

agony of struggle to dwell long in reflection upon objective wisdom. But the Book of Ecclesiastes is wholly of this third stage of wisdom, and objectifies not only wisdom, but also all the course and varied circumstances of human life, and submits them to this process of after-thought or reflection.

The entire wisdom of the Hebrews may thus be compactly classified as in-thought, forethought and after-thought, all born out of the practical experience of life, out of its joys and sorrows, and hence, as we have seen, closely allied to the poetical language of its religious emotions.

The wisdom of the Hebrews has often been compared with the philosophy of the Indo-European nations. Some have held that the Hebrew wisdom deserved to rank high as a form of philosophy; others are disposed to deny it all right to the name. Philosophy is either a subject-matter of truth, or it is a peculiar method of investigating truth. As to subject-matter, philosophy, in the broadest sense, deals with questions of ontology, ethics, æsthetics, physics or mathematics. The three latter classes of subject-matter are not expressly treated, and yet all through these books of wisdom there lie passages which show us that the thoughts of the authors were directed to physics and æsthetics, as well as to the more strictly moral and spiritual. The laws of storms and the course of lightning were regarded by Job as something fixed and certain, not a mere chance. The great problems of ontology were largely answered already by the Hebrew faith. This vivid apprehension of the personality of God excluded all approach of pantheistic or materialistic speculation, such as often prevailed in both East and West. But the whole tenor of their wisdom is pervaded by the clearest theistic conception of the universe. That the matter of their discourse is largely ethical is too patent to be denied. So far as subject-matter is concerned, then, the Hebrew wisdom has a claim to a place in the highest departments of philosophy, and it is quite probable that they embraced the remaining departments as well, though these have not been specifically included in a religious literature.

But philosophy embraces a method as well as a subject-matter. The processes of human thought may be described as threefold: