods to each of them,
for I abhor rapacity.
I gave burial to the heirless,
embalmment to him who lacked it.
I looked after the orphan,
(10) I [took] care of the needs of the widow.
I did not drive a son from the seat of his father,
I did not snatch a fledgling from his mother.
I extended my hand to the needy,
(12) I provided for the have-not.
--- ---
(The concluding sentences are partly destroyed.)

Altogether, the text is designed to make its points tellingly: That as chief priest of Amun he was in charge of all construction work on Theban temples. That he was a Theban by birth, with both parents being Thebans. That after scribal training he first served in the temple of Mut, and was then taught by his father to be a priest of Amun. When he attained the rank of 'god's father of Amun' he was on his own. From here on he was the accomplished priest who served Amun with requisite humility, and one who helped his fellow humans in their various condi-

tions by practicing the principal virtues: kindness, calm temper, justice, generosity. He also had respect for traditional rights.

On both his statues, the self-presentation of Bakenkhons blends traditional with modern thinking. Modern is the valuation of precise detail and the sophisticated synthesis of ancient values and a refined sensibility.

The principal features of Ramesside modernity are well summed-up by F. Junge in his contribution to the *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch*, Bd.6, 1993, p.45: "Die Ramessidenzeit ist eine überaus aufgeklärte Zeit, die sich ... als Moderne begreift. Eine pluralistische Gesellschaft in einer frühen Form von Wohlfahrtsstaat, in dem ein hohes Mass an Grundkonsensus zwischen Herrschenden und Beherrschten besteht; ein reicher Staat, der über alle zeitgenössischen Technologien ... verfügt; Funktionseliten, die ihr Geschäft verstehen ...; eine hocheffiziente Landwirtschaft, ... entwickelte Fertigungsverfahren ... ein Transportwesen ..."

As for the sense of history, J. Assmann discussed it in his *Stein und Zeit*, 1991, pp.288ff. And P. Vernus has now devoted a monograph to it: *Essai sur la conscience de l'histoire dans l'Egypte pharaonique*, Paris 1995.

6. LIFE GOODS AND HAPPINESS

l) The third poem of the "Man Weary of Life" (P.Berlin 3024, Faulkner, JEA 42) describes the man's longing for death by comparing death to happy moments of life. While the desire for death is unique, the life goods invoked are typical ones, e.g.

... like a sick man's recovery
... like the fragrance of myrrh
... like sitting on the shore of drunkenness
... like a man's coming home from warfare

2) In the "Admonitions of Ipuwer" (P. Leiden 344 recto, ed. Gardiner, *Admonitions,* 1909; Faulkner, *JEA* 50 & 51) the basic happiness experienced by man is identified in the following quatrain:

Lo, a man is happy when eating his food!
mtn nfr s ḥr wnm k;w.f
Use your goods in joy when none hinders you!
It is good *(;ḥ)* for a man to eat his food,
the god allots it to him whom he favors. (8,5-7)

3) Also in the "Admonitions" in a series that defines what happiness is for the people as a whole, we read:

It is however good when men's hands build tombs,
when ponds are dug and orchards made for the gods.
It is however good when people get drunk,
when they drink *miyet* with happy hearts.
It is however good when mouths shout for joy,
when nome-lords watch the shouting from their homes,
. . .
It is however good when beds are readied,
the masters' headrests safely secured;
when every man's need is filled by a mat in the shade,
and a door shut on one who slept in the bushes. (13.9-14.3)

4) The 12th dynasty stela of the 'Overseer of districts' Intef (Leiden V 6; Lichtheim, *Autobiographies* No. 48) ends as follows:

I am a knower who taught himself to know,
who consults so as to be consulted.
White-robed feast watcher with his brothers,
Lucky with crops, good with the spear (*w'ḏ sk'w nfr 'bb*).
Generous, free of meanness,
Shining at dinner, happy at breakfast (*ḥḏ msyt nfr ḥsmnw*)
Lord of food, free of stinginess.

Together, the four citations from Middle Kingdom literary texts dwell not on passing moments, but rather on recurring states, of happiness. And what ranks at the top is enjoyment of one's food and drink, especially when shared with others. Underlying this festive attitude toward food and drink was the natural wealth of the country, resulting from the annual inundation, whereby hard labor was amply rewarded.

But what was the reality of the farmer's life? If one were to believe the account of peasant life by the late Ricardo Caminos in the collective volume *Der Mensch des alten Ägypten* (ed. Donadoni) the peasant's life was an unmitigated disaster (pp.48-9):

> "Nicht enden wollende schwere Arbeit, miserable Löhne, Not und Entbehrungen, Hunger, Krankheit, erbärmliche Lebensbedingungen, tyrannische Herren, drückende Steuerlasten ... Aufgrund seines jämmerlichen Lohnes hatte er niemals die Mittel (noch gab man ihm die Gelegenheit), seine Situation zu verbessern ... Als Bauer geboren, blieb er als solcher bis ans Ende seiner Tage gebrandmarkt: ein Bauer, das unterwürfige, halb verhungerte Arbeitstier ohne eigenen Willen ..., von allen verachtet, von keinem bemitleidet."

This lugubrious phantasy is based on nothing except the Ramesside schoolboys' satiric exercises, known as "the miserable farmer's lot" (e.g. P. Anastasi V, no.11 and P. Sallier I, no.6, Gardiner, LEM). One must distinguish the several groups of the farming population and account for each of them: Big landowners; free full-time farmers; free persons who combined farming with other occupations; government employees who lived in town and also owned a farm; soldiers settled on the land; tenant farmers who worked under contract; unfree serfs and slaves. All these we know from the sources. Most of these belonged to the middle class.

We also know that plots of land were the most coveted possession and that the acquisition of land functioned at all times, either as payment for service in the royal administration, or by purchase, or by inheritance.

Thus, except for unfree serfs and slaves, whose lot depended for good or ill on their masters, all other ranks were avid land owners. The scribal satires on "the miserable farmer's lot" were excercises by young scribes goaded by the image of scribedom as the most desirable profession. But the professional writers were not at all contemptuous of the farmer's life. And one such professional scribe produced the glorification of the ordinary free peasant by writing the tale of "The Eloquent Peasant."

In sum, the ownership of land was a major source of income and of contentment. I therefore found it odd that this fact is sidetracked in the collective volume Assmann J. & Burkard G. eds., *5000 Jahre Ägypten,* where H. Altenmüller wrote:

> "Landwirtschaft und Viehzucht, Vogelfang und Fischzug, die Herstellung von Möbeln und sakralen Geräten haben in den Gräbern der 5. Dynastie in den meisten Fällen mit der eigentlichen Berufstätigkeit der jeweiligen Grabherren nichts zu tun. Es sind Bilder, die in ihrer Gesamtheit jene Verrichtungen darstellen, die für die Versorgung des Menschen in der grossen Gemeinschaft des altägyptischen Staates von Bedeutung sind und von denen der Verstorbene auch für seinen Totenkult profitierte. Als fiktive Lebensbilder sind sie Idealbilder, auf die der Grabherr Anspruch erhebt, um seinen Namen ... für die Nachwelt zu erhalten ..." (p.79)

"Fiktive Lebensbilder ..."? How did the king pay for the services of his officials - including his goldsmith and his "Hofsänger" - if not by grants of land? F. Junge, discussing the same topic, evidently envisaged this reality when he wrote that the "Lebensumstände" of the tomb owner are summed up in a "Handlungsformular" that has a single content: "Überfluss an Nahrungsmitteln für seinen und seiner Abhängigen Verbrauch, und seine Verfügungsgewalt über die Produktionsmittel der ägyptischen Wirtschaft." (ibid. p.56). I trust that "Verfügungsgewalt über die Produktionsmittel" means ownership of land. And such ownership, I submit, caused the tomb owner deep contentment, pride, and joy, and made him commission his craftsmen to depict the abundant production, which was as life enhancing as it was life sustaining.

With the end of the Old Kingdom the distribution system broke down. The ensuing emancipation of the individual overcame the shortages and famines by increased formation of private property through individual initiative. Herewith some citations to illustrate this well known fact.

1) The soldier Qedes: "I acquired oxen and goats. ... I acquired title to a big field." (Fischer, *Kush* 9, 44ff.; Schenkel, *Memphis*, no.41)

2) The butler Merer: "I acquired cattle, acquired people, acquired fields, acquired copper." (Černý, *JEA* 47, 5-9; Schenkel, *Memphis*, no.42)
3) The sole companion Weha: "I am a worthy citizen who lives on his own possessions, plows with his own oxen, fares in his own boat." (Dunham, *Naga-ed-Dêr Stelae*, pl. xxxii; Schenkel, *Memphis*, no.263)
4) The sole companion Ded: "I gave a field to him who had no field, a house to the homeless." (CG 20513; Schenkel, *Memphis*, no. 312; Fischer, *Orientation*, 143-146)
5) Merikare, 60. "Enrich the young men who follow you! Provide with goods, endow with fields, supply with herds!
6) The Eloquent Peasant addresses the magistrate (B1,300): "You have your plot of ground in the country, your estate in the district, your income in the storehouse!"
7) For his services to the king, Ahmose of Elkab received: Gold, seven times; slaves, male and female; and very many fields! (*Urk.* IV 2-4)

Now here is a good middle class citizen of the 18th dynasty. His father had been mayor of Thebes in the reign of Amenhotep I. The upper part of the stela is unfortunately missing.[25] In the first four lines of the extant 11-line text the man, called Nufer, speaks of his father's service to the king. Thereafter he speaks of himself. I translate from line 5 to the end:

5 I fare in my boat and moor at my plot,
I plow with my oxen, bring in on my asses.
My good plot of land that I cultivate
was given me as payment for the valor of my arms,
its herbs make bundles of offerings.
7 I am one truly silent *(grw m;')* from the womb of his mother,
whom everyone wishes to emulate.
I did not rob a poor man on the road,
I was friendly with the great.
I did not anger my mother,
My father did not reproach me.
9 I am a truly excellent scribe,
and a dexterous physician, who knows useful remedies,
having studied disease of the body.
I was a strong fellow when young,

---

[25]Found at Deir el-Bahri and published by I.E.S. Edwards in *JEA* 51(1965), 25f. & pl. xi.2.

I snared fowl and caught fish,
11 trapping from my self-made boat.

A rounded verbal portrait of a contented citizen, whose income derived from being scribe and physician, and from working his plot of land. Health, vigor, virtue, and skills made this free man a happy man. In the course of the 18th dynasty, royal officials now often recorded in their tomb inscriptions not only their devotion to the king but also their personal worship of the gods. Here is Iamunedjeh, an official of Thutmosis III, praying to the sun-god:

I come to you, my lord Re,
to laud you and hail your might,
to praise and please you with incense
from dawn to fall of night,
O Re in all your names!
May you hear me speaking to you,
Turn your heart to your suppliant,
No god ignores his servant!

Behold, your life-breath is sweet to my nose,
I am in the good wind of favor!
Praise of me is in the palace - life-haleness-health - each day!
I have followed the ruler in his strides,
without causing a mishap in all his plans,
for I am attentive *(w'ḥ-ib)* to the god,
hale-of-heart, hale-of-mouth, hale-of-hand !
(*Urk.* IV 943.11-944.7)

This man's happiness comes from his devoted and competent service to the king, for which he receives the latter's praise *(ḥswt)*, a happiness unlike that of the independent citizen Nufer. Yet underlying all varieties of happiness was the understanding that *only a good person could be a happy person.* While not worked out philosophically, as was later done in Greece, the understanding was a fully conscious one, not a mere sentiment, for it resulted from the basic conviction that doing the good created good results all around, while doing evil produced further evil. Wherefore declarations of joy and happiness were voiced in conjunction with accounts of successful action and moral worth. But the pursuit of happiness was not viewed as a goal of life. Rather, happiness was the natural by-product of the well-lived life. There was also no specific

lexeme for "happiness". States of well-being were covered by the terms *nfr* and *w;d*, and there were ample lexemes for "joy" and "joyful."

A particular form of happiness was the festive mood engendered by celebrations, the *ir hrw nfr*, "making a happy day."
Here is just one example of the private feasting in one's own garden on the part of the top official, the vizier Rekhmire. That such scenes were recorded in picture and text on tomb walls was standard practice from the Old Kingdom to the end of the 18th dynasty. I cite the one scene in which the vizier and his wife are seated in the garden, and a son offers garden produce to them (TT 100; *Urk.* IV 1165):

Delight your heart,
exult in joy,
unite with happiness,
summer-lotus at your nose,
myrrh-oil on your brow!
For the ka of the prince, count, mayor and vizier Rekhmire, justified;
and his beloved sister, house-mistress Meryt, justified

The son says:
Receive the lotus that comes from your garden,
there is nothing lacking here!
It offers you all the refreshments it bears,
be pleased with its foods,
rejoice in its produce, delight in its flowers!
You are cooled by the shade of its trees.
May you do as you wish in it for all eternity!

In the Ramesside age such earthly pleasures are rarely shown in the tomb repertoire of texts and pictures. Instead, the enjoyment of one's garden and farmland became a topic of belles-lettres.

Among the life goods prayed for one might expect the frequent wish for a good family. But I have encountered only one example of that wish. It occurs on stela CG 34037, a round-topped stela divided in two registers.[26] In the upper register the deified couple Amenhotep I and Ahmes-Nefertari are seated in a double scene, facing each other across an offering table. In the lower register, two men, one on each side, are

---

[26]Lacau, *Stèles*, I, p.72. Schott, *Liebeslieder*, translated it, p.123 no.73.

kneeling in adoration, their prayers engraved in the middle between them. The man on the left side, the priest Sementawy, prays for:

The breath Amun gives,
A good wife,
Obedient children,
Many belongings!
A good funeral after old age,
Burial in western Thebes;
to visit your temple daily,
and not be turned away!

One of the Ramesside innovations is that all ranks, from vizier to workman, now prayed for one and the same basic set of life goods. It begins with the wish for *ʿnḫ wḏ͗ snb*, formerly addressed only to kings and persons of rank.

a) The vizier Prahotep, on a stela showing him praying to an image of his master, king Ramses II, requests (*KRI* III 53.5):
ʿnḫ wḏ͗ snb
spd-ḥr ḥsw mrwt
Life, haleness, health,
alertness, favor, love.

b) The foreman Nebnufer, on a stela of his, prays to the deified royal couple Amenhotep I and Ahmes-Nefertari (*KRI* III 583.10):
di.k n.i ʿnḫ wḏ͗ snb
spd-ḥr ḥsw mrw(t)
ʿḥʿw nfr ḥr šms k͗.k rʿ nb
Grant me life, haleness, health,
alertness, favor, love,
a good lifetime in following your ka daily!

c) On a wooden statue of his, the 'chief craftsman' Karo prays to Amun-Re, Mut, and Khonsu (*KRI* VII 410.11-14):

May they grant life, haleness, health,
all alertness, favor, love,
a good life endued with health, gladness, joy, daily,
my eyes seeing, my ears hearing,

my mouth filled with *maat*, daily,
as is done for one righteous *(m3'ty)*
who has placed Amun in his heart!
For the ka of the truly silent and good natured ...
n k3 n grw m3' nfr bit ...

The round-up of life goods that gave happiness still lacks a major component: the intoxication of young love. Here it is:

I fare north in the ferry
by the oarsman's stroke,
on my shoulder my bundle of reeds.
I am going to Memphis,
to tell Ptah, lord of truth,
give me my sister tonight!
The river is as if of wine,
its rushes are Ptah,
Sakhmet is its foliage,
Iadet its buds,
Nefertem its lotus blossoms.
[The Golden] is in joy,
when earth brightens in her beauty;
Memphis is a bowl of fruit,
placed before the Fair-of-face.[27]

Impressive here is the integration of love lyric with nature lyric. An intense feeling for nature was present in Egyptian art from early on. But its translation into lyric poetry is a Ramesside achievement.

From here I return to the topic of ownership of land as a highly valued life-good. Just as Ramesside school texts created the black satire of the downtrodden peasant, so they also wrote glowing accounts of the successful person's "life of bucolic ease in one's villa, surrounded by the produce of a well-stocked and well-managed farm." The quoted sentence is from Barry J. Kemp's *Ancient Egypt*, p.310, where he illustrates the "bucolic ease" by citation from P. Anastasi IV no. 5.

I cite the same kind of idyll from another Ramesside school text: P. Lansing, no.10 (Gardiner, *LEM*, 110ff.):

---

[27]P. Harris 500, II.a: The first collection, no.5, ed. W.M. Müller, Die Liebespoesie der alten Ägypter, Leipzig 1899.

Raia has built a beautiful mansion; it lies opposite Edjo.
He built it on borderland, strong as a work of eternity.
Trees are planted all around, a channel is dug in front.
Lapping waves sound in one's sleep; one wearies not of seeing it.
One is gay at its portal, one is drunk in its halls.
... Its barns are full of grain and bulge with abundance.
Fowl yard and aviary with geese; byres filled with cattle.
A breeding pool with geese; horses in the stable.
Barges, ferry-boats, cattle boats are moored at its quay.
Young and old and the poor have come to live nearby.
... Joy dwells within. No one says, 'If only I had.'
... There are glens rich in green plants in summer and winter.
Fishes abound more than sand of river-banks; there's no end to them.
Amun himself established it. It is his ground in truth.
You sit in their shade, you eat their fruit.
Wreaths are made for you of their branches.
You are drunk with their wines. ...

What rings true in this phantasy is the joyous feeling for a bountiful, cultivated land teeming with life. And it was personal ownership of plots of land that made the experience real. Thus, the scenes of agriculture and hunting and fishing in 5th dynasty tombs came from the same reality and mentality as the word-pictures of Ramesside scribes. On the underlying attachment to land, here is again that excellent writer who wrote the Instruction to Merikare (86-7):

When free men are given land,
they work for you like a single team.
No rebel will arise among them,
and Hapy will not fail to come!

Add to this the saying quoted at the beginning of the chapter "Lo, a man is happy when eating his food" - and you have here a stated insight into the nature of happiness in which common sense has risen to wisdom.

For an account of Egyptian happiness that sets its accents quite differently see Jan Assmann, "Glück und Weisheit im alten Ägypten," in *Vom guten Leben: Glücksvorstellungen in Hochkulturen*, ed. Alfred Bellebaum (Berlin, Akademie Verlag 1994), pp.17-54.

7. ETHICS IN THE POST-IMPERIAL EPOCH

In three separate essays, the late Wolfgang Helck dismissed the culture of ancient Egypt in the first millennium B.C. as that of a decaying mummy.[28] Arguing that it was the radicalism of Akhenaten's imposition of his new religion that destroyed the chance of its acceptance, he claimed that with Akenaten's death there came first a time of chaos, then an insecure restauration of the old beliefs and practices, insecure because the concept of Maat had been discredited, whence resulted the dissolution of all ethical norms. I quote from his monograph *Politische Gegensätze*:

"In der 18. Dynastie bestand eine Standesethik der Beamten ... Diese Berufsethik war mit den alten Geschlechtern vernichtet worden und konnte wegen der Diskreditierung des Maat-Begriffes auch nicht wieder geschaffen werden. (p.64)

In der ... Regierung Ramses' II. wandelt sich Äypten endgültig zu einer Kultur, die aufgibt, das Rechte zu suchen ... Dagegen werfen sich die Menschen in die Arme Gottes, d.h. sie verzichten auf eine eigene Führung ihres Lebens. Niemand weiss ja, was gut und was böse ist ... (p.66).

Die Priester grosser Heiligtümer im Lande schliessen sich zusammen, bilden Grossfamilien durch Heiratspolitik und bekommen damit nicht nur Tempelbesitz, sondern auch staatliche Institutionen in ihre Hand. (p.71) ... In der Tat wird Ägypten in dieser Zeit - mit der 21. Dynastie - ein Priesterstaat, dessen tragende Schicht sich eifersüchtig gegen jede Verminderung ihrer Bezüge und ihres Einflusses wehrt. (p.74) ... auf der einen Seite die Priesterkaste mit ihren orthodoxen Vorstellungen, auf der anderen die Kriegerkaste mit einer mehr "liberalen" Auffassung der Welt. (p.75) ... Die letzte Einigung Ägyptens durch die Herren von Sais ... war aber auch der letzte Versuch, eine freiheitlichere Lebensauffassung durchzusetzen. (p.76)

Wenn man den Kampf des Menschen um ein Leben in Vernunft und eine Befreiung von magischen Vorstellungen und die Beseitigung von repressiven Machtstrukturen innerhalb der Gesellschaft als Zeichen einer lebendigen Kultur ansieht, so ist das letzte Jahrtausend der altägyptischen Geschichte zu vernachlässigen; am Todesstoss von Amarna verblutet Ägypten geistig ..." (p.79)

---

[28] "Menschenbild", in: *LÄ* IV, 55-64.- *Fortschritt* (1983). *Politische Gegensätze* (1986).

This final paragraph yields the key to Helck's sweeping dismissal of Egypt's last millennium. An odd key. For if the criteria of a living culture are rationality and freedom from absolutist power structures, then the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms do not qualify as live cultures either. The facts, it seems to me, are two. One, Helck's dismissal of the first millennium B.C. was a personal idiosyncrasy. Two, most of the work on Egypt's cultural history in the first millennium B.C. has yet to be done.

There are two excellent recent works on Egypt's political and social history in the first millennium B.C., minus the final Greco-Roman centuries. One, K.A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, 1100-650 B.C. (1973, ^{2}1986, abbrev. *TIP*). Two, *Ancient Egypt, a Social History* (1983). The sources on the political events being substantial, the changes and upheavals can be followed rather well. But as regards the intellectual and moral ambience, the sources known so far are intermittent. In this chapter I focus on the two centuries of Libyan rule, dynasties 22-24, 935-ca. 730 B.C. For here we have some good sources, namely the inscribed statues of the clergy of Amun of Thebes, found in the Karnak cache, the major pieces of which are now easily available in the very thorough edition of K. Jansen-Winkeln.[29] And on the political and social scene one reads with profit the two studies cited above, Kitchen's *TIP*, and *Ancient Egypt, a Social History*, from which I now quote some observations made by D. O'Connor in his chapter entitled "New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, 1552-664 B.C.":

> "The imperative to create civic and individual security led to a continuous stress upon the necessity for efficient, impartial and incorruptible administration. ... The persistence of this ideal as an integral element of the Egyptian world-view is more important than the frequent transgressions against it, for it reflects that national consensus without which no system of government can long exist. ... motivation was complex, involving both self-interest and altruism. (p.191) ... The elite, while exploitative, were conscious of the necessity of providing certain basic services and recognizing particular rights in order to ensure social stability. The gods explicitly sanctioned attention to the problems of the less fortunate. ... Periodic reforms of abuses are well documented, and officials' biographies frequently refer to their aid to the disadvantaged." (pp.192-94)

---

[29] *Ägyptische Biographien der 22. und 23. Dynastie* (1985), here abbreviated as J.-W.

"Self-interest and altruism," O'Connor's formulation, sums up very well the twofold nature of so many self-laudatory declarations of high officials, especially now, when the country that had split apart during the twenty-first dynasty was being reunited by the determined measures of the 22nd dynasty kings of Libyan descent. On the reunification of Egypt by Shoshenq I here is Kitchen, *TIP*, §243:

> "The intention 'to unite the Two Lands' expressed in Shoshenq's titulary was no idle epithet. Hitherto the Thebaid (and with it, much of Upper Egypt) had been virtually a state-within-the-state, headed by the dynasty of army-commanders as high priests of Amun in an unbroken hereditary succession. This was no longer permitted. Henceforth, the Thebaid was to be bound to the royal house by two related methods: the appointment of members of the royal family and its allies to leading offices in the Theban hierarchy, and marriage-alliances with notable Theban families."

In carrying on this policy, Shoshenq's son Osorkon I awarded the fourth prophetship of Amun of Thebes

> "to a Theban notable of his acquaintance - to Djed-Khons-ef-ankh A, son-in-law of Iuput and descendant of a very old Theban family. On his statue (Cairo 559) dated to Osorkon I and perhaps dedicated by his own son, Djed-Khons-ef-ankh is further entitled the (civil) Governor of Upper Egypt and portrays himself as a 'king's man' in picturesque phrases." (Kitchen, *TIP*, §266)

Here he is:

I) Cube statue of Djedkhonsefankh, fourth prophet of Amun. Cairo 559; J.-W. no. A1, pp.9ff. & 433ff. I translate parts of lines 4-5 and 7-10:

> I kept my mouth clean of harming him who harmed me,
> My attention *(w'ḥ-ib.i)* turned my foes into my friends;
> I ruled my mouth, was skilled in answer,
> yet did not acquiesce in evil-doing *(bw-ḏw)*.
> The people reckoned me as open-handed,
> for I despised the piling-up of riches. (lines 4-5)
> The country's nobles strove to copy me,
> because my favor with the king was great.
> I strayed not from his majesty at the palace,

He did not exclude me from his falcon-ship.
His drink was sweet, I ate with him,
I sipped wine together with him.
The god esteemed me for attending him agreeably,
I was advanced in keeping with my worth. (lines 7-8)

Attaining Thebes when old age came,
I did what is favored in Ipet-sut.
Appointed king's speaker at its head,
I did not praise him who flattered me.
I prevented expenses beyond the king's orders,
I protected the goods of the poor.
I put respect of its lord before them,
I restrained the arms of its robbers.
I was constant in sending reports to the king
in cases of resolving difficulties.
He gave assent to what I did,
He favored me above his courtiers.
My goodness *(nfr.i)* was a sheltering refuge,
a fundament that will not ever tilt. (9-10)

Evidently, knowledge of good and evil was intact, and so was trust in Maat. Note the virtues that are stressed: attention, liberality, justice; the traditional virtues of the man in public life, as taught and claimed for more than a millennium. And self-interest plays its part as natural companion of the virtues. For virtues are not "ideals" but basic needful endowments which nature built into the human constitution.

II) As for family values, one could not ask for a better verbalisation than what is given by the inscriptions on the two statues of Nakhtefmut, fourth prophet of Amun,in the reign of Osorkon II. (J.-W. nos. A2, pp.25ff. & A4, pp.44ff.). In addition to Nakhtefmut's own accounts and prayers, the two statues record a speech of the mother, two speeches of the daughter, and two of the wife.

The mother recalls her noble descent (J.-W. no. A2, pp. 27f. & 443). The daughter first prays that she might always see her father's image, and in her second speech she vows to protect the property which her father has bequeathed to her (A2, pp.27 & 441; A4, pp. 50 & 458).

The wife's two speeches carry high tones of emotion. She will never be parted from her husband. And might they not escape death altogether? For only life is good. Like her husband, she also prays to Amun

for protection of their daughter. (A2, pp.26f. & 441; A4, pp.49f. & 443). Here is the first speech of Nesmut, the wife:

We here wish to dwell together,
God not separating us!
As you live for me, I leave you not!
Let your heart not grieve!
Rather sit at ease each day,
There is no evil coming!

Let us not go to the land of eternity,
that our names not be forgotten!
Worth more is a moment of seeing sun-rays
than lasting lordship of death-land !
m-rdit šm.n r p;t; n nḥḥ
r-tm smḏ rn.n
;ḫ ;t n m;; stwt ỉtn
r ḏt m ḥq; ỉqr (= ỉgrt)

Nesmut's plea is often compared to the plaint of Achilleus (Odyssey XI, 489-91). Closer parallels come from Greco-Roman times. The one closest in wording that I know is that of the Syriac Pseudo-Menander, *Sententiae Menandri* no. 66, which urges enjoyment of life and ends:

Do not deny yourself good things,
for better is one day under the sun
than hundred years inside Sheol.[30]

Now here are two excerpts of Nakhtefmut's prayerful speeches (A2, p.444.6-7) to Amun-Re:

Giver of of old-age joined to health,
of strength endued with joy !
One who is on his water has no want,
one pure for him without failing,
who offers him Maat daily, has no grief in his lifetime.
May you love your servant as he loves you,
May you keep him in your house forever!

---

[30]See J.P. Audet, "La sagesse de Ménandre l'Égyptien", *RB* 59(1952), p.73.

On his second statue, a stelephorous one, Nakhtefmut has a very long address to Amun-Re, including a fervent plea for protection of his daughter, and ending with a self-presentation as an exemplary person. I quote from the ending (J.-W. A4, p.456.19-23):

I am your truly devoted servant, guided by my heart,
the plummet of the balance among the followers,
One pure and blameless in your following.
Loathing evil (*isft*) I offered you Maat,
and shunned soiling your pureness by false complaints.
I slandered no one to the captain of the land,
but went forth to resolve troubles for the palace.
I am one great in his town, chief of his family,
who bent down to companions inferior to him.
I know the profit of doing what serves:
a storehouse found by children thereafter.
May you give me the reward of a good old age,
daily seeing Amun as my heart desires,
and serving kings while safe from their wrath!

The phrase "serving kings while safe from their wrath", had come into use at this time. It suggests that loyal service to kings now included a measure of wariness. Also typical of this time are the fervent and lyrical tones of the speeches, and that the occasional plaints about death are mostly given to female speakers. To wise old men it behooved to praise a worthy life and a happy old age - and to formulate an acceptance of death.

III) Praise of life and a calm acceptance of death are voiced with vigor by Amun's priest Nebneteru. His autobiography fills all four sides of his cube statue, which has the cartouches of Osorkon II (CG 42225, J.-W. A10). In its first part, on the front of the cube, he tells that he had reached the age of 96 years in good health. Here are lines 4-10 of the left-side inscription (J.-W. pp.497f.):

I spent my lifetime in heart's delight,
without worry, without illness;
making my days festive with wine and myrrh,
I banished languor from my heart.
I knew it is dark in the desert vale,
it is not foolish to do the heart's wish!

The priest of Amun, royal scribe, Tery says:
Happy is he who spends his life
following his heart in the favor of Amun!
He granted my office of door-opener of heaven,
He appointed me intimate of the palace.
I had surpassed the life-span of any man in my time
when I reached the desert-vale with his favor.
The land mourned when I had passed away,
my many descendants and the people. (lines 4-7)
Fret not that the like will happen,
It is sad to live with head-on-knee !
Be not tight-fisted with what you own,
Act not empty-handed with your wealth !
Sit not in the hall of heart's concern,
foretelling the morrow before it has come !
Halt not the eye's water lest it come unawares !
Sleep not with the sun-disk in the east,
Thirst not at the side of beer ! (lines 8-10)

While outstanding in their formulation, Nebneteru's views on right living and right dying were not isolated ones. Here are two other priests of Amun, who lived about a generation later, whose exhortations read like sequels to his.

IV) Cube statue of Horakhbit (CG 42231, J.-W. A17, p.543.1-3 & 5):

O people who will be,
who will come in after years:
Gain profit in serving Amun
by telling the truth (maat) he loves!
He who serves him till reveredness,
Death does not snatch him away!
Dies sated with life, reaches burial
he who walked on his water !
...
Who were before are gone,
Others remain,
The land will not lack its people !

That is to say, he who lived the right life dies in the peace of fulfilment "sated with life." Moreover, the continuity inherent in the succes-

sion of generations also spells fulfilment. Hence, burial with appropriate services is the cap-stone of the well-lived l ife.

V) On the cube statue of the priest Hor the point is made concisely (CG 42230, J.-W. A.15, p.533.8-9):

There can be no ignoring death,
One may not shun the valley!
One comes, another goes,
The one shall recall the other !
I offer to the ancestors, the brothers who went before.

VI) Furthermore, in one form or another, these men kept repeating that their contentment with life came from the knowledge of having done right. Cube statue of another Hor (CG 42226, J.-W. A11, p.506):

I completed the years in gladness,
the reward for the doer of good.
km.n.i rnpwt n ndm-ib
fq;w pw in ir ;ḫ

VII) The priest of Amun and vizier Hor, son of Iutjek, had a son, also named Iutjek, who when erecting his father's statue, added a statement of his own to his father's autobiographic text. It forms part of the bottom line of the statue's pediment (Cairo JE 37512, J.-W. A20, p.563.d). It is a veritable trumpet call of Maat-doing:

I have done Right (Maat) for the Lord-of-Right,
the Righteous one who determines Right,
Amun-Re, Lord of Thrones-of the-two-lands,
Who raised the sky wherein the sun-disk is,
for I knew he gave me to you,
because you did Right for him!

* * *

Let us now ask the question: Who composed the autobiographies of these priests of Amun of Thebes? M.L. Bierbrier, in his genealogical study *The Late New Kingdom in Egypt (c. 1300-664 B.C.)* distinguished four types of temple statues (p.xv): "(a) those set up in the lifetime of the owner, (b) those set up by the owner's son or descendants 'to cause

his name to live', (c) those given 'as a favor' by a monarch whose cartouches are shown, and (d) those bearing cartouches with no corresponding royal formula of favour." And Bierbrier remarked: "Type (b) is by far the most common, and it is of course possible that some of these statues were made in anticipation when the person depicted was still alive." Bierbrier's four points give a good overall explanation of the circumstances; but they are not designed to answer the question, "who composed the texts?", especially in the cases (type b) where the statues had been set up by a descendant. The point I want to make is that it seems to me unlikely that these outstanding public servants did not themselves compose the summations of their thoughts and achievements by which they wished to be remembered. Hence, they would have penned them, or dictated them, as writings on clean sheets of papyrus, and stored for the day of their transfer to the stone statue. I do not mean that they also wrote the descriptions of their funerals. In short, I read these texts as the spiritual testaments of old men who proffer the viewpoint of old age. It defies belief that this viewpoint should have been penned by young descendants. When a statue text is clearly the work of a son, as is the case of the Nakhtefmut of CG 42229 = J.-W. A18, the text is remarkable only for the paucity of autobiographic statement. I propose that we allow to the forceful self-presentations and reflections of such men as Djedkhonsefankh, Nakhtefmut, and Nebneteru (J.-W. A1, A2 & A4, A10), to name only these three, that they were, at least partly, the genuine accounts of those aged men, who summed up their lives and thoughts as worthy of emulation and remembrance.

As for their teachings on the finiteness of human life, that pragmatism goes back to early times, when the tomb owners addressed their visitors with "O you who love life and hate death!" In its second stage, this pragmatic approach informed the Harpers' Songs, which coupled it with the *carpe diem* advice. Now, in its third stage, the finiteness of individual human lives is stated with mature poise:

> There can be no ignoring death,
> One may not shun the valley!
> One comes, another goes,
> The one shall recall the other!

And with these thoughts on human finiteness Egyptian thinking lined up with the attitudes to life and death prevailing in Mesopotamia, Israel, and Greece in the first millennium B.C., at least when Egyptians were thinking pragmatically. Speculative and magical thought continued to

envision a transfigured afterlife, as worked out in the mortuary literature. On the statue inscriptions of the clergy of Amun such visions are mostly brief citations from the mortuary repertoire. Here is one from the statue CG 42227 of the priest Hor (J.-W. A12, pp. 151 & 516), lines 5-7:

May I walk among the living,
to see Aten arise in the sky,
when he shows himself in your house!
May I rise to heaven,
traverse the firmament, join the stars!
May I be hailed in the daybark,
May I be in the bow of the nightbark!
For I was one great in his office,
important in his rank,
and expert in sacred writings.

I am not discussing here the concept of the Last Judgment, and how it promoted the intertwining of moral thought with magical belief and practice. I have dealt with the matter in my *Maat* book, studies 1 and 2.

8. A LATE-PERIOD INSTRUCTION: P. BROOKLYN 47.218.135

Known since its brief description by Posener and Sainte-Fare Garnot,[31] the papyrus has recently been published in a very good and thorough edition by Richard Jasnow.[32] Thereafter, J.F. Quack wrote a review of Jasnow's work together with a complete German translation of the Instruction in which he made significant improvements.[33] If the text as we now have it were not a fragment, it would be a first-rate source of Egyptian moral thought as formulated in the middle of the first millennium B.C. But even as a fragment it makes a major contribution.

As pieced together, the Instruction consists of six pages or text columns, that deal with the following topics (I paraphrase Jasnow's summary on his p.29):
1) A narrative section. 2) A paean to the pharaoh. 3) Instructions and reflections, 4) A narrative about Re and Thoth. 5) and 6) Instructional reflections. For its date, the mention of pharaoh Apries provides the *terminus post quem*. For its *terminus ante quem*, here is Jasnow, p.40:

> "I have attributed the manuscript to the fifth or fourth century B.C., and the composition itself may be from this period (i.e. ca. Thirtieth Dynasty). It is entirely possible, of course, that the work is Saite, and portions could even be earlier. The narrative in the first two columns is placed in the reign of Apries. If the work derives in fact from the fourth century, this could reflect the Late Period fondness for the Saite Dynasty as a choice of setting."

Two topics of moral reflection stand out in this instruction by the prominence with which they are discussed. One is the relationship of superior and subordinate in its various contexts and forms. The other outstanding, and unusual, topic is the long discourse on farming, which occupies all of Column Six and culminates in the praise of the farmer as the leader of all professions! Herewith a sampling of themes.

---

[31] In *SPOA* (1963) 153-157.

[32] *A Late Period Hieratic Wisdom Text (SAOC, 52)* Chicago 1992.

[33] "Ein neuer ägyptischer Weisheitstext", *WdO* 24(1993) 5-19. See also the review by I. Shirun-Grumach in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 53(1996) 409-412, which comments in particular on the section of the papyrus dealing with pharaoh Apries.

I. Superior and Subordinate (Column II/17-19)

A lord lives by Maat,
he abhors falsehood.
He mingles with honored ones,
he befriends the just one.

A lord gives reward
to him who excels in his task.
He who multiplies his labor
him he prefers to the friends.
Give the bounty of your output
daily to your lord -
he will stretch his hand to you with life !

i.ir sr ʿnḫ (m) mꜣʿt
tꜣy.f bwt isfy
i.ir.f šbn n imꜣḫw
i.ir.f iry n mꜣʿty

i.ir sr di šb
n pꜣ nty di mnḫ tꜣy.f wpt
pꜣ nty di ʿšꜣ pꜣy.f bꜣk
iw.f wiꜣt.f r smrw
imy pꜣ ḥꜣw n ir-ḫt.k
n pꜣy.k nb m-mnw
dwn.f n.k ḏrt.f ḫr ʿnḫ

II. A failure of Courage (Column III/10-11)

One who suffers from an evil [thinks][34] not of the god,
he begs for death, his heart is faint;
he does not raise himself, life has failed him.

III. Right and Wrong (Column IV/9-10)

A good man *(rmṯ nfr)* opens his arms to everyone;
if you are wealthy ---

---

[34]Quack restored mḳmḳ.

The wealth of the just one *(m;'ty)* perishes not,
a robber does not bequeath to his son.

IV. The Law of Change (Column IV/l2)

As one is born, another dies,
As one becomes great, another is small.

V. Retribution (Column V/3-4)

If you are found out when you have robbed,
you are killed.
If not found out when you have robbed,
there is a fever in your body.

VI. Diligence (Column V/9-10)

Exert yourself to make a living.
Be not slack, lest you founder.

VII. "A Field is Turquoise" (Column VI/9-10)

A field is turquoise, a good well
for one who knows its nature;
fat for him who works it,
granite for him who robs it.

sḫt mfky ḫnmt nfr
n p;' nty rḫ p;'y.s ky
'ḏ n p;' nty b;'k s
m;'ṯ n p;' nty ḥ;'q s

Note the rimes. Now here is the farmer:

VIII. (Column VI/18):

The farmer is chief of all professions,
for him do they labor,
his hands are their breath of life in [⌜truth⌝]

ḥwty p;y ḫry n i;wt nbt
i.irw b;k n.f
n;y.f ḏrty p;y.w t;w n ʿnḫ m [ršs][35]

As Jasnow and Quack observed, the Instruction is a transitional work, one linked to the past and pointing to the future. But with so much of the text missing, one does not get a good grip on its particular thrust or "Sitz im Leben". Why did the author make the topic superior/inferior into a major theme? Why was he so intent on stressing the importance of farming? I here offer impressions and guesses.

Most of the teachings are not formulated as advice, but rather as observations and judgments. The author pondered how people actually respond to teaching and to experience; and he formulated evaluations of human behavior, just occasionally adding an advice.

The "subordinate" who is so much in focus here is, most of the time, the "you" of earlier Instructions, the everyman by whose work the society functions. Hence the stress on the ancient virtues of loyalty, honesty, and diligence. As for Maat, or moral causality, it is what it was before: "The wealth of the just one perishes not ..."

Regarding retribution, the comment made in citation V is interesting: "If you rob and are not found out, there is a fever in your body." Can this mean anything other than "you suffer the pangs of a bad conscience"? In his essay, "Zur Geschichte des Herzens im alten Ägypten"[36] Jan Assmann made the point that in the autobiography of Intef (Louvre C26) the heart appears as a "moralische Instanz, die Lehren erteilt und Weisungen gibt, ... die als göttliche Stimme erkannt wird und unserem Begriff des Gewissens schon sehr nahe kommt." (p.99). His observation made me want to determine just how far the Egyptian had come in working out the notion of "conscience." The role of the heart as source of thinking and planning had been a major topic since the Middle Kingdom. But "conscience", as the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* tells me, means "the moral sense of right and wrong." Knowing right and wrong, and loving good and hating evil, were central topics of Egyptian morality (see chapters 3 & 5). But explanations how men and women came to know good from bad, and right from wrong, had not been formulated. And the "moral sense", though an active player, had not been given a name. Nevertheless, in autobiographies of 18th dynasty officials, the

---

[35]I am guessing that the word missing after *m* was *šs*.

[36]In J. Assmann ed., *Die Erfindung des inneren Menschen* (Studien zum Verstehen fremder Religionen, Bd.6), pp.81-113.

"moral sense" is in focus: it is the heart in its particular role of guide to right action. Here is the Intef of Louvre C26, who was Assmann's example:

It was my heart that made me act thus as it guided me,
It was to me an excellent instructor;
I did not neglect its prompting,
fearing to stray from its guidance.

I flourished greatly thereby,
I excelled by what it made me do,
I became worthy by its guidance.

⌜True is [what] people [tell] by saying⌝":
A god it is who is in every body,
blessed is whom he shows the good way of acting",
Behold, such a one was I.
(*Urk.* IV 974.1-11; Lichtheim, *Maat*, no.52)

As always, the "I" is the actor and the judge of his actions. But now the writer explains the excellence of his actions by the guidance of his heart; and by way of a popular saying, that good guidance is attributed to the presence of a god in everyone.

Somewhat earlier, Paheri of El-Kab had made the same point more briefly (*Urk.* IV 119.12-17):

I went and came, my heart the same,
I told no lie to anyone.
I knew the god who is in people,
aware of him, I knew this from that.

šm.n.i iy.n.i ib.i ḫr mity
n ḏd.i grg r ky
rḫ.kwi nṯr imy rmṯ
siw.i sw rḫ.i pfy r pn

This is the closest approximation to a definition of the moral sense, or conscience, that I know from 18th dynasty texts.

That the notion of "moral sense/conscience" did not attain a precise shape embodied in a lexeme can be attributed to at least two causes.

One, the idea of a god being active within man was vague and varied. It guided the dream books, where peoples' good or bad dreams were interpreted as the consequence of their being followers of Horus or Seth. Two, the magical thinking that governed the weighing-of-the-heart procedure of the Book of the Dead allowed the dead person to command his heart not to bear accusing testimony against him (BD chapter 30). In sum, the heart was not invariably a reliable moral guide or witness.

It is interesting that even in classical Greece the concept of "conscience", though formulated, did not become significant. Here is Eduard Schwartz discussing Socrates:

> "Vor allem darf man sich nicht darauf berufen, dass Sokrates ein besonderes "Gewissen" gehabt habe. Gewiss ist es richtig, dass der Begriff aus dem Griechischen stammt und schon im 5. Jahrhundert vorkommt, z.B. im Orestes des Euripides 396, wo Orestes das *syneidós* zu sehen glaubt; aber man muss hinzufügen, dass das Gewissen in der hellenischen Ethik nicht die geringste Rolle spielt." (*Ethik der Griechen*, 90-91).

Assmann in his above-mentioned study of the heart in ancient Egypt gave an incisive account of its multiple aspects and commented "Das Herz ist also zugleich das wichtigste und das problematischste Organ des Körpers." (p.87). His analysis of its many facets culminates in the description of the "gottgeleitete Herz", for which he cites prayers and instructional sayings of the Ramesside age. And he suggests that the idea of the "gottgeleitete Herz" belonged to a later historical situation than that of the "herzgeleitete" man, whose concerns had been primarily social (pp.107ff.). But when he concludes "Die Welt ist undurchsichtig, unberechenbar und unbeständig geworden. Sie flösst kein Behagen und Vertrauen mehr ein ..." (pp.110-111), I find that this judgment holds only for the last four centuries of the first millennium B.C., when Egypt had become part of the Hellenistic world and acquired its anxiety. In the preceding six centuries, however, although the world appeared "undurchsichtig" and "unberechenbar", there still flourished a great vitality and a positive outlook which taught confidence in the face of contingency (see chapter 5).

As for the heart as moral guide, the concept became somewhat clearer in the Ramesside age and thereafter, even though the notion of "conscience" was not formulated. Here is Huyshery, treasury scribe of Seti I (*KRI* I 332.16ff.). Unfortunately the text is full of lacunae:

> I say to you, future people coming after me:

I was one worthy, cool ---
who had put Maat in his heart,
without neglecting her occasion.
Since I left the womb she was joined to my heart ---

To say that he had acted by the guidance of Maat whom he had held in his heart since birth is how a man of the Ramesside age claimed possession of that innate moral sense which we call "conscience".

Thus, the author of P. Brooklyn, wanting to point out the pangs of a bad conscience that follow an evil deed, probably employed the best thinking available when he called it "a fever in the body."

Regarding the emphatic discussion of farming in Column Six, there must have been good reasons for dwelling on this topic, reasons which may perhaps be guessed by seeing the Saite and post-Saite state as having pressing needs and a modern outlook, which combined to intensify the systematic exploitation of the agricultural resources. Thus it may not be accidental that the earliest formal farming contracts that are known to us date from the Saite period.[37] And I quote from the chapter by A.B. Lloyd, "The Late Period" in the volume *Ancient Egypt* (1983) dealing with the farming population, notably the warrior class:

> "Most, if not all, of the warrior class originated from Libyan mercenaries who had settled in Egypt during the New Kingdom ... They were concentrated mainly in the Delta where they grew into a numerous and powerful element in the population. ... Each warrior is alleged to have received from the Crown a tax-free fief of one *st;t* of land (c. 8 acres). ... Since they functioned as a militia, not as a standing army, the majority would have lived most of their lives as peasants ... At all events, the prominence of soldiers, Egyptian and mercenary, in the agricultural life of the country, is far from novel. ... In the Wilbour Papyrus we find that, although most of the land was actually owned by the Crown or temples, it was worked by, or on behalf of, a variety of individuals including not only priests and soldiers but also 'cultivators, 'ladies', herdsmen, scribes and stablemasters." (pp. 309-311)

The author of P. Brooklyn, a moralist who knew the facts, judged rightly when he gave highest praise to the farming population on whose diligent labor the welfare of the nation depended. And because he was a moralist, his tract on farming (and not the scattered remarks on farming

---

[37]See G.R. Hughes, *Saite Demotic Land Leases* (1952).

in the Instruction of Ankhsheshonqi) constitute a true parallel to Hesiod's *Erga*. Whether he knew Hesiod's work we shall never know. But we may place the two side by side because they had the same concern. The successful labor of the diligent farmer, be he owner of his plot, or tenant farmer, or serf, depended on a fair system of labor relations, supplies, and taxation. For Hesiod's concerns I quote from Fritz Wehrli, *Hauptrichtungen des griechischen Denkens:*

> "Wie Vergil sieht schon Hesiod die harte Arbeit, von der allein sich die Not überwinden lässt, unlösbar mit der Herrschaft des Rechts verbunden, und ihre Einheit vor Augen zu führen ist die eigentliche Aufgabe seiner Dichtung. (p.81)
> Das Werk der Hände kann überhaupt nur dort gedeihen, wo es vor der Gewalt der Mächtigen geschützt ist, das heisst in einer rechtlich geordneten Gesellschaft. (p.84)
> Perses soll bedenken, dass Zeus den Fischen, wilden Tieren und Vögeln bestimme, einander aufzufressen, den Menschen aber Dike, das Recht, verliehen habe." (p.85)

The author of P. Brooklyn reiterated in modern populist language the ancient lessons of Maat-doing, the need for constant application of justice, honesty, and loyalty.

As a small echo of the author's "Praise of Farmers" one may read a quatrain from the tomb of Petosiris (Lefebvre, *Tombeau de Petosiris*, II, 24):

> I am the good farmer bearing crops,
> who fills the storerooms in a lean year
> for his lord, by the labor of his arms,
> with all herbs of the field comes inundation.

> *ỉnk ḥwt(y) nfr ḫrw ḫww*
> *mḥ šnwt m mpt qsnt*
> *n nb.f m kꜣt ʿwy.f*
> *m smw nb n sḫt m ỉy ỉḫt*

9. ON THE VOCABULARY OF MORAL THOUGHT: THE PRINCIPAL VIRTUES

As discussed in chapters 2 & 3, a first stage of integrated thinking on moral behavior had been attained in the 6th dynasty. Now to focus on individual virtues which came to be viewed as leading ones, I begin with the autobiography of Pepiankh the Middle, official of king Pepi II (Blackman, *Meir* IV, 23ff. tomb D2; *Urk.* I 221-224; Lichtheim, *Autobiographies*, no.5; Roccati, *Littérature*, no.53). The text on the right side of the doorway has this to say:

I have spent a life of 100 years among the honored living,
being with my ka. I spent a great part of this time as chief priest
of Hathor, Lady of Qus, entering unto Hathor, Lady of Qus,
to see her and perform her ceremony with my hands.

I am one honored by the king, I am one honored by the great god
I am one honored by the people.
I am one beloved of his father, praised of his mother.
I am one beloved of his siblings.

I spent all the time that I spent in the office of magistrate
to do what is good (*bw nfr*), to say what is liked (*mrrt*),
in order to attain good repute with the god,
in order to grow old [in my town].

I have judged two parties so as to content them,
knowing it is what the god wishes.
Never did I pass the night angry with people
because of their behavior toward me.

I have now applied my magistrate's income to the West,
in the district of the Mistress of Right,
in a clean place, in a good place, where no work had been done,
other people had never worked there before.

It is I who opened up this region *(w'rt)*,
It will serve me as burial ground *(ḫrt-nṯr)*,
It will do what I desire,

I attended to it greatly when among the living.
I have come to it now as one excellently old,
having spent my time among the living,
guarded by my honor with the king.

While tripartite - inscribed over the doorway, and to the right and left of the door - the autobiography forms a well planned whole. Part 1, over the door, gives his offices and titles and a prayer for offerings. Part 2, the section just rendered, presents his moral person and tells the careful planning of his tomb. Part 3 has some account of his magistracy and an "address to the living." In all three parts the prose is marked by regular sentence rhythms, employing repetitions and parallelisms, and forming groups of sentences - "Kunstprosa." Of special interest is the phrase *w;ḥ.n.i ib.i r.s wrt*, here rendered "I attended to it greatly", by which he stresses the planning of his tomb. For here appears *w;ḥ ib* as a verb denoting "attending to" something. In this sense it is the exact equal of Hebrew *sim lev*, as Breasted rightly observed in connection with the stela of Sehetepibre (*BAR* I, p.325, note g). I think now that all of us would have spared ourselves much inconclusive guessing on the meaning of adjectival and nominal *w;ḥ-ib* if we had understood that the verb *w;ḥ ib* means "attend to" or "pay attention to."

Here are examples of adjectival *w;ḥ-ib*, often used since the 11th dynasty, which show that the meaning "attentive" suits much better than the renderings "patient, calm, well-meaning," etc. that have been offered, mostly based on *Wb*. I, 256: "wohlgesinnt, freundlich, wohlwollend, geduldig, bescheiden."

l) Djari (*TPPI* no.18; Schenkel, *Memphis* no.72: Lichtheim, *Autobiographies*, no.16; 11th dyn.), line 5:
ink wdn m-m srw w;ḥ-ib ;t sḫt
"I am one weighty among officials, attentive in time of blows."

This, I now think, is the true rendering; it also holds the right mean between Schenkel's "draufgängerisch" and my "calm"!

2) Amun-wosre (ed. Simpson, *JEA* 51, 1965, pp.63ff.) where *w;ḥ-ib* occurs twice (lines 6 & 10). In both cases the rendering "patient" is possible but "attentive" is better; see Simpson's remarks. The second occurrence is the phrase *w;ḥ-ib r sḏm mdwt*, "attentive to hear speech",

and that is a set phrase which recurs on stela CG 20539 (Lange-Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine*, II,152.5-6):

w'ḥ-ib r sḏm mdwt mity nṯr m wnwt.f
"Attentive to hear speech, alike to the god in his hour";

and in the same expanded form in *Urk.* IV 49.5 (stela of Kares).

3) Furthermore, the stela of Mentuhotep, CG 20539, line 8, has:

w'ḥ-ib iwty snnw nfr sḏm iqr ḏd
"Attentive without equal, good listener, well spoken",

where the integration of good listening with good speaking underlines the quality of "attentiveness."

4) The Ramesside official Tjia (*KRI* III 366.6-367.1) declared:

ink w' iqr nfr bi't w'ḥ-ib r irt m'' t mty m'' tm rdit ḥr gs
"I am one worthy, good-natured, attentive to do right, truly straight and impartial."

5) That *w'ḥ-ib* did not mean "geneigt", in the sense of superior bending down to inferior, is proven by the phrase:

ink is w'ḥ-ib ḫr nṯr wḏ'-ib wḏ'-r' wḏ'-ḏrt
"I am one attentive before the god, hale-of-heart, hale-of-mouth, hale-of-hand." (*Urk.* IV 944.6-7 and 1589.19).

8) Back in the 12th dynasty, here is Sehetepibre of CG 20538 recto, lines 6-7 (which had inspired Breasted's remark)

w'ḥ-ib mnḫ nḏnwt-r'
ḏd nfrt wḥm mrrt
w'ḥ-ib iwty snnw.f
nfr sḏm iqr ḏd
"attentive, effective of counsel,
who says the good, repeats what is liked;
attentive without his equal,
good listener, excellent speaker."

Here the repetition of *w3ḥ-ib*, and its precise connection with a listening and speaking that results in advice and decisions, make it crystal clear that *w3ḥ-ib* denotes an active and major virtue, something more incisive than being "calm" or "patient."

9) The same point is made on the 12th dynasty stela of Intef son of Sitamun (Louvre C167, no.28 of my *Maat*, published by R. Moss in *Griffith Studies*, pl.47) lines 8-9:

sḏmw hnw š3w irw
w3ḥ-ib iqr ṯsw
d3r srf šw m ḥnw
m3ʿty iwty wʿ(3)
Considerate hearer, able doer,
attentive, well-spoken,
calm-tempered, free of anger,
one righteous who speaks no evil.

10) As a third example of the interconnection between attentive listening and effective speaking here is a quatrain of Menkheperresonb (18th dyn.; *Urk.* IV 993.3-8):

grw m3ʿ nfr s3rt
w3ḥ-ib mrr nb.f
ʿq3 st-ns mty ḥ3ty
hrrw nb-t3wy ḥr tpt-r3.f
One truly silent, of good sense,
attentive, beloved of his lord,
precise in speech, straight of heart,
whose word contents the two-lands' lord.

11) But what do we make of the noun *w3ḥ-ib* in Sinuhe B 203, where Sinuhe rejoices over the king's letter telling him to return: *ḫr ḥm w3ḥ-ib nḥm wi m-ʿ mwt*, Good indeed is the *w3ḥ-ib* that saves me from death. Here *w3ḥ-ib* has usually been rendered "benevolence" or clemency" or "kindness." So also in the Loyalist Instruction §13 *mnw pw n s w3ḥ-ib*, which Posener rendered: "C'est le monument de l'homme que la bienveillance." Yet at this point of the tale Sinuhe does not know that the king will pardon him; he only realizes that the king has paid attention to

his case and seems well-disposed. Thus here too it would suit to translate "Good indeed is the attentiveness that saves me from death." But given the fact that Egyptians, operating with a vocabulary much smaller than modern ones, allowed broad ranges of meaning to individual lexemes, it is likely that *w;ḥ-ib* had expanded from "attentive / attentiveness" to include "benevolent / benevolence." In most cases where I have in the past rendered *w;ḥ-ib* as "calm, patient, etc." I would now put "attentive", as for instance in Eloquent Peasant B1 209-10: *w;ḥ ib.k rḫ.k m;'t:* "Be attentive so as to learn justice!" But in *Urk.* IV 120.5-6 where Paheri sums up his righteous conduct *ink inw n w;ḥ-ib / ḥsy pr m ḫt ḥsw* the rendering "I was the model of benevolence / One praised who came praised from the womb" seems best.

In an ethic which understood parental example, and listening to teachings, as major means of acquiring good moral habits "attentiveness" was both a requirement for the learner and an achievement of the educated person. Moreover, in a royal administration which, since the Middle Kingdom, was as complex as it was clumsy, the many overlapping departments and responsibilities required great competence and attentiveness on the part of the office holders. While all this is very well layed out and summed up by Kees,[38] I dissent from his description of the officials' self-portrayals in the 12th dynasty as being examples of "die in dieser Zeit besonders schwülstig stilisierten Idealbiographien" (p.207). Not only because, as I keep repeating, the term "Idealbiographie" is quite wrong, but because the efforts of writers in the 20th century B.C. to enlarge and refine their vocabulary is worthy of our acute interest and esteem. Growth of vocabulary was growth of thought.

The three stelae from the Abydene cenotaph of Intef son of Sent[39] are outstanding examples of the flowering of an expanded vocabulary. Intef son of Sent's multiple tasks included instructing officials, directing persons who came on particular business matters, and advising petitioners; tasks that required acute attention, competence, intelligence, and good will. These and other capabilities he ascribes to himself on his tall stela BM 572. On his second stela, BM 562, he recorded what were the standard virtues: goodness (*nfr*) to his household. Generous assistance to the old, the poor, and anyone in need. Never a word of calumny or deceit. In short, a just, upright, and friendly conduct toward everyone. On his third stela, BM 581, he declares that his cenotaph stands on the

---

[38]H. Kees, *Ägypten* (1933), pp.205ff.

[39]Translated in my *Autobiographies*, numbers 45-47.

holy ground of Abydos, the ground sacred to Osiris and Wepwawet. Then follows a highly stylized, symmetrically composed verbal portrait of his virtuous self. The final sentence indicates that the whole ceremonial speech can be read as a self-presentation before the gods in their role of judges of the deceased:

> I am a speaker in the Hall of Maat,
> skilled in speech in cases of anxiety.
> *ink mdww m ḫ3 n m3ʿt*
> *spd-rʾ m swt ḥns-ib*

As for *ḥns-ib*, "narrow-hearted," Faulkner's definition, *Dictionary* p.173, "meanness", with reference to this passage, is wrong. In other instances, *ḥns-ib* can mean "stingy/mean", but not here, where the "constricted heart" is evidently the "anxious heart", as rightly said by Sethe, *Erläuterungen zu den ägyptischen Lesestücken,* to 81.10: *"ḥns*, "eng", hier übertragen von besorgt sein."

In his *Ma'at* book (1990 & 1995) Jan Assmann dealt extensively with the Egyptian's understanding of the need for "Füreinander-Handeln" by means of "justice." In that connection he said of *wʿḥ-ib* :

"Die Tugend der 'Herzensgeduld' *(wʿḥ-ib)* bezieht sich auf die Kunst des guten Zuhörens, d.h. des *Verstehens*, und bezeichnet Eigenschaften wie 'geduldig', 'verständnisvoll', 'aufmerksam', 'zugewandt'." (p.73)

I suggest that we add to this definition the original verbal sense "attend to", owing to which the adjectival meaning "attentive" is the central one, which in turn produced the expansion to "benevolent." Thus, *wʿḥ-ib* became a major virtue, wherefore the Loyalist Instruction declared: "A man's benevolence (*wʿḥ-ib*) is his monument." See chap. 3: A man's monument was his *qd nfr*, or *imʿt*, or *wʿḥ-ib*.

II. The principal lexeme for "kindness/friendliness" was *imʿ (iʿm)* and noun *imʿt*. The ten examples of *imʿ* in Janssen, *Autobiografie* (p.2) all show it in relation to a man's family. That could remind us that family affection is the most ancient moral trait. The "kindness" of *imʿ (iʿm)* implied "graciousness", whence the nomarch Amenemhet wore the title *imʿ-ʿ* like a badge of honor (Lichtheim, *Autobiographies*, p.139). The New Kingdom favored the compounds *imʿ-ib* and *nb-imʿt*. Late Period autobiographers selected essentials from the large inherited vocabulary. Here is Djedher, the priest (in dyn. 30) praying to Hathor:

I am one truthful who abhors lying
I did what people love and gods praise,
I was gracious and benign to all.
ỉnk m3ʿ ʿ-ỉb bwt(.ỉ) grg
ỉr.n.ỉ mrr rmṯ ḥsw nṯrw
ỉnk ỉmʿ-ỉb nfr-qỉḥ n s nb

(de Meulenaere, *BIFAO* 61(1962), 29ff.; Lichtheim, *Maat*, no.96). The writer could not have chosen better than combining the bent arm (*qỉḥ* for *q ʿḥ*) with the gentle heart in order to sketch the priestly mien.

III. From the beginning, the leading and inclusive virtue was "goodness" (*nfr*). But its being the inclusive virtue does not mean that we should render *nfr* as "vollkommen." The thirty examples of *nfr* in Jansen's *Autobiografie* (pp.24-5) suffice to prove that *nfr* does not mean "perfect."

That is so because the lexeme "perfect" has a narrow sense; and most of the time it functions merely as an adverb: The full moon is "perfectly" round. But no human being is perfect, and few things are. People can be "good"; and the educated Egyptians who bequeathed us their writings claimed to have been "good."

My goodness (*nfr.ỉ*) was a sheltering refuge,
a fundament that will not ever tilt.
(Djedkhonsefankh, Cairo 559, see chap.7)

"Goodness" was, and is, the sum of the major virtues, which in Egyptian included the traits of *ỉqr*, *mnḫ*, and *ʾḫ*, as well as *wʾḥ-ỉb* and *ỉmʾ*. If one then asks, which Egyptian term or terms equaled the lexeme "virtue" in its English usage, the answer, I think, is *ỉqr/ỉqrw* and *mnḫw/ mnḫ-ỉb*. Thus, Ineni, speaking of his services to queen Hatshepsut, says:

rḫ.n.s ỉqrw.ỉ m stp-sʾ
She knew my worth (virtue) in the palace.
(*Urk.* IV 60.14)

Sennefer, mayor of Thebes, said of himself:

sḫnt.n nswt ḥr mnḫ-ỉb.f

ir.n iqrw.f st.f
Whom his majesty advanced because of his worth,
whose virtue made his position.
(*Urk.* IV 1428.8-9)

Here paired, *mnḫ-ib* and *iqrw* are much alike; indeed they were interchangeable, as when Iamunedjeh says of himself (*Urk.* IV 945.7):

sḫnt.n mnḫw.f st.f
whose virtue advanced his position.

A parallel modification of meaning occurred with *aretē*. It meant "goodness" or "excellence" of any kind of being until the Greek philosophers turned it into "virtue" i.e. the excellence of the human character.

IV. The intellectual virtues - intelligence and understanding, knowledge and foresight, alertness and competence, were highly valued. While not viewed as a separate category of virtue, they were yet often gathered in clusters in the autobiographic self-praises. As elsewhere, we can observe the growth of the vocabulary, until the fullness of the 12th dynasty is reached. Then follow the refinements made by New Kingdom writers.

1. Like the good moral character traits, the intellectual qualities were understood as innate dispositions which grew with age, training, and experience. The chief priest Wepwawet-aa, in the 12th dynasty, put it thus (Leiden V4; Sethe, *Les.* no.15a; Simpson, *Terrace*, ANOC 20.1; Lichtheim, *Autobiographies* no 31):

I assumed office as a youth,
I became priest at my time of *understanding*;
I quickened the pace under royal command,
I partook of praises.
The king gave to me as to one who makes growth,
I was born as one who understands and acts;
My heart advanced my position,
I conformed to the deeds of my fathers.
ir.n.i i;wt iw.i m nḫt
w'b.n.i r tr.i n s;;
ṯs.n.i nmtwt ḫr wḏ nswt
sm;.n.i m ḥsw.i

rdi.n n.i nswt m iw.f ꜥ.f
ms.n.t(w).i m sꜣ.f ir.f
in ib.i sḫnt st.i
sn.n.i r irt itw.i

2. In the partly destroyed self-presentation of the royal treasurer Seninofer there is a triple statement of capabilities, followed by a lacuna (*Urk.* IV 530.7-9):

sꜣr.n.i rḫ.n.i mnḫ.n.i
I was intelligent, I was knowing, I was competent.

3. The overseer of granaries Min-nakht from whose granite statue I cited the phrase "a noble person while still a youth without understanding" (see chap. 2), says in the same text that he was:

iqr sꜣrt mrrw ḥnmw n niwt.f
of excellent understanding, beloved of his townsmen
(*Urk.*IV 1183.3f.)
The compound *iqr sꜣrt* is also favored by Hepusonb
(*Urk.*IV 481.13).

4. Here is the ever so accomplished Ineni (*Urk.* IV 67.10-14):

nb sꜣrt iqr nḏwt-rꜥ
iqr ḏd ḥr-ib nswt
skm-ns rḫ sw m ḏdt
intelligent, excellent in counsel,
whom the king deemed excellent in speech,
hoary-tongued, who knows what to say.

5. Topping them all is the Intef of Louvre C26,who felt guided by his heart (see chap. 8) and tried to define the working of thought:

wꜥ sꜣ ꜥpr m rḫ
wḏꜣ n wn mꜣꜥ
rḫ wḫꜣ r rḫ
stnj ḥmww rdi sꜣ r ḫm
tꜣ-ib ꜥrq-ib wrt

w;ḥ-ib r sḏm
One thoughtful, equipped with knowledge,
truly sound,
who knows fool from knower,
honors the skilled, shuns the ignoramus;
one very alert and adroit,
and attentive to listen. (*Urk.* IV 969.16-970.6)

In sum, *s;;/s;rt* meant "intelligence-understanding-discernment", and from that threefold capability came "knowledge" (*rḫ, rḫ-ḫt*). That knowledge was indeed understood as the consequence of intelligence and understanding is made clear by the manner in which these qualities are brought together in the five statements just cited. Similarly, the "competences" were viewed as the products of understanding-and-knowledge.

Furthermore, the writers realised that, in addition to character traits producing "goodness" *(nfr)*, people possessed intellectual qualities headed by "intelligence and understanding" *(s;;/s;rt)*.

Lastly, a third class of virtues was perceived, those of the temperament. They were brought together under the notion of the "silent man" *(grw)*. He was self-controlled and calm. And, depending on his social status, he was modest and even submissive, or dignified. What modest behavior consisted of is amply described in the Instruction of Amenemope, especially in chapters 4, 5, 14, 18, 21-23, where modesty is often, not always, associated with piety. What may be the best early description of modesty is the opening quatrain of the "Instruction for Kagemni" fragment:

wḏ; snḏw
ḥs mty
wn ḫn n grw
wsḫ st nt hr[40]

Here is Simpson's translation in his *Literature* (1973):

The submissive man prospers,
the moderate man is praised,
the tent is open for the silent man

---

[40]Text in Gardiner, *JEA* 32, 1946, 71-74. See also the articles "Reden und Schweigen" by J. Assmann and "Schweiger" by E. Brunner-Traut in *LÄ* V, cols.195-201 & 759-762.

and the place of the contented man is wide.

I translate thus:

Safe is the meek one,
praised is the straight one;
the tent admits the silent one,
wide is the seat of the quiet one.

The two renderings are sufficiently alike to show that, together, the four adjectives *snḏw, mty, grw, hr* define "modesty." As for the "silent man" (*grw*), it is noteworthy that, whereas he plays a major role in the Instruction of Amenemope, he is not very conspicuous in the Autobiographies. He appeared as good listener and speaker in this chapter, ex. no.10, where his silence meant deliberateness, and in the self-presentation of the happy citizen Nufer (chap.6). Also in chap.6 he is the craftsman Karo (*KRI* VII.410ff.), a *grw m3ʿ nfr bỉt*. Essentially, the "silent man" is the "temperate man", the Greek *sophron*.

If we now set up a group of virtues which by their prominence in Egyptian texts appear as cardinal ones, I reckon it should be:

1. Family affection: Respect and love of parents, and solicitude for siblings and offspring.
2. Honesty and truthfulness in all circumstances.
3. Justice and fairness to all, this being the special concern of the public official.
4. Kindness and benevolence to one and all.
5. Loyalty and devotion.
6. Diligence and competence.
7. Moderation, including modesty, calm, and peacefulness.

All literary genres, Instructions, Autobiographies, Laments, Tales, and Mortuary texts, taught and exemplified the virtues and warned against the vices. And the single unchanging measuring rod was Maat, the Rightness which the gods upheld, and which it behooved men and women to implement in their daily lives and thereby to offer it to the gods.

As for vices and crimes, Egyptian knowledge of these was limited to the common ones. They rightly recognized greed as a comprehensive vice that fostered lying, stealing, cheating, and aggression. Altogether, they understood the destructive nature of immoral behavior, how it

undermined the bonds of the community, the welfare of the community being the main goal of all moral endeavor. What they lacked was our two-thousand year long experience with the human being's appallingly inventive and perverse capacity for evildoing.

In the 12th dynasty a person's autobiographic presentation of his virtues was at its most intensive and detailed. It bespeaks the writer's grasp of, and interest in, the workings of his moral and intellectual endowment; and the authors were evidently proud of their insights into human capabilities. The resulting self-laudations have absolutely nothing to do with "Idealbiographie" - a complete misnomer. The Egyptian had no idea what an "Ideal" was. To him all his thoughts, beliefs, and utterances were real. Moreover, the virtues which he ascribed to himself could very well have been present in all cases, because they are nothing more than ordinary decencies, the common virtues which all of us, you my colleagues and I, practice every day. None of us lie, steal, cheat, and curse. All of us try to be polite and kind to neighbors, friends, and strangers. All of us are loyal to our families and dedicated to our work. The notion "ideal" is an entirely useless one in the Egyptian context.

By the middle of the first millennium B.C. any high official, educated in the long tradition of the past, could outline his moral self-portrait effectively by a brief assemblage of the most pertinent virtues. Here is Wahibre-merneith on his Serapeum stela (SIM. 4112, Vercoutter, *Textes Biographiques* (1962) texte 0, pp.93ff; Lichtheim, *Maat*, no.95):

I am a worthy noble, a leader in the nomes,
One attentive *(w'ḥ-ib)* who knows the good,
successful, resourceful, weighty,
knowledgeable, who finds the missing word,
a solver of problems, discreet, dignified.
Who speaks the good, repeats the good,
does what his god praises,
does what his lord praises,
does what people love,
A man of right (*s m'ʿ*), beloved of all the gods.

Note how well this "man of right" integrated the intellectual virtues with the specifically moral ones.

10. WHAT KIND OF ETHIC ?

Eduard Schwartz began his lectures on *Ethik der Griechen* thus:

> "Wer sich mit hellenischer Ethik befassen will, muss zuallererst mit einem verbreiteten Irrtum brechen, der darin besteht, dass man das, was wir unter dem Namen "Sittlichkeit" zusammenfassen, aus einer religiösen Grundlage abzuleiten pflegt. In Wahrheit steht - für die alten Völker jedenfalls - die Ethik neben der Religion als etwas Selbständiges, und ihre Gültigkeit erstreckt sich auf Götter und Menschen gleichermassen. Will man ihr Wesen an der Wurzel fassen, dann muss man vom Zusammenleben der Menschen ausgehen. Ethik kann nur da entstehen, wo eine Mehrzahl von Menschen aufeinander angewiesen ist, wo eine Gemeinschaft besteht und der einzelne nicht tun und lassen kann, was er will."

Hugh Lloyd-Jones in *The Justice of Zeus* demurred mildly and claimed that, as early as the Iliad, the "Justice of Zeus" was the guiding concept of Greek ethics. That may be so, but it does not disprove that ethics and religion were, and are, two distinct avenues of thought. In classical scholarship the distinction seems to hold. But in egyptological studies the theological approach to Egyptian ethics was, and is, prominent. It produced an oddly tortured account of Egyptian ethics by H. Bonnet in his *Reallexikon* ("Ethik", pp. 173-177), e.g.:

> "Dass die äg. Gotter in ihrem Wesen nicht sittliche Mächte sind, braucht kaum unterstrichen zu werden. Es ist selbstverständlich; denn erst mit Jahwe trat die sittliche Gottesidee in die Welt."

Really?[41] Morenz, in chapter "Ethik" of his *Ägyptische Religion* granted "dass die Pflichten des einzelnen Ägypters wesentlich durch sein Verhältnis zur Gesellschaft und Mitwelt bedingt sind und dass folglich Ethik im Raume der allgemeinen Ordnung steht." Hence Maat was "kein expliziert vorliegendes Gottesgesetz." Yet in analysing the Egyptian's understanding of Maat, and his prayers for divine guidance, Morenz offered the conclusion: "Angesichts dessen möchte ich für die ägyp-

---

[41] Compare Volten, "Ägyptische Nemesis-Gedanken", p.371: "Es ist der schönste Zug in der ägyptischen Religion, dass das Göttliche immer als Hüter des Guten und Rechten aufgefasst worden ist."

tische Ethik neben das intellektuelle Erkennen durch Einsicht und Erfahrung das charismatische der Erleuchtung durch Gott setzen." (p.132). In the USA, however, J.H. Breasted, in his last book, *The Dawn of Conscience* (1933), placed himself firmly on Darwinian ground:

> "We are watching the higher aspects of an evolutionary process ... We are contemplating the emergence of a sense of moral responsibility as it was gradually assuming an increasing mandatory power over human conduct ... while the range of good conduct may at first have been confined to the family, it had in the Pyramid Age long since expanded to become a neighborhood or community matter." (p.123).

The one German scholar who wrote on Egyptian ethic without a monotheistic bias was E. Otto. I quote from his very good short book *Wesen und Wandel der ägyptischen Kultur* (1969):

> "In eine Betrachtung von Staat und Gesellschaft gehört auch ein Blick auf die Ethik. Denn diese ist nicht wie etwa die christliche Ethik primär an religiös fundierten absoluten Wertmassstäben orientiert, ja sie verbindet sich überhaupt nur zögernd und spät mit Religiösem. Ihre eigentlichen Fundamente beruhen auf einem die gesellschaftlichen Zustände erhaltenden, das geordnete menschliche Zusammenleben fordernden Verhalten; man könnte sie mit Recht eine Sozialethik nennen. Unsere Quellen sind einmal biographische Inschriften, sodann die sogenannten "Lehren". ... Für den einzelnen, der sie befolgt, verbürgen sie Erfolg und Ansehen. Freilich greift dieser Wesenszusammenhang ... tiefer. Hinter ihm steht die ja nicht nur in Ägypten existierende Anschauung, dass Erfolghaben die notwendige Konsequenz von Rechttun sei. ... Erst allmählich ... verinnerlicht sich der Inhalt der Lehren und tritt damit in ein positives Verhältnis zur Religion. ... War "Gott" in der älteren Zeit mehr der entfernte allgemeine Quell der Ordnung und ihr Hüter, so wird er immer stärker der unmittelbare Partner des Einzelnen." (pp.60-62).

The Partnership of morality and piety has been documented here especially in chapter 5. Thereafter, in outlining the moral thinking of the Theban elite in the Post-Imperial Epoch, we found an increased sense of the transitoriness and finiteness of human life. Moreover, in the course of the first millennium B.C., Egypt was strongly affected by foreign wars, foreign occupation, and foreign settlers. It is in this context that

the question, raised in chapter 1, "Was there a concept of 'Wisdom'?" can be answered.

The Brooklyn Papyrus discussed in chapter 8 has sayings on the contrasted pair "wise man/fool." But since they all occur in broken contexts I have not cited them. One fact, however, is to be noted. The term for "wise man" in P. Brooklyn is the Demotic lexeme *rmt-rḫ*. This means that the only sources currently available to us for studying the "wise man" concept are the two Demotic Instructions of Ankhsheshonqi and P. Insinger. Having discussed the concept at some length in my *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature*, I here focus briefly on the question whether the *rmt-rḫ* = "wise man" was, in fact, a wise man in any of the senses assembled in Aleida Assmann's volume *Weisheit* (1991).

Here are six examples of the "wise man/fool" pair in the Instruction of Ankhsheshonqi:

1) Do not send a fool *(lḫ)* in a great matter when there is a wise man *(rmt-rḫ)* whom you can send. (Ankhsh. 6/14)

2) If you consult three wise men about a matter, it will surely reach the great god. (Ankhsh. 8/6)

3) The good fortune of property is a wise woman *(sḥm.t rmt-rḫ.t)*. The good fortune of a wise man is his speech. (Ankhsh. 8/22-23)

4) A wise superior who consults, his house stands firm forever. (Ankhsh. 12/5)

5) A wise man is he who knows what goes on in his presence. (Ankhsh. 19/20)

6) A fool wanting to go with a wise man is a goose wanting to go with its slaughter knife. (Ankhsh. 22/12)

Clearly, this "wise man" is intelligent, competent, and prudent; and so is the "wise woman" (8/22, also 18/9). She is a sensible and prudent mistress of the house. Moreover, this wisdom is a social quality attained by learning and consulting. But it also discriminates: the wise man does not suffer fools gladly.

The "wise man" of P. Insinger is a very different type. He is a fully drawn moral person whose principal virtues are: Self-control *(twt)*. Shame and care *(špy, rwš)*. Patience and gentleness *(ʿw-n-ḥ.ʾt, gnn)*. Generosity *(wstn)*. And fear of god *(snte)*. Thus, the "wise man" *(rmt-rḫ)* is also the "man-of-god" *(rmt-ntr)*. His opposite is the "fool" *(lḫ, ḫne, rmt swg)* who also has a double in the shape of the "impious man" or "bad man" *(s.ʾb.ʾ, rmt bn)*.

The confrontation of pairs inevitably recalls the contrasted pairs in the book of Proverbs, where the *hakham/sadiq* is the opposite of the *ksil/raša'*, with that difference that the biblical pairs have even more alternates.

Here are the main features of P. Insinger's wise man:

1) The good quality *(p; sp nfr)* of the wise man is to gather without greed.

The great praise of the wise man is self-control in his manner of life. (Ins. 5/16-17)

2) Small wrath, shame, and care *(ḫm b' špy rwš)* that is the praise of the wise man . (Ins. 9/23)

3) It is a wise man's patience *('w n ḥ;ṯ)* to consult with the god. (Ins. 21/9)

4) Gentleness *(gnn)* in all behavior *(ḫn ;my.t nb)*, that is the praise of the wise man. (Ins. 22/8)

5) When a wise man is stripped, he gives his clothes and blesses. (Ins. 27/9)

6) The support of the man-of-god in misfortune is the god. (Ins. 19/12)

7) The man-of-god does not burn to injure, lest one burn against him. (Ins. 30/10)

But when a wise man is under the influence of passion, he loses his wisdom. And the worst case is the desire for vengeance, *p; tb;*. In the hands of the god, "vengeance" is divine retaliation. But in the hands of man it is wholly destructive of the community. All of the 25th Instruction deals with "retaliation." Here are three of the sayings:

> When it (retaliation) reaches a family, it leaves brothers as foes.
> When it reaches a town, it leaves strife among its people.
> When it reaches a wise man, he is left foolish, bad, and stupid.
> (Ins. 34/7.8.12)

Though I have here sketched P. Insinger's "wise man" very briefly, I trust he is sufficiently present to answer our next questions. Is the *rmt-rḫ* indeed the "wise man"? Or is he the "good man"? Or is he "der Kluge"? The entry *rḫ* in Erichsen's *Demotisches Glossar*, p.252, reads thus: *rḫ*, "wissen, können" ... *rmt-rḫ*, "Kluger Mann, Gelehrter." *rḫ.t* "die Kluge" ... *rḫ.w* "Wissen" o.ä. (Insinger) ...

K.-Th. Zauzich in his discussions of P. Insinger has consistently rendered *rmt-rḫ* as "der Kluge", e.g. in his article on P. Insinger in *LÄ* IV,

898f.: "Das zentrale Thema der Lebenslehre ist der Kontrast zwischen dem "klugen Mann" *(rmt-rḫ)* und dem Toren *(rmt swg)*."

Yet when one compares the *rmt-rḫ* of P. Insinger with that of Ankhsheshonqi, one observes a difference which suggests a range of meanings, one which accommodates, on the one hand, practical intelligence and prudence, and on the other, a thoughtful and pious morality. Adding it all up, I find that the rendering "wise man" for P. Insinger's *rmt-rḫ* can be justified with some qualification. We must take into account that the noun *rḫw*, "wisdom", appears only twice in P. Insinger, as follows:

1) If a wise man is not balanced (*rḫ* corrected to *mḫy* by Volten), his wisdom *(rḫw)* does not avail. (Ins. 4/19)
2) There is he who is satisfied by his fate, there is he who is satisfied by his wisdom *(rḫw)*. (Ins. 5/4)

The two sayings are observations on the functioning of a man's "wisdom"; they are not definitions of its meaning.

Nevertheless, P. Insinger's "wise man" is very much alike to the Stoic "sage." And that the author of P. Insinger made the contrast of wise man and fool his main theme suggests acquaintance with Stoic moral philosophy. The quality of "Klugheit" does not match the intellectual-and-moral stance of the Stoic sage and of P.Insinger's *rmt-rḫ*. But what the author of P. Insinger did not achieve was to fill out his term *rḫw* with content comparable to *sophia* or *hokhma*. Aleida Assmann's *Weisheit* volume richly documents those filling-out endeavors from classical Greece to modern times. But the essays in her volume on the pre-classical world cannot supply what was not there, what came into being only in the middle of the first millennium B.C., when Greek philosophers debated and exalted *sophia*, and when *hokhma* made her great missionary speech in Proverbs chapter 8.

One can, however, speak of "wisdom attitudes" in ancient Egypt, as Buccellati suggested to do for Mesopotamia. I would locate the Egyptian "wisdom attitude" primarily in certain autobiographic statements of high officials in the Late Period. My favorite candidate is Harwa, the high steward of the 'god's wife' Amenirdis. On his Cairo statue JE 36711 (from the Karnak cache, Gunn-Engelbach, *BIFAO 30*, no.2; Lichtheim, *Maat*, no.92) he declares:

I was greatly favored at the king's side,
foremost in the house of my lady.
I did not malign anyone to them,

nor harm an unfortunate man.

My heart taught me contentment,
it guided me to virtue;
I spoke truly, I acted justly,
for I knew of the day of arrival.

The second quatrain reads thus:

sbȝ.n wꜣ ib(.i) r hr
sšm.n.f wꜣ r mnḫ-ib
ḏd.n(.i) m mȝʿ ỉr.n(.i) m mȝʿ
ỉw.ỉ rḫ.kwꜣ m hrw spr

To offer this declaration as a sample of the wisdom attitude is to propose that, to the educated and mature Egyptian, virtue brought contentment, and his knowledge that this was so is a knowledge that *we* may call "wisdom."

Understood as being rooted in human nature, grown to maturity during three millennia of recorded practice and discussion, Egyptian ethic possessed an essential rightness because it focused on the basic fact of human interconnectedness, and on the need to make that interconnectedness benefit all segments of the population.

Women, while not completely equal, held civil rights which women in modern societies attained only recently, and which are still lacking in many parts of today's world. Marriage was a private contract which either party could dissolve.

Altruism advanced early beyond the reciprocity principle of *do ut des* by emphasizing the obligation of everyman to care for the poor and disadvantaged, and, altogether, by stressing benevolence toward all.

Even in the "empire" period there was no glorification of military virtue, and there was no worship of heroes. Bravery was mentioned occasionally in the context of loyalty to the king as military leader.

The goods of life were goods of peace and of communal amity. They consisted of a modicum of possessions, an occupation that brought satisfaction along with an income, a good family, a long life in good health and good repute, and provisions for a good burial.

Gradually, belief in a last judgment, and piety, became closely associated with moral thought. The gods came to be viewed as benevolent

creators of all life and benefactors of all mankind. Yet they remained distant and silent. Only in dreams, and rarely, did they appear and gave counsel. And only in literary tales did they talk - to each other.

When moral thought became formulated, it took the forms of Teachings and Autobiographies. Its central teaching was knowledge of, and adherence to, Maat, the Right Order of all life, which the gods maintained, and which it behooved men and women to implement in their lives for the benefit of family and community.

In the company of Breasted and Otto, I hold that the ethic of ancient Egypt was an autonomous and social ethic, one that did not claim to derive from divine command, nor from indirect divine inspiration. The partnership which moral thought forged with religious thought consisted of individuals praying to gods, and to sanctified middlemen, for guidance and support.

The increasingly sophisticated outlook on human affairs which evolved in the second and first millennia came to include foreign nations as peoples equally human, and partners in the adventures of individual and national existence. The gods above were thought of as shepherds of all mankind; shepherds, not teachers.

Except for the final centuries under Greco-Roman rule, which led to a complete break with the past, Egyptian moral thought was guided by a positive outlook on the human condition. The understanding of morality as an innate good disposition, fostered by education and experience, was part and parcel of an optimistic view of life. Existence was governed by an overall Right Order, and life was the greatest good.

By the formulation of Coffin Text spell 1130, where the sun-god declares "I made every man like his fellow", and by later formulations as well, the Egyptian made explicit what was implied in his ever repeated teachings on benevolence to all. He recognized the brotherhood of mankind. By this recognition his ethic was an ethic for everyone.

It is remarkable that, even as late as the Greco-Roman period, when anxiety and a search for salvation were spreading, the ancient values not only continued to be taught, but appeared now also as specific commands to the priesthoods, inscribed at temple entrances. I cite from the version of the Horus temple of Edfu, as rendered by Dieter Kurth in his interesting monograph, *Treffpunkt der Götter* (1994) pp.141ff.:

"Tretet nicht ein mit Bösem!
Geht nicht hinein mit Schmutz!
Sagt keine Lüge in seinem Haus,
Lasst es an nichts mangeln!

Seid nicht verleumderisch,
Setzt nicht Abgaben zu Nachteil des Kleinen,
Vorteil des Grossen!
...
Schädigt nicht die niederen Priester,
und die Menschen in Stadt und Land!
Geht nicht hastig, redet nicht viel und laut,
schwört nicht falsch, trinkt nicht!
...

* * *

Now whereas in Egypt and elsewhere in the ancient Middle East the peoples were losing their confidence in the goodness of life, in China there arose Confucius (551-479) and taught an ethic which, as recorded by his followers and elaborated by his successors, was wholly pragmatic, rational, and humane. Here is a piece of his central teachings in the rendering of David L. Hall & Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (1987) p.122:

"Tzu-chang asked Confucius about authoritative humanity. Confucius replied, 'A person who is able to promote the five attitudes in the world can be considered authoritative.' 'What are these?' Tzu-chang asked. Confucius replied: 'Respect, Tolerance, Living-up to one's word, Diligence, and Generosity.'"

* * *

An ethic that does not claim to derive from divine command, and is articulate and advanced, is a good example of Darwinian evolution. In so defining ancient Egyptian morality, I have been guided by four major works:

Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression (1963).
Robert J. Richards, Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior (1987 & 1989).
Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self (1989).
Stephen Jay Gould, Wonderful Life; the Burgess Shale and the Nature of History (1989).

In *The Descent of Man* (1871) Darwin insisted that the moral sense be considered a species of social instinct, social instincts being the bonds that formed animal groups into social wholes. The principal

mechanism of their evolution was community selection, that kind of natural selection that welded a society together. Community selection worked most effectively among the social insects. But it was in evidence among all socially dependent animals, including that socially most advanced creature, man.

What began as crude instinct would become a moral motive under the guidance of intelligent decision. As the moral sense evolved, so did a distinctively human creature. The moral sense became a set of innate dispositions that moved the individual to act for the good of the community. Rational deliberation discovered what leads to communal welfare. *Darwinism stipulates that community welfare is the highest moral good.*

Human beings form intentions to act for reasons. An action is good only if performed from a certain kind of motive. This means that persons have authentic moral choices. Aristotle believed that men were by nature moral creatures. Kant worked out the rationale of this belief. Darwin demonstrated it.

To the objection that evolution has also given aggressive urges to man, which are detrimental to the good of the community, there are several answers. One is that some persons are born morally deficient. Others point to a bad environment and to ideologies that preach hatred toward certain groups. Even so, man is not the slave of his aggressive drive. Altogether, my chosen authors are fairly hopeful. I quote Charles Taylor on his page 448:

> "But the position which affirms the goodness of nature isn't a marginal one. It has all the depth in our civilisation of the combined weight of Christianity and Platonism. It is the basis of the most widespread secular ethics and political views, those which descend from the Enlightenment as well as those in full continuity with the original Romantics. And it is the necessary basis for a family of life goods which is widely recognized in our civilisation, those related to benevolence. ... In other words, it becomes possible for us to see a crisis of affirmation as something which we may have to meet through a transfiguration of our own vision, rather than simply through a recognition of some objective order of goodness. ... Put in yet other terms, the world's being good may now be seen as not entirely independent of our seeing it and showing it as good, at least as far as the world of humans is concerned. The key to a recovery from the crisis may thus consist in our being able to 'see that it is good'."

Now here is Stephen Jay Gould,*Wonderful Life*, pp.319ff. on the origin of *Homo Sapiens*:

"The usual scenario holds that attainment of upright posture freed the hands for using tools and weapons, and feedback from the behavioral possibilities thus provided spurred the evolution of a larger brain. But I believe that most of us labor under a false impression about the pattern of human evolution. We view our rise as a kind of global process encompassing all members of the human lineage ... In an alternate view ... Homo sapiens arose as an evolutionary item, a definite entity, a small and coherent population that split off from a lineage of ancestors in Africa. ... we are an improbable and fragile entity, fortunately successful after precarious beginnings ... not the predictable end result of a global tendency. We are a thing, an item of history, not an embodiment of general principles. ... We are the offspring of history, and must establish our own paths in this most diverse and interesting of conceivable universes - one indifferent to our suffering, and therefore offering us maximal freedom to thrive, or to fail, in our chosen way."

* * *

The poets, by their imaginative thoughts, put markers on our chosen ways:

Brau uns den Zauber, in dem die Grenzen sich lösen,
immer zum Feuer gebeugter Geist!
Diese, vor allem, heimliche Grenze des Bösen,
die auch den Ruhenden, der sich nicht rührte, umkreist.

Löse mit einigen Tropfen das Engende jener
Grenze der Zeiten, die uns belügt;
denn wie tief ist in uns noch der Tag der Athener
und der ägyptische Gott oder Vogel gefügt.

R.M. Rilke (1922)

Slowly, slowly wisdom gathers:
Golden dust in the afternoon,
Somewhere between the sun and me,
Sometimes so near that I can see,
Yet never settling, late or soon.

Would that it did, and a rug of gold
Spread west of me a mile or more:
Not large, but so that I might lie
Face up, between the earth and sky,
And know what none has known before.

Then I would tell as best I could
The secrets of that shining place:
The web of the world, how thick, how thin,
How firm, with all things folded in;
How ancient, and how full of grace."

Mark Van Doren (1969)

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. COLLECTIONS, JOURNALS, SERIES, ETC.

ÄA	Ägyptologische Abhandlungen
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
BAR	Breasted J.H., Ancient Records of Egypt. 5 v. Chicago 1906-1907.
BD	Book of the Dead
BIFAO	Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale
BM	British Museum
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CG	Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire
GM	Göttinger Miszellen
HTBM	Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae etc. (in the) British Museum
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
KRI	Kitchen K.A., Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical. 8v. Oxford 1975-1990.
LÄ	Lexikon der Ägyptologie
MDAIK	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo
MMA	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
P. Prisse	*see* Žába Z., Les maximes de Ptaḥḥotep.
RB	Revue Biblique
RdE	Revue d'Égyptologie
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, Chicago
SPOA	Les Sagesses du Proche Orient Ancien, Colloque de Strasbourg 1962. Paris 1963.
TPPI	Textes de la première période intermédiaire, 1er fascicule, ed J.J. Clère & J. Vandier. (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca, X) Bruxelles 1948.
TT	Theban Tombs

TUAT	Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments
UGAÄ	Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ägyptens
Urk. I, IV, VII	Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums. Abteilung I; Abteilung IV; Abteilung VII.
Wb.	Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, ed. A. Erman & H. Grapow
WdO	Welt des Orients
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZÄS	Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde

II. WORKS CITED

Ancient Egypt, a Social History. (By) B.G. Trigger, B.J. Kemp, D. O'Connor and A.B. Lloyd. Cambridge 1983.

Anthes R., Die Felseninschriften von Hatnub. (UGAÄ, 9). Leipzig 1928, repr. Hildesheim 1964.

Assmann A. ed., Weisheit. (Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation, III) München 1991.

Assmann J., Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete. (Die Bibliothek der alten Welt). Zürich & München 1975.

- "Reden und Schweigen", LÄ V, 195-201.
- Ma'at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im alten Ägypten. München 1990, ^{2}1995.
- Stein und Zeit. Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten. München 1991.
- "Weisheit, Schrift und Literatur", in A. Assmann ed., Weisheit, pp.475-500.
- "Zur Geschichte des Herzens im alten Ägypten", in J. Assmann ed., Die Erfindung des inneren Menschen: Studien zur religiösen Anthropologie. (Studien zum Verstehen fremder Religionen, Bd. 6) Gütersloh 1993, pp.81-113.
- "Glück und Weisheit im alten Ägypten", in A. Bellebaum ed., Vom guten Leben. Glücksvorstellungen in Hochkulturen. Berlin 1994, pp. 17-54.
- "Die Unschuld des Kindes", in Stricker Fs, pp.19-25.
- & Burkard G. eds., 5000 Jahre Ägypten. Genese und Permanenz pharaonischer Kunst. [Heidelberg 1983].

Audet J.P., "La sagesse de Ménandre l'Égyptien", RB 59(1952), 55-81.

Barns J.W.B., Five Ramesseum Papyri. Oxford 1956.

Bickel S. & Mathieu B., "L'écrivain Amennakht et son enseignement", BIFAO 93(1993), 31-51.

Bierbrier M.L., The Late New Kingdom in Egypt (c. 1300-664 B.C.). Warminster 1975.

Blumenthal E., "Lehre Amenemhets I.", LÄ III, 968-971.

- "Neferti, Prophezeiung des", LÄ IV, 380-381.
- "Die Erzählung des Sinuhe", in TUAT III/5: Mythen und Epen III. Gütersloh 1995, pp. 884-911.

Bonnet H., Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte. Berlin 1952.

Bottéro J., Mesopotamia. Chicago 1992.
Breasted J.H., The Dawn of Conscience. New York 1933.
Brunner H., "Herz", LÄ II, 1158-1168.
- Altägyptische Weisheit. Lehren für das Leben. (Die Bibliothek der alten Welt) Zürich & München 1988.
Brunner-Traut E., "Schweiger", LÄ V, 759-762.
Buccellati G., "Wisdom and Not", JAOS 101(1981) 35-47.
Buchberger H., Transformation und Transformat. Sargtextstudien I (ÄA, 52) Wiesbaden 1993.
Burkard G., "Die Lehre des Ptahhotep", in TUAT III/2: Weisheitstexte II. Gütersloh 1991, pp.195-221.

Černý J., Late Ramesside Letters. (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca, IX) Bruxelles 1939.
- & Gardiner A.H., Hieratic Ostraca, I. Oxford 1957.

Davies N. de G., "Tehuti: Owner of Tomb 110 at Thebes", in Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith. London 1932, pp.279-290.
- The Tomb of Antefoker. Vizier of Sesostris I, and of his Wife Senet (No. 60). With a Chapter by Alan H. Gardiner. (The Theban Tomb Series, 2) London 1920.
Donadoni S. ed., Der Mensch des alten Ägypten. Frankfurt/Main 1992.
Dunham D., Naga-ed-Dêr Stelae of the First Intermediate Period. London 1937.

Edel E., Untersuchungen zur Phraseologie der ägyptischen Inschriften des Alten Reiches. (MDAIK 13/1) Berlin 1944.
- Hieroglyphische Inschriften des Alten Reiches. (Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 67) Opladen 1981.
- Die Inschriften der Grabfronten der Siut-Gräber in Mittelägypten aus der Herakleopolitenzeit. (Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 71) Opladen 1984.
Edwards I.E.S., "Lord Dufferin's Excavations at Deir el-Baḥri and the Clandeboye Collection", JEA 51(1965) 16-28.
Erichsen W., Demotisches Glossar. Kopenhagen 1954.

Faulkner R.O., "The Stela of Rudj'aḥau", JEA 37(1951), 47-52.
- "The Man Who Was Tired of Life", JEA 42(1956), 21-40.

- A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian. Oxford 1962.
- "Notes on 'The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage'", JEA 50 (1964), 24-36.
- "The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage", JEA 51(1965), 53-62.

Fischer H.G., "A Scribe of the Army in a Saqqara Mastaba of the Early Fifth Dynasty", JNES 18(1959), 233-272.
- The Orientation of Hieroglyphs. Part I: Reversals. New York 1977.

Fischer-Elfert H.-W., Literarische Ostraka der Ramessidenzeit in Übersetzung. (Kleine ägyptische Texte) Wiesbaden 1986.
Frankfort H., Ancient Egyptian Religion. New York 1948.

Gardiner A.H., The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage, from a Hieratic Papyrus in Leiden. Leipzig 1909, repr. Hildesheim 1969.
- Late-Egyptian Stories. (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca, I) Bruxelles 1932.
- Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum. Third Series: Chester Beatty Gift. 2v. London 1935.
- Late-Egyptian Miscellanies. (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca, VII) Bruxelles 1937.
- "The Coronation of King Ḥaremḥab", JEA 39(1953) 13-31.
& Sethe K., Egyptian Letters to the Dead Mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms, London 1928.

Gould S.J., Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History. New York 1989.
Griffith Studies *see* Studies Presented to F.Ll. Griffith.
Gunn B., Studies in Egyptian Syntax, Paris 1924.
- & Engelbach R., "The Statues of Harwa", BIFAO 30/3 (1931), 791-815.

Hall D.L. & Ames R.T., Thinking through Confucius. New York 1987.
Helck W., Die Lehre für Merikare. (Kleine ägyptische Texte) Wiesbaden 1977.
- Fortschritt und Reaktion. Innenpolitische Gegensätze im alten Ägypten. (Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Jahrgang 1, Heft 2) Hamburg 1983.
- "Menschenbild", LÄ IV, 55-64.
- Politische Gegensätze im alten Ägypten. Ein Versuch. (Hildesheimer ägyptologische Beiträge, 23) Hildesheim 1986.

Hornung E., Ägyptische Unterweltsbücher. (Die Bibliothek der alten Welt) Zürich & München 1972, ^{3}1989.

Hughes G.R., Saite Demotic Land Leases. (SAOC, 28) Chicago 1952.

Jacobsen Th., The Treasures of Darkness, a History of Mesopotamian Religion. New Haven 1976.
Janssen J., De Traditioneele Egyptische Autobiografie voor het Nieuwe Rijk. 2v. Leiden 1946.
Jansen-Winkeln K., Ägyptische Biographien der 22. und 23. Dynastie. 2v. (ÄAT, 8/1-2) Wiesbaden 1985.
Jasnow R., A Late Period Hieratic Wisdom Text (P. Brooklyn 47.218.135). (SAOC, 52) Chicago 1992.

Kaplony P., Studien zum Grab des Methethi. (Monographien der Abegg-Stiftung Bern, 8) Bern 1976.
Kees H., Ägypten. (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, III.1.3.1: Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orients, 1) München 1933.
Kemp B.J., Ancient Egypt, Anatomy of a Civilization. London 1989.
Kitchen K.A., Ramesside Inscriptions *see under* KRI.
- The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 BC). Warminster 1973, ^{2}1986.
Kurth D., Treffpunkt der Götter. Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu. (Die Bibliothek der alten Welt) Zürich & München 1994.
Lacau P., Stèles du Nouvel Empire. Tome premier, premier fascicule (Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, Vol. XLV) Le Caire 1909.
Lange H.O., Das Weisheitsbuch des Amenemope aus dem Papyrus 10.474 des British Museum. Copenhagen 1925.
- & Schäfer H., Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reiches im Museum von Kairo. v.1-2.4. (Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire) Berlin 1902-1925.
Leclant J., "Documents nouveaux et points de vue récents sur les sagesses de l'Egypte ancienne", SPOA, pp.5-26.
Lefebvre G., Le tombeau de Petosiris. 3v. Cairo 1923-1924.
- Romans et contes égyptiens de l'époque pharaonique. Paris 1949.
Legrain G., Statues et statuettes de rois et de particuliers. 3v. (Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire) Le Caire 1906-1914.
Lichtheim M., Ancient Egyptian Literature. 3v. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London 1973-1980.
- Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context.

A Study of Demotic Instructions. (OBO, 52) Freiburg Schweiz & Göttingen 1983.
- Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies chiefly of the Middle Kingdom. (OBO, 84) Freiburg Schweiz & Göttingen 1988.
- Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies. (OBO, 120) Freiburg Schweiz & Göttingen 1992.

Liddell H.G. & Scott R., A Greek-English Lexicon. New York ^{7}1883.

Lloyd A.B., "The Late Period", in: Ancient Egypt (1983) pp. 279-348.

Lloyd-Jones H., The Justice of Zeus. (Sather Classical Lectures, 41) Berkeley & Los Angeles 1971.

Lorenz K., On Aggression. New York 1966.

Martin G.T., The Hidden Tombs of Memphis. New Discoveries from the Time of Tutankhamun and Ramesses the Great. London 1991.

Morenz S., Ägyptische Religion. (Die Religionen der Menschheit, 8) Stuttgart 1960.

Müller W.M., Die Liebespoesie der alten Ägypter. Leipzig 1899.

Norden E., Die antike Kunstprosa. Leipzig 1898. ^{5}1958.

O'Connor D., "New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, 1552-664 B.C.", in *Ancient Egypt*, pp. 183-278.

Oppenheim A.L., Ancient Mesopotamia, Portrait of a Dead Civilisation. Chicago 1964.

Otto E., Wesen und Wandel der ägyptischen Kultur. Berlin 1969.

Parkinson R.B., The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, Oxford 1991.

Plantikow-Münster M., "Die Inschrift des B3k-n-ḫnsw in München", ZÄS 95(1969) 117-135.

Posener G., "L'Exorde de l'instruction éducative d'Amennakhte", RdE 10 (1955) 61-72.
- Littérature et politique dans l'Egypte de la XIIe dynastie. (Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, 307) Paris 1956.
- L'Enseignement loyaliste, sagesse égyptienne du Moyen Empire. Genève 1976.
- "Lehre für Merikare", LÄ III, 986-989.

Quack J.F., Studien zur Lehre für Merikare. (Göttinger Orient-forschungen IV. Reihe: Ägypten, Bd. 23) Wiesbaden 1992.
- "Ein neuer ägyptischer Weisheitstext", WdO 24(1993) 5-19.

- Die Lehren des Ani. Ein neuägyptischer Weisheitstext in seinem kulturellen Umfeld. (OBO, 141) Freiburg Schweiz & Göttingen 1994.

Richards, R.J., Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior. Chicago 1987, ^{2}1989.

Rendtorff Fs: Die hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte. Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. E. Blum, C. Macholz & E.W. Stegemann. Neukirchen-Vluyn 1990.

Roccati A., La littérature historique sous l'ancien empire égyptien. (Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient, 11) Paris 1982.

Schenkel W., Memphis Herakleopolis Theben. Die epigraphischen Zeugnisse der 7.-11. Dynastie Ägyptens. (ÄA, 12) Wiesbaden 1965.

Schmid H.H., Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit. (BZAW, 101) Berlin 1966.

Schott S., Altägyptische Liebeslieder. (Die Bibliothek der alten Welt) Zürich 1950.

Schwartz E., Die Ethik der Griechen, ed. W. Richter. Stuttgart 1951.

Sethe K., Ägyptische Lesestücke zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht. Texte des Mittleren Reiches. Leipzig 1924 (& reprints)

- Erläuterungen zu den Ägyptischen Lesestücken. Leipzig 1927 (& reprints).

Shirun-Grumach I., "A Late Period Hieratic Wisdom Text", Bibliotheca Orientalis 53(1996) 409-412.

Shupak N., Where can Wisdom be found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature. (OBO, 130) Fribourg & Göttingen 1993.

Simpson W.K. ed., The Literature of Ancient Egypt. An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry. New Haven 1972, ^{2}1973.

- The Terrace of the Great God at Abydos: The Offering Chapels of Dynasties 12 and 13. (Publications of the Pennsylvania-Yale Expedition to Egypt, 5) New Haven & Philadelphia 1974.

Stewart H.M., Egyptian Stelae, Reliefs, and Paintings from the Petrie Collection. 3v. Warminster 1976-1983.

Stock H., "*Nṯr nfr* = der gute Gott?" Vorträge der orientalischen Tagung in Marburg, Fachgruppe Ägyptologie, 1950. Hildesheim 1951.

Stricker Fs: Hermes Aegyptiacus, Egyptological Studies for B.H. Stricker on his 85th Birthday, ed. T. DuQuesne. (Discussions in Egyptology, Special Number, 2) Oxford 1995.
Studies Presented to F.Ll. Griffith. London 1932.

Taylor Ch., Sources of the Self. Cambridge 1989.
Thomas Mann Jahrbuch, Band 6. Frankfurt/Main 1993.

Van den Boorn G.P.F., The Duties of the Vizier. Civil Administration in the Early New Kingdom. (Studies in Egyptology) London & New York 1988.
Vercoutter J., Textes biographiques du Sérapéum de Memphis. Paris 1962.
Vernus P., Essai sur la conscience de l'histoire dans l'Egypte pharaonique. (Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques, 332) Paris 1995.
Vogelsang F. & Gardiner A.H., Die Klagen des Bauern. (Hieratische Papyrus aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin, 4) Leipzig 1908, reprint 1970.
Volten A., "Ägyptische Nemesis-Gedanken", in Miscellanea Gregoriana, Roma 1941, pp. 371-379.

Waddell H., Mediaevel Latin Lyrics. London 1929 & reprints.
Wehrli F., Hauptrichtungen des griechischen Denkens. Zürich & Stuttgart 1964.
Williams R.J., "The Sages of Egypt in the Light of Recent Scholarship", JAOS 101(1981) 1-19.
Žába Z., Les maximes de Ptaḥḥotep. Prague 1956.
Zauzich K.-Th., "Pap. Dem. Insinger", LÄ IV, 898-899.

III. SOME STUDIES OF EGYPTIAN ETHICS THAT I HAVE NOT CITED

Anthes R., Lebensregeln und Lebensweisheit der alten Ägypter. (Der Alte Orient, Bd. 32/2) Leipzig 1933.

Brunner H., Altägyptische Erziehung. Wiesbaden 1957, ^{2}1991.

Couroyer B., "Le chemin de vie en Egypte et en Israël", RB 56(1949) 412-432.

Daumas F., "La naissance de l'humanisme dans la littérature de l'Egypte ancienne", Oriens Antiquus 1(1962) 155-184.

Fox M.V., "Two Decades of Research in Egyptian Wisdom Literature", ZÄS 107(1980) 120-135.

Otto E., "Ethik", LÄ II, 34-39.

MIRIAM LICHTHEIM
IN THE SERIES «ORBIS BIBLICUS ET ORIENTALIS»

MIRIAM LICHTHEIM: *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context.* A Study of Demotic Instructions (OBO 52) 1983.

«On ne peut être qu'en admiration devant les traductions présentées, surtout quand on connaît les difficultés du texte démotique. D'autre part, la très grande culture de M. L. nous aide à mieux comprendre l'importance de la sagesse dans les différents contextes culturels de l'Egypte tardive.»
R. Beaud, Revue Biblique

«Studies like these shed light on the larger critical question of the affinity other biblical books may have had with their respective environments. By eschewing 'parallelomania,' they encourage similar investigations of other ancient Near Eastern materials.»
J. A. Gladson, Journal of Biblical Literature

MIRIAM LICHTHEIM: *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies chiefly of the Middle Kingdom.* A Study and an Anthology (OBO 84) 1988

«Es ist Miriam Lichtheim gelungen, nicht allein ein bisher einmaliges corpus der autobiographischen Inschriften vorzulegen, sondern damit gleich ein Stück ägyptischer Literatur-, Stil-, und Religionsgeschichte zu schreiben, das in seiner Prägnanz und Dichte dem hohen Stil angemessen ist, der dieser Gattung seit der Zeit der 11. Dynastie eigen war.»
O. Kaiser, Zeitschriften für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

«Apart from the abundance of material contained herein, the book also offers much food for thought and insights that perhaps only a scholar of the calibre of Dr. Lichtheim, with her wealth of experience, could offer. For all this, the field of Egyptology is forever in her debt.»
R. J. Leprohon, Journal of Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities

MIRIAM LICHTHEIM: *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies* (OBO 120) 1992

«This neat volume is a refreshingly original study of the famous Egyptian term and concept maat (truth/justice/right order). In ch. 1, instead of the usual generalizations, L. holds closely to the actual inscriptional evidence left to us by ancient Egyptian officials, showing (with copious quotations) very clearly the historical evolution of the real content of maat epoch by epoch, from the Fifth Dynasty (mid-3rd millennium BC) to Ptolemaic times.»
K. A. Kitchen, The Society for Old Testament Study

Summary

In ten chapters the author works out the ancient Egyptian's understanding of himself as a moral human being. As soon as the literate person had begun to sum up his life and his personality in the form of an «autobiography» inscribed in his tomb, he included in it statements on his moral personhood. In the course of the centuries these statements grew into rounded self-portraits in which he reported on his doing what he recognized as right actions and his shunning what he judged to be evildoing. He understood his knowledge of right and wrong as an innate capability which was articulated by himself as a thinking person, an «I». Altogether, he thought of himself as a person shaped by innate traits which were fostered by growth, education, and experience. The process of moral growth he viewed as a learning process in which parents and teachers exemplified moral precepts which he, the thinking person, worked out in his daily life. The Egyptian viewed his gods as ultimate judges of people's moral actions; but he did not ascribe a teaching function to the gods. An intense lover of life, he felt sure that rightdoing brought success and happiness, whereas evildoing was bound to bring failure. His moral thought added up to a social ethic which encompassed all members of society. Family, friends, neighbors, village and town, the nation as a whole and foreign peoples too – one and the same rules of rightdoing applied to all. Fair-dealing and benevolence were viewed as the leading virtues; greed was deemed the most pernicious vice. In sum, the ancient Egyptian recognized the brotherhood of mankind.