The Oxford Hebrew Bible:
Its Aims and a Response to Criticisms

Ronald Hendel
University of California, Berkeley

For Frank Moore Cross

זוכרו לברכה

The difficulty is one which lies in the nature of the case, and is inevitable; and the only way to surmount it is just to be a critic.

– A. E. Housman

The Aim of the Critical Text

The most distinctive feature of the Oxford Hebrew Bible project is its production of critical texts of the biblical books. This is the ordinary procedure for critical editions of other ancient books, such as the New Testament and the Greek and Latin classics, but is not the norm in textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. The other ongoing editorial projects are diplomatic

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editions, which present a particular manuscript (L for BHQ; A for HUB) with accompanying apparatus(es). In its apparatus the BHQ offers judgments on the preferred reading, while the HUB refrains from textual judgment. The OHB, in contrast, is an eclectic edition, which presents a critical text that is constructed by the textual judgments of the editors. The method is eclectic, drawing together the best readings from many manuscripts and, where warranted, conjectural readings. In the diplomatic editions, the reader is implicitly invited to construct a “virtual” critical text. The OHB constructs an actual critical text. As Paul Maas states in his guide to textual criticism, this is the classical aim of the discipline: “The business of textual criticism is to produce a text as close as possible to the original (constitutio textus).”3

As we will see, the business of textual criticism includes more than the constitution of a critical text, but this is an important feature of the discipline. Even if some editorial projects reject this goal, as do the BHQ and HUB, they must explain why they do so, and the resulting arguments can be evaluated and contested by other textual critics. The idea of a critical text is at the center of textual criticism, even if this idea is held to be impossible or undesirable.

The OHB takes a particular position on the concept of a critical text, which will clarify the nature of our project. Our critical texts aim to approximate the corrected archetype of each biblical book. The critical texts will also approximate the corrected hyparchetype(s) of each subsequent edition of that book. Instances of multiple editions will usually be presented in parallel columns. Where the archetype cannot be plausibly ascertained for a given book, the critical text will present one or more corrected hyparchetypes of proto-M, proto-G, or other textual families.4

This aim requires a clear understanding of the text-critical categories archetype, hyparchetype, and edition, and their relationship to the original of a biblical book. The procedures of the OHB are predicated on the details and implications of these concepts.

The archetype of a book, according to Sebastiano Timpanaro’s lucid definition, is:

a manuscript – even if it is later than the author by many centuries, even if it has been
preserved by chance and is devoid of any “official” quality or authority, even if it is
disfigured by errors or lacunas – from which all the others are derived.5

This manuscript is, as Michael Reeve states, the “latest common ancestor” of the extant
manuscripts.6 Occasionally this ancestral manuscript itself is extant, as is the case of Josephus,
Contra Apionem, for which an eleventh century Greek manuscript is the archetype of all the
other Greek manuscripts.7 However, it is usually the case for ancient books that the archetype
has been lost.

The archetype of a book is not the original text, but is, in E. R. Kenney’s description, the
“earliest inferable state of the text.”8 On the basis of the variant manuscripts, one can infer a
textual state (viz. a manuscript) that is their latest common ancestor. It is important to note that
the archetype may be many steps removed from the earliest common ancestor, which we may,
with some qualifications (see below), call the original. However, it may be identical with the
original in many, most, or all details. In cases (such as the Hebrew Bible) where we lack the
autographs of the books, we cannot know whether or to what degree the archetype is identical to
the original.

5 Sebastiano Timpanaro, The Genesis of Lachmann’s Method (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 2005), 50.
6 Michael D. Reeve, “Archetypes,” in idem, Manuscripts and Methods: Essays on Editing and
Transmission (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2011), 118.
7 Heinz Schreckenberg, “Text, Überlieferung und Textkritik von Contra Apionem,” in Josephus’
Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context (eds. L. H. Feldman and J. R. Levison;
Leiden: Brill, 1996), 62. The archetype is ms. Laurentianus 69,22. The later manuscripts have
the same lacuna in 2.51-113 and other shared Leitfehler.
18.192; accessed 7-8-12 at http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/589489/textual-
criticism.
The archetype and the original are distinguishable in terms of history and epistemology (viz. what we can know about them). In historical terms, the original is the oldest common ancestor and the archetype is the latest common ancestor. There may have been some or many changes in a book’s textual state during its transmission between these two points. There is also a crucial epistemological distinction. We cannot know the original because we lack access to it. But we can know the archetype, because it is inferable (by definition) through careful analysis of the existing manuscripts. Since our inferences are often fallible, in a practical sense we can only hope to approximate the archetype. We cannot plausibly claim to reconstruct all of its details perfectly. A careful distinction between the archetype and the original is a necessary condition for a critical edition of the Hebrew Bible.

A further qualification is necessary to clarify the aim of our (or any) critical text. The archetype will contain scribal errors that can sometimes be detected and corrected. For instance, distinctive scribal errors that are in all the manuscripts derive from the archetype. If we can discern these errors, we are obliged as textual critics to correct them. In this respect the aim of a critical text is a corrected archetype. The correction of discernible errors in the archetype clarifies the aim of the OHB, whose critical texts will approximate a corrected archetype of each biblical book and, where appropriate, corrected hyparchetypes.

A hyparchetype is the latest common ancestor of a particular textual family of a book. In some cases, this is equivalent to the hyparchetype of a particular edition. For example, for Pentateuchal books we can often establish three coherent textual families: proto-M, proto-SP, and proto-G. In theory we should be able to infer a hyparchetype for each of the textual families. If one of these families uniquely preserves an edition of that book, as is sometimes the case, then that family’s hyparchetype is also the hyparchetype of that edition.

The latest common ancestor of all the hyparchetypes is the archetype of the book. In the case of multiple editions, the archetype of the book contains (by definition) the first edition. Or, to be more precise, it contains the first inferable edition, since there may have been earlier editions in the historical span from original to archetype.

A famous example of a hyparchetype is Paul de Lagarde’s demonstration that all the medieval Masoretic manuscripts descend from a lost manuscript that contained the puncta
extraordinaria, nun suspensa, and other unusual scribal marks.⁹ Following the genealogical method of Karl Lachmann and others, Lagarde identified these scribal marks as *Leitfehler* (diagnostic errors) from which one can infer common ancestry. Since this distinctive cluster of errors cannot plausibly have originated independently in multiple manuscripts (viz. polygenesis), there must have been a manuscript with these odd features from which the medieval Masoretic manuscripts descend. It is possible that this hyparchetype descends from several manuscripts that collectively had these features, which were then amalgamated in an effort at uniformity. (Ironically, the *puncta extraordinaria*, which Tov aptly calls “cancellation dots,” originally designated *omit*, but they were mistakenly transmitted rather than omitted.¹⁰) Other variants may have been later incorporated “horizontally” from other manuscripts, but the medieval manuscripts with this cluster of odd features evince a clear genealogical affinity. The medieval Masoretic manuscripts are therefore an identifiable sub-lineage within the larger proto-M textual family.¹¹

There is a further analytical distinction between the archetype and the original. The archetype can change with the discovery of new manuscript evidence. To take a perspicious example, with the discovery of 4QSAm⁹, in many cases an earlier textual state of the book of Samuel is inferable than was previously possible. This means that the archetype is a different manuscript than it was previously. Hence, the practical goal of a critical text can change with the addition of more evidence. In contrast, the original of the book does not change – but we cannot

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¹¹ One can also identify an important sub-lineage within the medieval M manuscripts: those mss. that lack Josh 21:36-37 (lost by homoioteleuton). This sub-lineage includes A, L, C, and S¹, which include our oldest M manuscripts. The earliest M manuscripts with these verses are Or 2201 and M1 (the main source for the Complutensian Polyglot). See further, Ronald Hendel, “What is a Biblical Book?” in *From Author to Copyist: Composition, Redaction and Transmission of the Hebrew Bible. Essays in Honor of Zipora Talshir* (ed. Cana Werman; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming), n. 53.
know it because it is outside of our epistemological horizon. The archetype can be, in this sense, a moving target, yet we can know it, if only approximately.

The concept of multiple editions of a biblical book also requires clarification. As a general rule, the OHB regards a book or a portion of a book as having multiple editions if there is evidence of systematic revision, such as resequencing of text (verses, pericopes, or larger sections), new compositions, and systematic exegetical revisions (e.g., revisions of chronology). Local scribal changes, such as harmonizations, explications, linguistic modernizations, and small exegetical revisions do not, in our view, rise to the level of a new edition. There is no red line between a cluster of scribal changes and a new edition, hence the editor of each book will present the rationale for decisions regarding editions. New editions are, in loose terms, rewritten compositions within a given book.12

In cases of multiple editions, the critical text will present the corrected archetype of the first edition and the corrected hyparchetype(s) of subsequent editions in parallel columns. Where the genealogical relationship among the editions is not discernible, the corrected hyparchetype of each edition will be presented similarly, but without notations of relative priority. The later changes (including scribal errors) in each edition will be presented and analyzed in the apparatus and commentary.13

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13 This formulation clarifies the presentation of multiple editions, which was queried by Eibert Tigchelaar, “Editing the Hebrew Bible: An Overview of Some Problems, in Editing the Bible: Assessing the Task Past and Present (eds. J. S. Kloppenborg and J. H. Newman; Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 51: “how the OHB is going to distinguish between the original characteristics of variant
In contrast to these historical textual states (archetypes, hyparchetypes, editions), the concept of the *original* of a biblical book is difficult to clarify. It is the earliest ancestor of all the textual families of a book, but since it is beyond our epistemological horizon, its precise form is unknowable. A useful starting point is Emanuel Tov’s definition, which attempts to combine the concept of an original with the concept of multiple editions, yielding a chronological series of textual states. The original, in Tov’s formulation, is “the written text or edition (or a number of consecutive editions) that contained the finished literary product … that stood at the beginning of the textual transmission process.”

The binary oppositions in this definition require qualification, particularly “finished” versus “beginning,” and “literary” versus “textual.” As Tov acknowledges, in practice these distinctions often overlap. Sometimes, as Shemaryahu Talmon famously argued, the copyist is “a minor partner in the creative literary process.” As such, “literary” and “textual” are not wholly separable concepts. Sometimes substantial compositional activity resumes, yielding a new edition of a biblical book, well after the process of textual transmission had begun. So there may be some recursions in the relationship between the “finishing” of a literary work and the “beginning” of its transmission. In cases of “consecutive editions,” Tov maintains that this entails a concept of multiple originals. He writes: “In these cases, the textual evidence does not point to a single ‘original’ text, but a series of authoritative texts produced by the same or different authors. Each of these stages may be considered a type of original text.”

In my view, Tov’s definition has the right emphases but it multiplies “originals” unnecessarily. In cases where a book has consecutive editions, the first edition is best designated editions—which should be attributed to an editor or author who consciously and consistently reworked a literary unit—and (subsequent) textual changes in the course of that edition’s transmission.”


16 Tov, *Textual Criticism* (see n. 14), 167.
as the original textual state, and the later editions designated simply as later editions. There is no gain in calling the later edition of Jeremiah an “original” form of the book, except to emphasize that it is a finished literary product as much as is the earlier edition. By calling each edition an “original,” Tov introduces confusion into the distinction between his concept of an original form of a book and Talmon’s concept of multiple “pristine original texts” (see below).

However one conceives the original form of a biblical book, or even if one conceives it as an impenetrable blur, the important methodological point is that we have no direct access to it. We only have access to the manuscripts and to the historical textual states (archetypes, hyparchetypes, editions) that we can infer from the manuscripts. Therefore, formulating a definitive concept of the original of a biblical book is a purely theoretical enterprise. The pragmatic goal of a critical text involves the archetype and, for subsequent editions, hyparchetypes. An approximation of these textual states is the pragmatic goal, not a reconstitution (or, better, divination) of the original textual state.

It is important to note that the concept of a critical text concerns the transmitted book, not the book’s constituent sources or earlier forms. These prior entities – such as J, P, the Ark Narrative, Second Isaiah, or the ipsissima verba of Jeremiah – belong to the literary prehistory of a book, at a time when there was no book of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Samuel, Genesis, etc. In other words, a critical edition tracks changes that occur during the textual transmission of books, and not to literary states prior to the “finished literary product” (Tov’s phrase) of a given book or edition.17

The original form of a biblical book is a theoretical limit or ideal concept for textual criticism, but it is in many ways an unreal goal. The actual – and achievable – goal of a critical text is the earliest inferable textual state, viz., the corrected archetype, which we will supplement with the corrected hyparchetype(s) of variant editions. These are the best representations of

17 This formulation responds to the query of Tov (Textual Criticism [see n. 14], 364) about whether the OHB would choose to exclude some literary strata, such as the hymns of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10) and Jonah (Jonah 2), which were arguably added secondarily in the literary prehistory of the book. The concept of the archetype precludes the discrimination of such literary strata, since any composition attested in all the extant manuscripts is, by definition, in the archetype.
“accurate copies” of the biblical books that we can achieve.\(^\text{18}\) It is a work of historical restoration, which may not appeal to all biblical scholars, but which is warranted by the theory and practice of textual criticism.

The Design of the Critical Text

Having sketched the aim of the critical text, I turn to the thorny issues involved in designing it. Rudolf Kittel granted that in theory a critical eclectic edition is superior to a diplomatic edition, but in practice it raises too many problems, including what to do about the details of spelling, vocalization, and accentuation.\(^\text{19}\) Previous eclectic editions, including Carl Heinrich Cornill’s edition of Ezekiel and Paul Haupt’s series, *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament*, produced purely consonantal Hebrew texts.\(^\text{20}\) But this strategy does not solve the problem, since it is impossible to formulate a consistent approach to the spelling of the archetype.

How does one move from the features of the existing Hebrew manuscripts – including the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have a plethora of spelling practices; the medieval manuscripts, most with slight variations of the Tiberian system(s) of vocalization and annotation, and some with other systems (viz. Palestinian and Babylonian); and the Samaritan Pentateuch, with its full spelling and distinctive vocalization tradition – to a coherent approach to the design of a critical text? One cannot produce a sentence without making speculative decisions about how to write

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\(^{18}\) On the historical and ontological complexities in the idea of an “accurate copy” of a book, see Hendel, “What is a Biblical Book?” (see n. 11).


the words, since spelling practices changed over time and were never systematized. The decisions necessary are dizzying, and some are philologically impossible.

A principled approach to these difficulties is provided by the concept of a copy-text, which was classically articulated by W. W. Greg in 1950.\(^{21}\) Greg argued for a practical distinction between the “substantive readings” (viz. the words or lexemes) of a critical text, which are the prime focus of the textual critic, and the “accidentals” of the text, which are everything else, including features of spelling, punctuation, etc. He proposed that the editor should choose a good manuscript and follow it, within reason, for the accidentals. The editor should then use the normal procedures of textual criticism to determine the substantive readings of the critical text. The substantive readings are, as it were, instantiated and annotated on the page by means of the accidentals of the copy-text. He writes: “the copy-text should govern (generally) in the matter of accidentals, but … the choice between substantive readings belongs to the general theory of textual criticism and lies altogether beyond the narrow principle of the copy-text.”\(^{22}\)

Greg proposes this strategy as a practical measure, not a philosophical theory, but he supports his distinction between substantive readings and accidentals with sound text-critical reasoning. He writes:

> The distinction is not arbitrary or theoretical, but has an immediate bearing on textual criticism, for scribes (or compositors) may in general be expected to react, and experience shows that they generally do react, differently to the two categories. As regards substantive readings their aim may be assumed to be to reproduce exactly those of their copy, though they will doubtless sometimes depart from them accidentally and may even, for one reason or another, do so intentionally: as regards accidentals they will


\(^{22}\) Greg, “Rationale” (see n. 21), 143.
normally follow their own habits or inclination, though they may, for various reasons and to varying degrees, be influenced by their copy.23

The distinction between substantive readings and accidentals is amply attested in Hebrew manuscripts and scribal traditions. Scribes implicitly distinguished between the words of their copy, which they copied (or miscopied, or occasionally revised) diligently, and the accidentals, which were subject to a much greater degree of change and revision. Hence we see the plethora of spelling practices among the Qumran texts, even among scrolls where the substantives barely differ.

Similarly, among the medieval Masoretic manuscripts the spelling, vocalization, and accentuation differ in each manuscript, while the substantive readings are remarkably stable. Even in the best Masoretic manuscripts, such as A and L, some features of vocalization were never fixed. For example, regarding the fluidity of hateph vowels, the Masoretic treatise Diqduqe ha-Ṭeʿamim §19 states: “Some scribes, following a valid tradition read hateph gamesḥ in many places … while others, also following a valid tradition, do not, but there is no (authoritative) source but the preference of the scribes.”24 One imagines the last generation of Masoretes – including Aharon ben Asher, Moshe ben Naphtali, and others – arguing over dinner about textual accidentals (such as the pointing of יִשָּׂשֵׁכָר), whereas the substantive readings were beyond cavil.

23 Greg, “Rationale” (see n. 21), 138.
25 According to the Sefer ha-Ḥillufim (“The Book of Variants”), Aharon Ben Asher, Moshe Ben Naphtali, and Moshe Moḥeh (otherwise unknown) vocalized this word differently: יִשָּׂשָׁכָר (implying a qeré pepetum יִשָּׂשָׁכָר), יִשָּׂשֶׁכָר, and יִשָּׂשֶׁכָר, respectively; see Yeivin, Introduction (see n. 24), 138.
In scribal traditions from Qumran to the Tiberian Masoretes, including Samaritan, Palestinian and Babylonian scribal traditions, we can document a practical distinction between the treatment of substantive readings and accidentals. Since this distinction is cogent for the Hebrew Bible, we have adopted and adapted it for our design of the critical text. I note that other scholars of early modern literature have proposed revisions to Greg’s model to accommodate the interplay between authors and compositors in the era of the printing press, but these revisions are not germane for the textual situation of the Hebrew Bible.

In a previous discussion, I wrongly associated the distinction between substantive readings and accidentals with the difference between meaning and presentation. This is too simple. Spelling does not directly affect the meaning of a word, but it does serve to disambiguate its meaning. Vocalization and accentuation also disambiguate meaning and syntax. Since these accidentals are either necessary (spelling) or useful (vocalization and accentuation), the critical text will use these features from the copy-text and will correct them where appropriate (see below).

The copy-text will be L, our oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible. Since the accidentals of vocalization and accentuation in L are the product of medieval scribes, our critical text is open to the complaint of anachronism. This complaint is technically correct. But our

26 These clarifications about the copy-text and the substantive/accidental distinction respond to the criticisms of Tigchelaar, “Editing” (see n. 13), 53-60.
27 The revisions by F. Bowers and G. T. Tanselle to Greg’s concept of copy-text, which focus on issues of authorial intention, have been criticized by Jerome J. McGann, A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 24-36. In any case, Greg’s pragmatic model is more suited to the textual situation of the Hebrew Bible.
28 See Tigchelaar, “Editing” (see n. 13), 55.
explicit use of the concept of copy-text requires that the reader is aware of the distinction between substantive readings and accidentals. The copy-text rule is a practical expedient that allows for the possibility of producing a critical text, but it does place a burden on the reader, since the substantives and accidentals must be weighed differently.

There are several ameliorating factors that lessen this dissonance. First, biblical scholars already know that the consonantal text is older than the medieval vocalization system. So a critical text with this overlay is not strange. Second, critical editions in other fields use anachronistic accidentals, including editions of Greek texts (including the New Testament and the Septuagint) that use rough breathings, accents, punctuation, and miniscule letters, all of which were scribal inventions of the ninth century CE, roughly contemporary with the Tiberian Masoretes. Third, the phonology of the Tiberian vocalization system is not wholly or even mostly anachronistic.

Scholars have demonstrated that most of the phonetic features of this system accurately represent a reading tradition from the Second Temple period, and many of its features stem from the First Temple period. For instance, many features of Classical Biblical Hebrew that became obsolete during the Second Temple period are accurately preserved, such as the distinction between the infinitive absolute and infinitive construct, the original (preterite) morphology of the converted imperfect in weak roots, the Qal passive verbal stem, and other grammatical forms and constructions. On the other hand, only a few features are arguably medieval, such as the change of the initial short vowel in the nominal pattern *maqtāl > miqtāl (e.g. *madbār > midbār), a feature that does not occur in Babylonian vocalization, earlier Greek and Latin transcriptions, or Samaritan Hebrew. Some Tiberian vocalizations misinterpret biblical forms, such as the


vocalization of some Qal passives as Niphals, or the overabundance of definite articles in nouns prefixed by prepositions (‘e and b’ vocalized lā and bā). But the majority of Tiberian vocalizations accurately preserve a very old reading tradition, which provides a useful and in many cases invaluable aid for understanding the words and grammar.

Having presented our rationale for the use of accidentals of the copy-text, I add an important qualification. As Greg advises, “the copy-text should govern (generally) in the matter of accidentals.” But the parenthetical “generally” indicates an important caveat: “there is no reason for treating it as sacrosanct.” In cases where the accidentals are incorrect, due to scribal error or an incorrect reading tradition, the editor is free to make corrections. In our critical text we will correct the vocalization and accentuation in cases where the meaning of a word or sentence is affected. For instance, if a participle is misvocalized as a finite verb, or a noun misvocalized as a near-homonym, or a 1-yod verb in the perfect misvocalized as an imperfect, the editor will correct the vocalization in the critical text. However, we will not restore the original morphology of substantive readings where the difference is meaning-neutral – melek will not be revocalized as malk, nor Miryām as Maryām – such changes would be nearly infinite


34 Greg, “Rationale” (see n. 21), 147.

35 For examples of such verbal interchanges, see Joosten, “Textual Developments” (see n. 30), 23-27.

36 The readings with corrected accidentals will be marked with ceiling brackets, as is the rule when the critical text diverges from the copy-text. This treatment of accidentals revises my discussion in Hendel, “Prologue” (see n. 2), 35, which limited such changes to the apparatus. Williamson’s criticism was helpful in pointing out the logical inconsistency of that procedure (“Reflection” [see n. 29],165-166).
and of no semantic value. In this manner, we maximize the utility of the copy-text rule while allowing for appropriate – and finite – editorial corrections of the accidentals.

A further wrinkle applies to the use of accidentals in cases of multiple editions. If one column represents the hyparchetype of the proto-G edition and the other column the archetype of the proto-M edition, only the proto-M column will have the overlay of the accidentals of vocalization and accentuation. The proto-G column will be a reconstructed consonantal Hebrew text. The only exception is where the same consonantal sequence in both columns has a different implicit vocalization in the proto-G column. In such cases the proto-G form will be vocalized (in the style of L) in order to facilitate comparison with the other column. Since this ancient edition never had Masoretic vocalization, it seems strange to clothe it in this dress; but this occasional exception provides useful guidance for the reader.

Generally, where there is only one column of the critical text, all words will be vocalized in the style of the copy-text, including words that are lacking in L. Substantive readings that differ from the copy-text, including differences of accidentals, will be marked by raised ceiling brackets. This mark also serves to indicate a break in the accentual chain.

A final feature concerns what we call the default rule. There are many cases where it is not possible to reach a compelling textual judgment about the history of the variant readings, that is, which one is most plausibly the archetype and which one is secondary (whether corrupted or revised). In cases where knowledge and evidence fails, the editor must make a decision without the support of a text-critical rationale. What should the editor do? Greg makes a sensible appeal to the copy-text as a default value:

Suppose that the claims of two readings, one in the copy-text and one in some other authority, appear to be exactly balanced: what then should an editor do? In such a case, while there can be no logical reason for giving preference to the copy-text, in practice, if there is no reason for altering its reading, the obvious thing seems to be to let it stand.37

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37 Greg, “Rationale” (see n. 21), 148. This default rule, where the variants are described as “equally plausible as the archetypal reading,” should not be confused with Shemaryahu
In some ways this default rule is a conservative hedge, where the critical text will err in favor of the copy-text rather than other witnesses. But it has the virtue of a consistent procedure, and as Greg adds, “at least saves the trouble of tossing a coin.” 38

In sum, the distinction between substantive readings and accidentals and the concept of a copy-text allow for a principled design of a critical text of the Hebrew Bible. It is not without some surprising features, but it solves many problems that earlier scholars had thought to be insuperable.

(Apparatus, Commentary, and History)

The heart of the edition is the apparatus and commentary. Here the editor presents the evidence and arguments that justify the decisions made in constituting the critical text. The apparatus and commentary accomplish two complementary purposes: (1) to explain these editorial decisions; and (2) to articulate the textual history of the variants, including the scribal motives – whether accidental or exegetical – that gave rise to them. In this sense the critical edition presents a panorama of the history and reception of the biblical text, from its earliest inferable state as a transmitted book through its small and large transformations as an interpreted text, including new editions, linguistic and theological updating, explication and harmonization, and scribal accidents. The random and the purposive are partners in the history of the biblical books. It is the burden of the apparatus and commentary to present and explore the book’s reception history in its scribal transmission, from the earliest inferable textual state to the major manuscripts.

This is a historical, philological, and hermeneutical enterprise, which involves attention to every aspect of the text. It is an intensely detailed form of close reading, which runs along

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Talmon’s theory of “pristine texts,” pace Tov, Textual Criticism (see n. 14), 164 n. 20; see further below.

38 Greg, “Rationale” (see n. 21), 148.
literary and historical axes. Some examples will help to display these layers of inquiry. The following examples are from Genesis 1.

1:5 מ SP G (ἡμέραν) [4QGen⁸ TOP (יומם) S (ܐܝܡܡܐ) (explication)]. The secondary reading יומם is a LBH usage, meaning not “by day” (as it does in CBH) but “daytime.” The LBH meaning derives from Aramaic תמסא (Joosten 2008: 95-97). This revision disambiguates the meaning of יום (“day”), which can mean a (whole) day or daytime (as in English and other languages). In 1:5 “daytime” is the obvious sense. The Targums and Peshitta have the same reading in vv. 14, 16, and 18, suggesting a Hebrew parent text with יומם in these verses also (4QGen⁸ lacks these portions).

As this entry illustrates, the apparatus line is followed by the commentary, which can be brief or expansive. This design keeps the data and analysis close, thereby demystifying the conventionally cryptic apparatus. The commentary details the relationship between the variants and the exegetical motivation of the revising scribe, who in this case chose to clarify the meaning of יום (“day”) by adding a single letter (mem), yielding the LBH form יומם (“daytime”).

The commentary will also have entries that address other features of the textual history, including translation features (particularly in G) and vocalization. The following, from Genesis 1:1, is an example of the latter.

1:1 בְּרֵאשִׁית M vocalizes this word as a construct form. Evidence from some Greek transliterations (βαρησθ and βαρησθί, which vary with βρασθ and βρησθ) and

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Samaritan reading tradition (bārāšīt) may indicate that the determined (absolute) vocalization (רֵאשִׁית) existed in some ancient reading traditions (but see the cautions of Rüterswörden and Warmuth 1993). This is explicable as a linguistic modernization of an archaic grammatical construction. Notably, the G translation, ἐν ἀρχῇ, corresponds to the construct vocalization בְּרֵאשִׁית – it would have translated בָּרֵאשִׁית with the definite article, ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ (Wevers 1993: 1). The construct vocalization, which is anomalous in late and postbiblical Hebrew, is best understood as a preservation of the older and original form. The updated form – “In the beginning, (God created)” – gave rise to the exegetical inference that Gen 1:1 describes a creation ex nihilo (first attested in 2 Macc 7:28).

Entries such as this begin with the word or sequence addressed (in Hebrew, Greek, etc.). Since it is not a matter of variants, there is no prefixed apparatus. In this instance, the issue involves the vocalization and grammatical analysis of a word. The M vocalization here preserves a CBH construction – an asyndetic clause, in which a noun phrase in construct with a verb – which was normalized to LBH grammar in some reading traditions, yielding an absolute noun phrase that gave rise to a novel – and influential – interpretation of the verse.

The commentary will demonstrate that textual criticism is not just an esoteric discipline (although it is certainly that), but that it also entails a close reading of the text and its history of reception, which includes literary, linguistic, and theological dimensions. Of course, the registering of scribal errors – reš/daiot confusions, dittographies, eyeskips, etc. – is less hermeneutically complex, but it also details the all-too-human history of the text in its inevitable scribal changes.

Notice that the form of the apparatus shows, in nuce, the direction of change. The lemma (from the critical text) is to the left of the bracket, and the secondary readings and their explanation(s), are to the right. All the substantive evidence is presented in the apparatus entry. By the convention of eliminatio, the testimonies of the minor versions – T, S, and V – are explicitly listed only where they differ from M; where they are not listed, they are witnesses to M. By presenting all the substantive evidence and all the relevant arguments, the reader is in a
position to evaluate them independently and to reach, where desired, different conclusions. This is a *sine qua non* for any scholarly apparatus – that it be clear, complete, and refutable.

The relationship between the critical text and the apparatus and commentary articulates a theory of a critical edition that differs in many respects from the existing diplomatic editions. The arrow of change built into the structure of the apparatus mirrors the relationship between the critical text and the commentary that surrounds it on the page. The idea is to represent the historical changes in the text, from the corrected archetype to the major manuscripts, as a process of development, including the entropy of scribal error and the creative episodes of linguistic, literary, and theological revision. In the latter, we detect the processes that made the books, as it were, “biblical,” that is, sacred, intelligible, and relevant for the present. This theory of a critical edition follows Eugene Ulrich’s proposal that textual criticism should be concerned not just with establishing a better text, but also with the Hebrew Bible’s pluriform history:

> The general project labeled “textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible” … must focus on the text of the ancient Hebrew Bible as it was, namely, diachronic and pluriform. The purpose or function of textual criticism is to reconstruct the history of the texts that eventually became the biblical collection in both its literary growth and its scribal transmission; it is not just to judge individual variants in order to determine which were “superior” or “original.”… Late layers or additions often have as much claim to being important tesserae in the biblical mosaic as do “original” or “early” elements of the developed text.\(^{40}\)

The concept and design of the OHB are responses to the dynamic textual condition of the biblical books, which expands from the first edition of a book to its plural receptions and elaborations.41

Response to Criticisms

As a critical edition project that departs from customary procedure in our field, the OHB has attracted some weighty criticism. This is entirely proper, since serious debate about evidence, theories, and methods is the lifeblood of critical scholarship. Ideally such debate is self-correcting, producing ever more precise analyses and yielding richer interpretive practices. We have had the benefit of thoughtful critiques by several scholars, including Emanuel Tov, Hugh Williamson, George Brooke, Eibert Tigchelaar, and Adrian Schenker.42 Their criticisms have tested our ideas and procedures, and in several instances have led our editorial committee to reconsider and improve them. In particular, the design of the critical text and our procedures regarding the copy-text have become more refined. Part of our project’s goal is to raise the level of sophistication of text-critical discourse in our field and such exchanges serve this end.

Some of the criticisms have been addressed above, particularly concerning the practical and theoretical distinction between substantive readings and accidentals (including vocalization) and other aspects of the copy-text principle. The other major criticisms may be subsumed under the following three headings:

1. The problem of the “original” of a biblical book
2. The subjectivity of eclectic editions
3. Our limited knowledge of textual history

41 This formulation supplies a theoretical rationale for presenting multiple editions of biblical books, responding in part to Tigchelaar’s apt criticism: “this is perhaps the better part of wisdom, but the OHB offers no theoretical foundation for this choice” (“Editing” [see n. 13], 53).
42 See the references in nn. 13, 17, 29, 39, 61, and 72. For the purpose of full disclosure I note that in the early days of the OHB project I invited Professors Tov and Williamson to participate (as editors of Jeremiah and Isaiah, respectively), but they politely declined.
This division roughly corresponds to issues of theory, method, and knowledge. I will address each in turn.

1. The problem of the “original” of a biblical book.

George Brooke has argued that the new data from the Qumran biblical scrolls mandate changes in our approach to textual criticism, one of which is: “Give up the pursuit of the original text.” He rightly maintains that “the starting point of the modern discussion of the text should be the artifactual evidence itself,” and “the best way to understandings of earlier forms of the text is through paying attention to how each generation of Jewish and Christian traditors of the text has understood and used the text.” Certainly we must start with the evidence, including the evidence of scribal practices and hermeneutics, which the Qumran scrolls reveal in abundance. However, Brooke then draws an unusual conclusion. Because the Qumran evidence is so complex, he wrongly infers that there is no genealogical relationship among the texts, and hence no need to posit an “original text” for each biblical book. He writes: “Faced with textual diversity in the earliest strata of the textual tell, the search for a pristine Ur-text has to be abandoned.” This is an unwarranted assertion. One might just as well say that faced with the diversity of bird species in the Galapagos Islands, the search for genealogical relationships and common ancestry among these species has to be abandoned. No ornithologist would accept this reasoning, and nor should any textual critic. Diversity of manuscripts and textual families is the normal situation for any scribally-transmitted book. The hypothesis that these manuscripts and textual families are genealogically related is a plausible and perhaps necessary explanation for them, as it is for birds. The only other explanation is polygenesis, that is, independent origins for different species of texts and birds.

Brooke is here relying on Shemaryahu Talmon’s theory of “pristine texts and traditions,” in which different versions of biblical books or biblical verses derive from independent crystallizations of divergent oral traditions. In his most detailed presentation of this theory, Talmon argues that biblical literature was primarily oral until the late Persian period, at which

43 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 33.
44 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 33.
45 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 34.
time the different oral versions of biblical books were committed to writing. He writes: “the process culminating in the practically total substitution of written transmission for oral tradition [occurred] toward the end of the Persian age.” His evidence consists of the multiplicity of texts and textual families among the Qumran manuscripts and an erroneous theory about the absence of writing materials before the Persian period. He states: “For committing to writing long literary texts a scribe must have at his disposal large and easily transportable surfaces. There is no tangible evidence to show that such surfaces were in fact available in monarchical let alone the pre-monarchical era.” Based on these inferences and conjectures, he concludes that there cannot have been an “original” of any biblical book, since their written forms were always divergent: “a hypothesis which postulates the existence of a single Urtext is incompatible with the proposition which assumes the co-currency of ‘various pristine texts.’ These theories envision diametrically opposed transmission processes of the biblical text.” In Talmon’s theory, the written texts stem from the multiform processes of oral tradition, hence the search for an “original” is misplaced.

Talmon’s theory is logically possible, but the evidence is against it. Regarding the supposed lack of “large and easily transportable surfaces” (viz. papyrus or parchment) for writing prior to the Persian period, Talmon misrepresents the material data. The oldest Hebrew inscription on papyrus is a seventh-century letter from Muraba’at, from the Judean desert near

46 Here Talmon is following the model of oral tradition and literary history formulated by the Scandinavian school of Pentateuchal criticism (Ivan Engnell et al.), which was criticized by Douglas A. Knight, Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 383-392, and references. A sophisticated revision of the Scandinavian theory has recently been proposed by David M. Carr, Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); but see the criticisms of his use of oral theory by Frank Polak, “Book, Scribe, and Bard: Oral Discourse and Written Text in Recent Biblical Scholarship,” Prooftexts 31 (2011), 131-133.


48 Talmon, “Textual Criticism” (see n. 47), 398.

49 Talmon, “Textual Criticism” (see n. 47), 415.
the Dead Sea, where such perishable materials have a chance of surviving. There is also a roughly contemporary papyrus legal document written in Moabite or Edomite, probably also discovered near the Dead Sea. More decisively, we have hundreds of Hebrew seals and bullae from the monarchical period, which were used to sign and seal legal documents written on papyrus or parchment, and also used on pottery vessels to indicate ownership. Many bullae (clay seal impressions) preserve impressions of papyrus fibers. The earliest is a collection of fragments of over 170 bullae from the Jerusalem dating to the eighth century B.C.E., probably from the dump of an administrative or commercial center. A slightly later example with a familiar royal name is a late eighth or early seventh century bulla with the inscription: “Belonging to Yehozeraḥ, son of Hilqiyahu, servant of Ḥizqiyahu [Hezekiah].” The reverse bears the imprint of papyrus fibers and the string that bound the papyrus document. There are many such bullae dating to the latter third of the monarchical period (ca. eighth-sixth centuries B.C.E.). This material evidence for the widespread use of papyrus writing materials is corroborated by the textual evidence in the Bible, which frequently mention the use of scrolls for legal and literary purposes during this period (e.g., Isa 8:1, Jer 29:1; 32:10, 36; Ezek 2:9-10). Perhaps most intriguing is “the scroll of this law” (אֶתְסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּ), referring to a scroll that was arguably one of the source-texts of Deuteronomy (Deut 28:61; similarly 29:20; 30:10; 31:26; and 2 Kgs 22:8).

51 Aḥituv, *Echoes* (see n. 50), 427-431.
A more telling criticism of Talmon’s theory is that the kinds of variations that exist in the Qumran biblical texts are not indicative of oral traditions. For instance, he argues that “the existence of ancient different ‘editions’ of biblical books would seem to lend support to the contemporaneous currency of ‘pristine’ traditions.” He takes as an example the different versions of 1 Samuel 11 in MT and 4QSam⁸. He argues for “the possibility that 4QSam⁸ and MT preserve different primary accounts of Saul’s wars against the Ammonites,” in which case both are equally pristine crystallizations of oral tradition. He cites the variant at the juncture from chapter 10 to 11:

\[
\text{MT} \quad \text{וַיְהִי כָּמַחֲרִישׁ וַיִּﬠַל נָחָשׁ הָֽﬠַמּוֹנִי} \quad \text{Galalad}
\]

\[
\text{4QSam}^8 \quad \text{וַיְהִי כָּמַחֲרִישׁ וַיִּﬠַל נָחָשׁ הָֽﬠַמּוֹנִי} \quad \text{על בֵּשׁ}
\]

\[
\text{LXX}^B \quad \text{(Καὶ ἐγενήθη ὡς μετὰ μῆνα καὶ ἀνέβη Ναας ὁ Αμμανίτης καὶ παρεμβάλλει ἐπὶ Ιαβις Γαλααδ)}
\]

There are only substantive variants here: \(שכמחרי\) vs. \(שדח\), and the absence of \(דגלע\) in 4QSam⁸. The first variant is easily explicable as the result of a word misdivision and a \textit{resh}/\textit{dalet} confusion, secondarily filled out with \textit{matres lectionis} (\textit{waw} or \textit{yod}). This kind of variation—which is entirely based on visual confusions—is characteristic of scribally-transmitted texts, not oral traditions. The second variant, the absence of the second word in Jabesh-Gilead, is explicable because the scribe of 4QSam⁸ accidentally omitted the sequence reproduced above and inserted it superlinearly. The omission of this sequence was triggered by a homoioteleuton from the previous “Jabesh-Gilead” to this one. When inserting the missing text, the scribe committed

\[\text{55 Talmon, “Textual Criticism” (see n. 47), 406.}\]
a smaller homoioteleuton by leaving out the word רֱאוֹל, which is the last word at the space where the insertion begins.\textsuperscript{56}

We must conclude that both of these variants derive from the vicissitudes of the scribal copying of the book. In each case a variant has been created by a scribal corruption (i.e. a visual misperception) of a previously existing text. (For our present purpose it does not matter which is the primary and which the secondary reading, although I would argue that the LXX\textsuperscript{B} reading preserves the textual archetype.) To posit variant oral traditions that agree in every detail except these visual miscues is not plausible. In oral prose traditions, the variations are generally more fluid and large-scale, such as those reflected in the many doublets in biblical narrative (e.g., the three wife-sister stories in Genesis; the two stories of the founding of Beersheba; the several type-scenes of meeting the future wife at the well; the two stories of David and Goliath, etc.). The concept of a virtually fixed text, such as evidenced in the example above, is foreign to the compositional techniques of oral traditional literature, particularly in prose narrative.\textsuperscript{57} Hence we must regard Talmon’s theory as unsupported or falsified by the evidence he cites.

Talmon advances an interesting methodological argument in support of his ‘pristine texts’ model. He states: “We have no objective criteria for deciding which reading is original and which derivative. Therefore both have the same claim to be judged genuine pristine traditions.”\textsuperscript{58} I will address the issue of subjectivity vs. objectivity below. But it clearly does not follow that the lack of objective criteria for adjudicating among variants entails that each readings is historically “pristine.” The impossibility of pure objectivity does not negate the validity of textual criticism, which by definition requires the exercise of critical judgment.

\textsuperscript{56} Frank Moore Cross \textit{et al.}, eds., \textit{Qumran Cave 4 XII: 1-2 Samuel} (DJD 17; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 65-67. The large plus in 4QSama\textsuperscript{8} before this reading is probably an exegetical expansion, as argued by Alexander Rofé, “The Acts of Nahash according to 4QSama\textsuperscript{8},” \textit{IEJ} 32 (1982): 129-133. The decisive details are the unconverted \textit{waw} + perfects \textit{(וָּנוֹאֵל ... וַנָּתָן)}, which are characteristic of Late Biblical Hebrew; see further Talshir, “Textual Criticism” (see n. 12), 46-50.

\textsuperscript{57} See my remarks in “Prologue” (see n. 2), 341-342.

\textsuperscript{58} Talmon, “Textual Criticism” (see n. 47), 413.
Talmon, as I have previously observed, confuses the epistemological condition of textual criticism (viz. the limits of what we can know) with the history and ontology of ancient texts.⁵⁹

Emanuel Tov has advanced other arguments against Talmon’s theory of pristine texts and concludes: “the assumption of multiple pristine texts … does not constitute a viable model that explains the development of the texts and the relation between the existing differences.”⁶⁰ However, Tov offers a different argument against the idea of the “original” of a biblical book. As we have noted above, Tov argues each edition should be regarded as an original of that book. Hence, he maintains that the condition of multiple originals deprives a critical text of a single original to aim for. He writes:

> There never was an “archetype” or “original text” of most Scripture books. For most biblical books, scholars assume editorial changes over the course of many generations or even several centuries. If this assumption is correct, this development implies that there never was a single text that may be considered the original text for textual criticism; rather, we have to assume compositional stages, each of which was meant to be authoritative when competed. Each stage constituted an entity that may be named an “original text.”⁶¹

If each compositional stage is equally original, then, he writes, “we ought to ask ourselves which stage, if any, may be presented as original or archetypal in a modern edition.”⁶²

Tov’s emphasis on the textual and literary authority of each edition is salutary, but in my view it is unhelpful to characterize each edition as an “original text.” As I stated above, it is

⁵⁹ Hendel, “Prologue” (see n. 2), 341-342.
⁶⁰ Tov, Textual Criticism (see n. 14), 162.
⁶² Tov, “Eclectic Text” (see n. 61), 327.
sufficient to call each new edition a new edition, as we do for editions of modern books. Any edition may differ considerably from previous editions. (A perspicuous example is Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, which was issued in roughly nine editions over the author’s lifetime, with major differences among the editions.) Yet there is a textual continuity and a genealogical relationship among a book’s editions. The same kind of genealogical relationship arguably exists for the multiple editions of the biblical books. As Tov elsewhere emphasizes: “the great majority of the large-scale differences [viz. different editions] … in our view were created in a linear way and not as parallel texts.”

Hence Tov’s objection to the idea of an original text comes down to an issue of terminology that does not affect the genealogical model on which the idea of an “original” rests. As Tov rightly argues, the idea of an “original composition” that entered into scribal transmission “appear[s] to be correct on a theoretical level, and must therefore be adhered to.”

Tov also points to a more practical consequence of the divide between the theoretical models of “original text and editions” versus “multiple pristine texts.” He writes:

For the praxis of textual criticism, in our view one of the two positions should be accepted. Almost all scholars are involved with the evaluation of textual variants, but often they may not be aware that this procedure actually requires the acceptance of the idea of an original text in some form. For those who claim that a certain reading is preferable to another one are actually presupposing an original text, since they claim that the reading better reflects the original composition from the point of view of the language, vocabulary, ideas, or meaning. The very use of such an argument is based on the perception of an original text, since otherwise two or more different readings could have been “equally original” thus negating the need to make a decision.

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63 Tov, *Textual Criticism* (see n. 14), 165.
64 Tov, *Textual Criticism* (see n. 14), 169.
65 Tov, *Textual Criticism* (see n. 14), 162-163.
In other words, the very act of adjudicating among variants logically entails the genealogical model and not the pristine texts model. If one corrects a particular manuscript reading on the basis of another manuscript, or even one MT reading on the basis of another MT reading (e.g. a Samuel reading on the basis of Chronicles, or vice versa), one has already chosen the genealogical model of “original texts and editions” and not “multiple pristine texts.”

Having argued for the theoretical validity of the genealogical model, with its reliance on the idea of an original (or first edition) of a biblical book, I emphasize (as I have done above) that the idea of the original of a biblical book is a problematic concept. It is necessary in theory, but it remains an abstract concept in the absence of the autographs. More important, it is not the goal of a critical text. The archetype, viz., the manuscript that is latest common ancestor of the extant manuscripts, is the practical goal of textual criticism, not the original. The OHB critical texts, as stated above, aim to approximate the corrected archetype of a biblical book or, if that is beyond reach, the corrected hyparchetype(s) of one or more textual families. The original is a chimera, a purely abstract goal, which can never be fully achieved, and we cannot know the extent to which we have achieved it. The original is both historically and epistemologically distinct from the actual goal of a critical text, which involves the archetype.

The distinction between original and archetype – which has long been essential to the genealogical method of textual criticism – is important to acknowledge, because it defines the conditions of possibility of text-critical inquiry. One can “give up” the original text, as Brooke admonishes, but a textual critic cannot give up the archetype as an empirically warranted goal, at least insofar as one grants the actuality of the past. A critical edition is, after all, a genre of historical inquiry, and it derives its validity from the possibility of investigating and reconstituting details that have been lost or fragmented in the present.

2. The subjectivity of eclectic editions.

A consequence of Brooke’s thesis that we should give up the pursuit of an original text is his exhortation: “Resist eclectic editions.”66 He correctly observes that “an eclectic edition is a scholarly invention” that “nowhere existed in any manuscript.”67 An eclectic edition is a genre

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66 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 38.
67 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 38.
of scholarly writing, and it is true that any particular eclectic edition never previously existed. (The same applies to diplomatic editions, which are also scholarly inventions, but which Brooke does not propose that we resist.) However, if an eclectic edition is done well, it approximates a particular manuscript, the archetype, although it also reaches back of the archetype when it detects and corrects its scribal errors. An eclectic edition aims at the earliest inferable textual state of a book, which is an empirical and justifiable goal.

Yet this goal will necessarily be imperfectly achieved. In this respect any critical text can be criticized as never having existed in all its details. But the point of this “scholarly invention” is to come closer to the original literary composition of a book than any of the extant manuscripts or printed editions. It is, in this sense, a work of restoration. It is a textual restoration of a book, comparable to the restoration of a painting by Rembrandt or Michelangelo. The difference is, of course, that a critical edition does not alter the old objects (the manuscripts), but rather provides another object, a restored and annotated text.

We may consider, for example, the value of correcting scribal errors, which is one of the main tasks of an eclectic edition. If there are good text-critical arguments for reading Rhodians (Ῥόδιοι) rather than Dodians (דֹדָנִים) in Genesis 10:4, then an eclectic edition should print the correct reading in the critical text.\(^6^8\) In this case a proto-M scribe has committed a simple reshd-alet confusion, and there is no good reason to resist correcting this error. Even the methodologically conservative Editionstechnik school grants that the correction of scribal errors is a necessary part of text-editing. As Hans Zeller writes: “A textual fault obliges the editor to intervene in the text.”\(^6^9\) If one wants to read a printed edition of a text that is marred with typographical errors, then one does not want to read an eclectic edition. But then one has abandoned textual criticism, which is, as A. E. Housman says, “the science of discovering errors


in texts and the art of removing it. That is its definition, that is what the name *denotes.* I would say that textual criticism consists of more than this, but it must do this at least.

But even if one grants the validity of correcting scribal errors, scholars have advanced other reasons to eschew eclectic editions. Tov writes: “The idea of producing eclectic (critical) editions is logical and has much to recommend it, but too many theoretical and practical problems stand in our way.” The main theoretical problem has to do with the concept of the “original text,” which we have considered above. This problem is ameliorated if one recognizes that the practical goal of an eclectic edition is the (corrected) archetype, not the original. The more basic problem, in Tov’s view, is the subjectivity of eclectic method. He writes:

[In] an eclectic edition … [t]he editor thus presents to the readers a personal view of the original text of the book of Genesis or Kings. Needless to say, the reconstruction of such an *Urtext* requires subjective decisions, and if textual scholars indulged their textual acumen, each scholar would create a different *Urtext*. If I were to follow this procedure myself, the *Urtext* I would create this year would differ from one five years hence.”

Although I would change his “Urtext” to “corrected archetype,” his point is generally valid. There is subjectivity in the production of a critical text, and critical editions – even done by the same editor – will change over time. What I question is whether this is a valid criticism, or simply a response to the corrigibility of any work of historical scholarship.

I submit that Tov’s criticism of subjectivity is overstated. The craft of textual criticism is not accurately characterized as “a personal view” or an “indulgence” of textual acumen. Textual criticism is, of course, not an objective procedure, but requires, by definition, critical judgment,

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70 Housman, “Application of Thought” (see n. 1), 123.
71 Tov, “Eclectic Text” (see n. 61), 333.
κριτικός. To quote E. A. Kenney, “There is no escape from ratio & res ipsa, from the commitment of the critic to do what his name implies – to judge, to decide, to discriminate.”\textsuperscript{73} The absence of transcendental objectivity is the condition of all of our scholarly labors. As William James memorably wrote, “The trail of the human serpent is … over everything.”\textsuperscript{74} But we can seek to critique our biases and faulty judgments, we can strive toward objectivity. This is what critical scholarship means – it entails being careful and self-reflective, and testing our judgments by the metal of cogent method and scholarly debate. This is how Nietzsche (a classical philologist by training) defines objectivity:

“Objectivity”—understood not as “contemplation without interest” (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability to have one’s For and Against under control …. the more eyes, different eyes we can use to observe a thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be.\textsuperscript{75}

This is the way of philological scholarship.

Hugh Williamson responds similarly to the problem of subjectivity in eclectic editions. He notes that “there is an inevitable subjective element which means that scholars will almost always disagree with one another at this point or that.”\textsuperscript{76} Regarding the OHB presentation of critical texts of multiple editions, including Hebrew retroversions from the Greek, he criticizes “the hazardously hypothetical nature of aspects of this programme.”\textsuperscript{77} He writes:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73} E. R. Kenney, \textit{The Classical Text: Aspects of Editing in the Age of the Printed Book} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 136.
\item \textsuperscript{74} William James, \textit{Pragmatism} (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), 53.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{Genealogy of Morals} 3.12; trans. Christoph Cox, \textit{Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 111-112.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Williamson, “Reflections” (see n. 29), 171.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Williamson, “Reflections” (see n. 29), 169.
\end{itemize}
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This would be an extremely interesting scholarly exercise, but whether it would be appropriate for an edition calling itself the Bible is something on which opinions could well differ. However secure the retroversion (and the fact that so much is parallel to MT gives the exercise a greater degree of plausibility than might otherwise be the case) it seems questionable to present the results of what is inevitably scholarly acumen in this manner. It is material for commentaries, monographs and articles rather than a Bible text.78

Because of the inevitable subjectivity in such text-critical work, Williamson argues that it should not be presented in a critical edition, but in other scholarly genres where such subjectivity can be more contained and controlled. But I would aver that if textual criticism is worth doing at all, there is no reason not do it fully, with all the evidence and arguments exposed to critical evaluation. Why should the eclectic method be practiced only covertly or piecemeal, in translations and commentaries?79 If it is legitimate at all, then it should be done with full disclosure. Even if it is a mere “scholarly exercise” involving “scholarly acumen” (what else could it be?), there is no reason to hide it away.

In my view, the debate over subjectivity versus objectivity in textual criticism is misplaced, because it poses a false dichotomy. All of our judgments involve subjectivity. The question ought to be whether a particular critical judgment is warranted, based on cogent analyses and arguments, and alert to scribal practices and historical probabilities. As Kenney writes (echoing Housman), textual criticism is “the art and science of balancing historical

78 Williamson, “Reflections” (see n. 29), 168.

probabilities.”80 The standard cannot be transcendental objectivity, but historical acuity, evidential scope, and explanatory adequacy. That is the best we can do, until someone else does it better. Scholarship is a dialogue and a process, a dialectic that involves elements of subjectivity and objectivity, and that is forever corrigible.

The argument over subjectivity and objectivity in critical editions is aptly addressed by G. Thomas Tanselle, a textual critic of modern English literature:

In the continual give-and-take of arguments over subjectivity and objectivity, some scholars naturally take the position that editions presenting critical texts are less valuable (if granted any value at all) than editions containing facsimile or diplomatic (or computer “hypertext”) reproductions of texts as they appear in extant documents…. But any attempt to argue that they are necessarily superior to critical editions, or indeed that they constitute the only legitimate kind of edition, cannot possibly succeed. The two kinds must always coexist, for they represent two indispensable elements in approaching the past: the ordered presentation of artifactual evidence, and the creation, from that evidence, of versions of past moments that are intended to be more comprehensively faithful than the artifacts themselves – random (and perhaps damaged) survivors as they are…. Critical editions, however, are not merely inevitable; they are desirable. A text reconstructed by a person who is immersed in, and has thought deeply about, the body of surviving evidence relevant to a work, its author, and its time may well teach the rest of us something we could not have discovered for ourselves, even if the reconstruction can never be definitive – and even if, indeed, it places us in a position to criticize its own constitution… Some people may not be interested in reconstructing such events, but their lack of interest cannot render the effort invalid.”81

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80 Kenney, Classical Text (see n. 73), 146.
By “critical editions,” Tanselle refers to editions with critical texts, viz. eclectic editions. There are obvious justifications for eclectic editions, just as there are for other kinds, including diplomatic editions. Each genre of critical edition has its own distinctive virtues and limitations. An eclectic edition may not appeal to the taste of some, for whom it involves “hazardously hypothetical” (Williamson’s phrase) decisions. Tanselle’s point is that such lack of interest does not invalidate the task of producing eclectic editions. It may well be that “the two kinds must always coexist, for they represent two indispensable elements in approaching the past.” An eclectic edition attempts to restore all the recoverable phases of the past, while a diplomatic edition may present the relevant evidence and invite the reader to constitute a private “virtual” critical text. These different approaches are not mutually exclusive, but operate along a range of possible responses to the complicated condition of scribally-transmitted texts.

The debate about eclectic editions is not a new development in biblical scholarship. New Testament scholarship has its own lively history on this topic, beginning with Erasmus’ eclectic edition of 1516. For the Hebrew Bible, this issue became prominent in the late nineteenth century, with the work of Paul de Lagarde, Julius Wellhausen, Karl Heinrich Cornill, and others.82 A key turn in this debate occurred in Theodor Nöldeke’s review of Julius Wellhausen’s Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht (1871). Nöldeke, perhaps the greatest Orientalist of his day, fulminated against the subjectivity of Wellhausen’s eclectic method:

It is unfortunate that even in this book the critic proceeds in an absolutely eclectic fashion, so that the decision between two readings often wholly depends on subjective judgment [....] Wellhausen set his goal to reach virtually the original text. But I hope that no one will be tempted thereby to put his or anyone else’s corrected readings into an edition of the Hebrew text [...] [A] Hebrew edition of the Old Testament should never go

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beyond the Masoretic text. Because, after all, this is a text that once actually had to be reckoned with.83

Nöldeke’s critique sets the table for Brooke, Tov, and Williamson: the subjectivity of eclectic method should preclude the production of eclectic editions. The very idea, he says, “provokes a gentle shudder in my philological sensibility.”84

Nöldeke’s warning, that “a Hebrew edition of the Old Testament should never go beyond the Masoretic text,” was quoted approvingly by Rudolf Kittel in his prolegomena to the Biblia Hebraica project. Kittel (like Tov) regarded an eclectic edition as a valid goal in theory, but not in practice. Because of the subjectivity of the eclectic method, he argued (like Williamson) that such scholarship should be practiced only in scholarly commentaries and monographs:

One should collect these pieces in commentaries and handbooks and use them for scholarly purposes, as well as one can depending on the degree of certainty of the respective suggestion: but one cannot produce a text edition of the Old Testament with them. On these points I can only agree with Nöldeke’s warning.85

Nöldeke’s warning continues to reverberate today in the criticisms of eclectic method and eclectic editions.

Adrian Schenker and Philippe Hugo update these arguments by emphasizing the degree of conjecture involved in producing an eclectic edition. They rightly emphasize the degree of uncertainty involved when retroverting Hebrew readings from the LXX, the difficulty of establishing the relationships among variant editions, and the hypothetical status of critical texts

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83 Theodor Nöldeke, review of Wellhausen, Der Text der Bücher Samuelis, Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie (1873): 118.
84 Nöldeke, review of Wellhausen (see n. 83), 118.
85 Kittel, Über die Notwendigkeit (see n. 19), 33.
of the LXX. They argue, for instance, that reproducing the earlier edition of Jeremiah by retroverting the Hebrew of the parent text of the OG “contains too great a hypothetical proportion for it to be edited like the Hebrew text that is more original. This is the reason that leads one to think that that it is more reasonable to renounce it [viz. an eclectic edition].”86 Because of the degree of uncertainty, “it appears wiser to reproduce a concrete historical text – as does BHK, BHS, and HUB – rather than establish a critical text.”87 This is a reasonable position, but it relies on a choice of how much uncertainty is too much, not whether uncertainty is permissible in scholarship. I would aver that the degree of conjecture involved in establishing the substantive readings of the earlier edition of Jeremiah is relatively small; as Williamson observes (above), “the fact that so much is parallel to MT gives the exercise a greater degree of plausibility than might otherwise be the case.” There is no reason to renounce conjecture as such in textual criticism, just as there is no justification for disallowing conjectural emendations.88

The OHB has its precursors in the tradition of Wellhausen and other critics. For such scholars an eclectic edition of the Hebrew Bible is a desirable goal, however difficult it may be to accomplish.89 Wellhausen’s diagnosis of the problematic state of textual criticism in his day

86 Schenker and Hugo, “Histoire” (see n. 29), 30.
87 Schenker and Hugo, “Histoire” (see n. 29), 27.
89 Cf. the comment of James Barr: “It may prove for a long time practically difficult to carry out Hendel’s plan over the entire Bible, but the principle is an important one” (review of Invitation to the Septuagint, by K. H. Jobes and M. Silva, Review of Biblical Literature [2002]: 14).
is illuminating in ours, as is his concept of a richer and more methodologically self-conscious textual criticism:

In this book I want to make a contribution to a future edition of the Old Testament. Directly, through a series of finished corrections that I submit; indirectly, through the method with which I obtain them. I am compelled to give the method as much weight as the results. It seems to me that textual criticism of the Old Testament is done too sporadically these days. One is content with individual emendations without engaging in a coherent assessment of the nature of the transmitted texts – one does not first attempt to learn about the constitution of the patient as a whole, but starts treating him immediately. Due to the nature of the variants, a more comprehensive approach seems worthwhile, especially in the case of the Old Testament, and it bears, especially here, the most rewarding fruit.  

The common practice of textual criticism, in his day and ours, consists of ad hoc and desultory emendations of the MT, without the necessary deep knowledge of the textual conditions and history of the biblical book in question. Wellhausen compares this to a doctor who treats a patient’s symptom immediately, without first assessing the health and history of the patient as a whole. Such a doctor is guilty of malpractice. One wants a trained and experienced doctor to conduct a full assessment of the patient’s condition as a precondition for diagnosis and treatment. The same condition obtains in textual criticism – although, happily, with less dire consequences. Wellhausen advocates an eclectic method based on detailed and comprehensive approach to the textual condition of a given book, which will inevitably produce more accurate diagnoses. This is the methodological ideal of our project. Each OHB volume will present – in its introduction and commentary – a full investigation of the textual history and constitution of the book (including the translation techniques, multiple editions, etc.), on which basis judicious decisions can yield, as Wellhausen says, rewarding fruit.

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90 Julius Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1871), iii.
I turn finally to address some less weighty arguments advanced by Brooke against eclectic editions. He states that such editions “might well lead to ignoring the authoritative text which the majority of those using the text experience.”91 It is difficult to see how or why this should be so, since the MT is the only fully preserved Hebrew manuscript tradition of the Hebrew Bible, and as such will obviously not be displaced by a scholarly edition. Most scholars will use the OHB and the BHQ side by side, so there is no chance of the MT disappearing even in scholarly circles. Brooke also argues that “eclectic texts should be avoided for the very reason that they minimize the contribution of individual scribes and the specific creative traditions to which they may severally belong.”92 In my view the opposite is the case. The OHB highlights the “contribution of individual scribes” and their “creative traditions” in the extensive commentary that surrounds the critical text. The genre of an eclectic edition is arguably an ideal instrument for observing the creative activities of scribes and their hermeneutics, since in this genre are they fully collected and discussed. An eclectic edition articulates the history of readings, such that one can observe the contributions of the scribes. Brooke further claims that “it is … important to resist eclectic editions of the Hebrew Bible, because it is becoming increasingly evident that each scriptural book has its own complex story to tell.”93 As stated above, an eclectic edition is precisely the place to explore and explain the complex story of each biblical book. This is a reason to embrace such editions, where the complex textual history of the book is a primary focus.

Regarding other aspects of biblical studies, Brooke objects that “The production of eclectic editions … encourages the continuation of the divorce of text criticism from other more literary approaches to the scriptural text.”94 In my view, once again, the reverse is the case. An eclectic edition highlights the textuality of a book in a way that that opens up its plural discursive, interpretive, and historical features, including its earliest reception. As I have elsewhere shown (using the example of 1 Samuel 17), the textual condition of biblical books is,

91 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 39.
92 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 39.
93 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 40.
94 Brooke, “Demise” (see n. 39), 40.
rightly viewed, a stimulus to literary criticism.95 The increasing sophistication of our knowledge of the Bible’s text should serve to break down artificial boundaries in biblical criticism, not reinforce them. In sum, Brooke’s fears about the dangers of eclectic editions are unwarranted, and may be better reformulated as notable advantages.

3. Our limited knowledge of textual history.

In the general introduction to BHQ, Schenker argues that the many lacunae in our knowledge of the textual history of the Hebrew Bible is sufficient reason to reject the production of an eclectic text: “not enough is known about the history of the development of the text of the Hebrew Bible and its various textual traditions to give a sound basis for constructing an eclectic text.”96 It is true that there is much we do not know about textual history. Nonetheless, I submit that if the goal is a corrected archetype and not a perfect Urtext, then we know enough about textual history to proceed. We are limited by the lacuna in our knowledge: our earliest manuscripts are from the third century B.C.E., whereas the originals (however one construes their form) of some biblical books are at least two centuries earlier. We can pursue the archetype of the surviving manuscripts, but we do not have the capacity to pursue the original. We can do only what our evidence and method allows us to do, and no more. As with any species of historical inquiry, we are limited by our understanding of the data and the efficacy of our scholarly procedures.

Granting the limits of our knowledge, we have sufficient evidence to correct obvious scribal errors, to adjudicate among variants, to propose responsible conjectures, and to ascertain the historical genealogy of the manuscripts to a reasonable but limited extent. That is to say, we can do textual criticism, even if our results are necessarily provisional and subject to debate. Because of the discovery and study of the Qumran scrolls, we know far more than our predecessors, but our knowledge is still finite. Nonetheless, this is a normal situation in textual criticism of other literatures. As Robert Browning observes regarding the limits of knowledge in

Classics: “our ignorance of the history of most Greek texts, in particular prose texts, is still abysmal.”

Yet capable critical editions of Greek prose texts continue to be produced. The situation is not different for the Hebrew Bible. As Sebastiano Timpanaro wisely comments regarding other premodern books:

The practical exigency remains that certain critical editions not be postponed forever for the sake of studying the history of the tradition in all its smallest details, that scholars not bury themselves so deeply in the study of medieval and Humanist culture that they forget to return to textual criticism.

By the same reasoning, textual critics of the Hebrew Bible should not bury themselves in the historical problems so deeply that they forget to do textual criticism. Specialized studies are a necessary prolegomena to the production of critical editions, but there is no reason to postpone the latter until the former are complete. Specialized studies and critical eclectic editions should work in tandem, stimulating each other to greater sophistication.

A practical objection regarding our limited knowledge of textual history is advanced by Tov. He rightly states that an eclectic edition must make decisions on many topics that are not well understood. He writes:

The creation of an eclectic edition involves the finding of solutions to all issues, including many which one would otherwise delegate to an apparatus. It requires solutions to small and large problems, many of which perhaps cannot be solved. Who can determine whether the text sequence of the Septuagint of Proverbs is preferable to that of the MT? Which chronology, that of the MT, the Samaritan Pentateuch, or the Septuagint, should one prefer in Genesis? In Kings, should one prefer the chronology of the Lucianic text to that of MT? Should we present as original the earlier Septuagint

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98 Timpanaro, Genesis (see n. 5), 138.
edition of Joshua-Judges, which combines these two books while omitting Judg 1:1-3:11?\textsuperscript{99}

These are pertinent questions, which an eclectic edition must address. I would add that these are fascinating and complex issues, which require all the acumen that a textual critic can muster. These are the kinds of puzzles that make textual criticism intellectually challenging and (dare I say it?) fun, where academic inquiry takes on the color of a Sherlock Holmes mystery.\textsuperscript{100}

The solutions adopted in the OHB are as follows:

(1) Since the textual history of Proverbs is so complex that one cannot in many places restore a plausible archetype, the Proverbs volume (by Michael V. Fox) will produce a corrected hyparchetype of the proto-M family in the critical text, and will fully comment on the corrected hyparchetype of proto-G textual family in the commentary, including instances where this branch preserves Hebrew verses that are lacking in the proto-M family.\textsuperscript{101}

(2) The Genesis volume (by Ronald Hendel) will reconstruct the archetype of the three editions of the chronology in Genesis 5 and 11 in the critical text, and will discuss the motives for the scribal revisions in the introduction and the commentary, with full details about the proto-M, Proto-SP, and proto-G editions. I have addressed this topic in previous publications.\textsuperscript{102}

(3) In Kings, I have argued that the proto-M chronology should be preferred to the proto-G chronology, which is mostly preserved in the Lucianic text. The variants in the proto-G chronology, as Wellhausen, Gooding, and others have argued, are best construed as the result of a systematic revision, motivated by a local exegetical problem regarding the accession date of

\textsuperscript{99} Tov, “Canon” (see n. 72), 246.

\textsuperscript{100} The comparison with the evidential and inferential procedures of detectives is not idle; see the elucidation of the “conjectural paradigm” by Carlo Ginzburg, \textit{Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96-125, esp. 107-108 on textual criticism.

\textsuperscript{101} Fox, “Editing Proverbs” (see n. 4).

The editors of 1 Kings (Jan Joosten) and 2 Kings (Andrés Piquer Otero) will present the earliest recoverable form of the chronology in the critical text, with the later edition presented in a parallel column and discussed in the commentary.

(4) The Joshua volume (by Leonard Greenspoon and Michaël van der Meer) will present the LXX plus in Josh 24:33a-b in a parallel column (in Hebrew retroversion). This plus is clearly from a Hebrew parent text, but it is arguably a secondary expansion, motivated by the exegetical problem of the disappearance of the high priest Phineas in the subsequent narrative. A revising scribe supplied a ritual ceremony for the death of Phineas’ father, Eliezer, a summary of Phineas’ subsequent career and death, and then a transition to the book of Judges in which Israel goes astray after Phineas’ death (harmonized with Judg 2:11-13 and, oddly, 3:14). The editors will argue that this plus is not a remnant of an earlier edition (pace Alexander Rofé and Tov). They will show that this plus is not isolated, but has parallels in G-Josh 6:26, 16:10, 19:47a-48a, and 21:42a-d, which are essential in assessing the plus in Josh 24:33a-b.

These specific answers to Tov’s questions should emphasize the kind of work involved in producing the OHB. We will certainly not solve every problem to everyone’s satisfaction. We will rely on the guild of textual critics to point out the flaws in our arguments and to propose more compelling solutions. It will not be a perfect edition, which in any case is hardly thinkable. But it will involve serious efforts to expand our knowledge and to stimulate further work on the most interesting problems of our discipline.

Conclusions

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The OHB, as I have previously suggested, will complement the other critical editions of the Hebrew Bible. The BHQ is a diplomatic editio minor, the HUB is a diplomatic editio maior, and the OHB will be an eclectic editio maior. This triad is comparable to the situation for the Septuagint, for which Rahlfs is an eclectic editio minor, the Cambridge Septuagint a diplomatic editio maior, and the Göttingen Septuagint an eclectic editio maior. Each of these critical editions has its distinctive uses and virtues, with the Göttingen edition as the most recent and ambitious undertaking. An eclectic edition does not replace diplomatic editions, but rather sets its sights on a different aim. The OHB aims to identify and restore the earliest inferable text and the later editions of biblical books (or portions thereof). The aim is to represent and discuss the full panorama of textual history, from a book’s corrected archetype(s) to the latest scribal changes in the major manuscripts. This is an ambitious goal, which requires wide learning, keen judgment, and considerable effort.

While the OHB is complementary to the other critical editions, it also operates by a different theory of what a critical edition ought to do. In this respect, the OHB hews to a more traditional scholarly standard than the other editions. I have quoted Paul Maas: “The business of textual criticism is to produce a text as close as possible to the original (constitutio textus).” This is a restatement of the classical goal of the Renaissance Humanists, the Alexandrian textual critics, and, at least in part, the Tiberian Masoretes. The preservation and restoration of important texts is an age-old activity, even as its methods have been sharpened by the historical and philological procedures of modern textual critics.

In contrast to this goal, the BHQ straddles the divide between an eclectic apparatus and a presentation of (and often, a preference for) the MT as the authoritative canonical text. This is an odd yoking of textual criticism and theology, which yields what James Barr described (for BHS and BHK) as an eccentric method:

[This approach to the] editing of the text of the Hebrew Bible has had something of the schizophrenic about it. In printing the text the aim has been the faithful reproduction of the Massorethic original taken as model; in the apparatus (or apparatuses, since the kinds of evidence may have to be separated out) the editor betrays his awareness that the text he has printed may be very remote from that which was written by the biblical writer, or from that which was current at the end of the biblical period. Here he adds variant
readings that may have been suggested by the Septuagint, by the Samaritan, or simply by the ingenuity of modern scholars. Might it not therefore be better to seek to print the text that the editor thinks is the farthest back that the evidence can reach?

Barr’s question urges that we return to a more consistent model of textual criticism, which the OHB has taken up and refined.

In its juxtaposition of the apparatus and the MT, the HUB is more theoretically consistent than BHQ, but in the opposite direction. It eschews the validity of textual judgments, since, in the view of the project’s founders and directors, these are tainted by subjectivity. The HUB is dedicated to an unassailable facticity. As Talmon states: “The HUB presents the textual facts without assessing their comparative merits or professing preference for one or the other reading.”105 This is a reasonable position, but a presentation of a mountain of facts without “assessing their comparative merits” is no longer textual criticism, which by definition requires judgment, κριτικός. To echo Housman, “That is its definition, that is what the name denotes.”106

The HUB is a magnificent production, a labyrinth of real and pseudo-variants. But by failing to distinguish consistently between real and apparent variants (it does this intermittently), the HUB falls short of its aim of presenting the facts. It presents the simulacrum of textual facts, some of which are translational phenomena, and others insignificant medieval spelling and graphic errors that do not reflect ancient variants. Even the modest goal of presenting the facts turns out to involve text-critical decisions. In its latest volume the editors appropriately state: “the full description of the process of digesting the evidence and a comprehensive philological and textual commentary remain a desideratum.”107 The OHB is dedicated precisely to this task.

The OHB represents a refinement of the model of textual criticism produced by nineteenth century textual critics such as Karl Lachmann and, in our field, Wellhausen and Carl Heinrich Cornill. We have learned much since their time – we have more data (the Qumran

106 See above, n. 70.
texts), more textual resources (e.g., the Göttingen Septuagint, the Leiden Peshitta), and more precision in our text-critical methods.\textsuperscript{108} This model of a critical edition entails that specialists who know intimately the complexities of a particular book exercise their critical judgment in assessing the textual data. Readers of the OHB can agree or disagree with the editor’s judgments, but at least they will have an opportunity to engage with the text under expert tutelage. Like Wellhausen’s doctor, the OHB editors are trained diagnosticians. Not everyone is – or wants to be – a textual critic, and those who are innocent of the discipline should not be faced with the choice between MT (“because it exists”) or their own stabs at textual decisions. Textual critics arguably have a responsibility to do textual criticism and to share their judgments with others. The OHB represents a return to this goal.

The OHB is an eclectic edition. But in a sense the critical text of the OHB will be less eclectic than the existing manuscripts and editions, which mingle early readings with secondary scribal errors and revisions. Some scholars will, with Dominique Barthélemy, “prefer a text form which is ‘wrong’ (= of inferior quality)” because it is traditional and hence more authoritative.\textsuperscript{109} But many will prefer to read a critical text, as one does in New Testament studies and other scholarly fields. We will present the biblical text in a panoramic fashion, with the critical text in the middle, surrounded by a commentary on the scribal changes. Where there are multiple editions, we will present them in parallel columns, so that the emergence of textual plurality becomes available to the reader. The OHB will not be a static text, but a dynamic representation of the textual history and details of scribal exegesis in each biblical book. (The electronic version, the Digital OHB, will further advance the representational possibilities.\textsuperscript{110}) This is our theory of what a critical edition should be. It will not be a perfect edition. But it will

\textsuperscript{108} At the risk of inundating the reader, I will cite only Emanuel Tov, The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.; Jerusalem: Simor, 1997); and idem, Textual Criticism (see n. 14), with ample bibliography.

\textsuperscript{109} Barthélemy, Studies (see n. 88), 96.

\textsuperscript{110} The design and capabilities of the Digital OHB are still in process and will be presented on another occasion.
be a considerable advance and, if my guess is right, will stimulate the field of biblical scholarship in unexpected ways.\footnote{My thanks to the OHB editors whom I consulted on various aspects of this essay, including Michael V. Fox, Jan Joosten, Andrés Piquer-Otero, Leonard Greenspoon, Michaël van der Meer, and Gary Knoppers, and the other editors and advisors who have given richly of their expertise. Thanks also to Scott-Martin Kosofsky for his design and typography of the following sample. The Hebrew type is by Matthew Carter and Scott-Martin Kosofsky, after Guillaume Le Bé’s “Texte Hébreu” (1568), which he created for the Antwerp Polyglot of 1569-73.}