Themes and morality in the literary texts from the Babylonian scribal school curriculum

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Introduction

The Mesopotamian scribal school system was designed to instruct scribes in the Sumero-Akkadian cuneiform writing tradition. The places where instruction took place were known as Eduba (or Edubba), *tablet houses*, in Sumerian. Practice tablets containing teaching exercises and interpreted as evidence of scribal schools have been found in several buildings dating to the Old Babylonian period. The current archaeological evidence suggests that this schooling took place in private residences (Robson 2001: 62). Scribal training must have existed before this period to support the bureaucracy of the Sumerian and Akkadian states during the 3rd millennium (Lucas 1979: 306-308). It is unclear, however, how similar this training would have been to the Old Babylonian school system.

Preserved Old Babylonian texts about scribal instruction reference a large institution at odds with the archaeological evidence for teaching in private residences (Delnero 2019). Delnero argued that the description is too specific to be purely exaggeration and George (2005) has suggested that these narratives reference scribal schools in the preceding Ur III period. A hymn to Šulgi, the second king of Ur III, also praises him for founding two scribal 'schools' (Šulgi B 308-10). Despite this textual evidence, no concentrations of practice tablets have been found akin to the Old Babylonian Eduba for earlier periods (Woods 2006: 110). This may be because schooling took a different form, tablets were recycled or due to accident of discovery. Regardless, the first archaeological evidence for 'schools' dates to the 18th century BCE. An important contextual consideration is that by this time Sumerian, which was the primary language taught in the Eduba, had died out or was declining as a spoken language (Woods 2006).

Examination of the tablet remains from the Old Babylonian schools have revealed a pan-regional core curriculum used to instruct scribes in training (Robson 2001; Tinney 1999). The curriculum included sign and lexical lists, legal contracts, proverbs and numerical and literary texts. All of these genres excepting literary texts were taught at a beginner-intermediate stage of learning, whereas literary texts were taught at a more advanced stage (Tinney 1999). Literary texts taught included laments and hymns, letters, epics, law codes and what has been termed by modern scholars as School Dialogues. Tinney identified a group of four literary compositions used for intermediate training, 'the Tetrad', consisting of *Lipit-Eštar B*, *Iddin-Dagan B*, *Enlil-bani A* and *Nisaba A*. At a more advanced stage the 'the Decad' consisting of *Šulgi A*, *Lipit-Eštar A*, *the Song of the Hoe*, *Inana B*, *Enlil in the Ekur*, *the Kesh Temple Hymn*, *Enki's Journey to Nippur*, *Inana and Ebiḫ*, *the Nungal hymn* and *Gilgameš and Huwawa*, along with other compositions, were taught. These texts have been found in sites across southern Mesopotamia (Carr 2005: 22), but the overwhelming majority of extant manuscripts come from Nippur and Ur. Delnero (2010) has called into question that 'the Decad'

texts represented a curricular sequence, arguing that lists in which the texts are grouped represent inventories of tablets for archival purposes. However, these texts were certainly taught in scribal schools and in this thesis the content of the composition and frequency with which it occurs are the important factors, not their curricular order in scribal education. It is also worth noting that the scribal curriculum at different schools was not completely standardised as the proliferation of individual texts varies and some literary compositions such as 'the fourteen' from Nippur are only attested at this site (Robson 2001: 54-55).

Many of the compositions in the scribal curriculum were created before the Old Babylonian period such as the Inana hymns attributed to Enheduanna, high priestess during the Old Akkadian Empire. In addition, the original purpose of many texts was not scribal instruction, such as the debate literature between animals and nature (e.g. Tree and Reed) which was probably created as entertainment for the kings of the Ur III period (Lambert 1960). As most of the copies of Sumerian literary texts originate from school copies (Taylor 2013: 290), it is, unfortunately, difficult to determine to what degree such compositions preserved their original form or were altered over time. Regardless, the selection of these compositions for the scribal curriculum indicates that the teachers thought they were relevant to scribal education.

Veldhuis (2004: 46, 66) has argued that the focus on Sumerian (an antiquated dead or dying language) in the curriculum was used to manufacture prestige for the legitimisation of an elite identity. The learning of Sumerian literature also created a sense of shared tradition and history which was a unifying factor during changing times (*ibid*). On a smaller scale, it has been argued that particular Sumerian literary texts were selected for 'didactic reasons' in order to teach various lexical and grammatical forms (Delnero 2012: 190). It is probable that cultural and ideological factors related to elitism and legitimisation, as well as pedagogy, played a part in the choice of scribal curriculum. However, I raise the possibility that literary texts were also used to impress ideals about correct human behaviour or morality upon students.

Carr (2005) has discussed the enculturation nascent scribes underwent as part of their schooling. He uses this term to describe how a sense of scribal "personhood" was instilled in students in order to prepare them for membership in the exclusive sect of intellectual elite. The Eduba is described as an institution which opens the eyes of scribes and endows an individual with humanity (*ibid.* 31). These qualities were instilled through the exaltation of archaic material, exposure to the values expressed in the curricular texts and punishment for disobedience and mistakes (*ibid.* 32). The type of person who was formed was an intellectual, a Sumerian and subservient to their teachers and the king. Though the humanity referred to seems to have been tied heavily to intellectualism and

Sumerianism rather than morality as it might be considered in a modern sense, other moral teachings frequently appear in the compositions which plausibly were also used to shape scribal identity.

Literary compositions and proverbs contain messages and beliefs about the world and how humans should behave (Pryke 2016). Some of the proverbs and narratives in the curriculum relate to proper decorum in a scribal school; the composition *Schooldays* indicates that it is not acceptable to speak in Akkadian or leave the classroom without permission (Kramer 1964: 238-239). Though it has been argued that this may have been caricature (Carr 2005: 18), the inclusion of school literature in the curriculum decreeing rules or ideals for scribes is clear evidence that texts were selected with something other than just pedagogy or elite ideology in mind. Therefore, it seems plausible that a moral agenda could have also been involved in the selection of the curriculum.

This thesis will investigate this possibility by analysing the most commonly attested literary texts in the Old Babylonian curriculum to see if any common themes regarding proper behaviour emerge. The compositions considered include the previously mentioned Decad along with 26 other compositions which have been attested at 'school' sites in Nippur (house F) and Ur (no.1 broad street). It was not possible to source direct translations for the tablets recovered from these sites and therefore the translations used in this thesis are from composite versions of the texts from sources such as ETCSL, CDLI and published editions. Because of this, the composite versions of the texts may be slightly different from the versions of these manuscripts found in these two schools.

Table 1. The literary texts attested at House F and No.1 Broad Street in addition to the Decad.

Genre	**Compositions***
School Dialogues	A Class Reunion/ A dialogue between two scribes (Dialogue 1)
	Enkihegal and Enkitalu (Dialogue 2)
	Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum (Dialogue 3)
	Father and Son (Eduba B)
	Two women (Dialogue 5)
Debate literature	Bird and Fish
	Hoe and Plough
	Sheep and Grain
	Winter and Summer
Laments	The lamentation over the destruction of Sumer and Ur
	The Nippur lament
	The Ur lament
Praise poems and hymns	Enlil-bani A
	Išme-Dagan A
	Ninurta's return to Nippur
	Šulgi B
	The exploits of Ninurta
Narratives and miscellaneous works	Dumuzid's dream
	Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld
	Inana and Shu-kale-tuda
	Inana's descent to the Netherworld
	Lugalbanda and the anzud bird

	Lugalbanda in the mountain cave
	The Cursing of Agade
	The instructions of Shuruppag
	The history of the Tummal

*The literary texts *Išbi-Erra E*, *Tree and Reed* and *the lament of Lisin*, though attested at both House F and no.1 broad street, are not considered in this thesis as a translation was either not available or the manuscripts were too incomplete to allow for any meaningful analysis.

In this thesis, morality is defined as the correct way of behaving or qualities of an ideal person. This consequently includes qualities not considered morals in the modern sense such as wisdom. Many morals and themes necessarily occur in the literary texts. Most of the compositions mention the gods and a considerable number of morals arise through their praise; the virtues they possess or establish for humankind and the vices they punish or prevent are frequently listed. However, there is not space in this thesis to fully consider every moral evoked. Therefore, priority is given to morals which occur most often or are attached to narrative lessons/the theme of the composition. The reasoning for this is the assumption that the Babylonian scribes who established the curriculum would have given precedence to the morals which they believed were most important or those they most wished to impress upon their audience. The themes and morals which become evident in this study will shed light on the type of character the scribal instructors were attempting to mould in their students. These factors will be investigated by addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the most prominent themes and morals attested in the Old Babylonian Scribal curriculum?
2. Why might these morals have been desirable qualities for scribal students?
3. Was there a moral agenda in the curriculum or are the morals contained merely a by-product of the scribal perspective?

Chapter 1: Hierarchy and three associated morals

Introduction

A prominent theme in almost every literary composition is the hierarchy of the Sumerian/Babylonian world in which humans are ultimately subservient to gods but are also stratified in relation to one another. Three interlinked morals are tied to this theme: respect for authority/betters, obedience and humility. Respecting those above you is a virtue which maintains the established world order. Obedience to these authority figures is a form of respect. An injunction against boasting also prevents individuals from stepping beyond their place, which is a mistake repeatedly punished in different literary compositions. There are loopholes to these morals which are related to ability: those who are worthy can prove themselves by challenging equals or authority figures. In this way, they might disrespect authority figures by boasting or disobeying their orders. As these three morals are strongly linked in several compositions they are considered together in this chapter.

Social stratification in the curricular literature

The Sumero-Babylonian world depicted in the literature was organised on a hierarchical basis. In Sumerian texts, kings, slaves and rich men occur and the existence of other classes or social groups is alluded to through the work and pedigree of characters and their contrast with others of differing status. The compositions frequently depict individuals (and inanimate objects) under the authority of or coming into conflict with their betters – a category which includes gods, kings, teachers, family members and rich and learned men. These differing social statuses are displayed as a natural part of the world order; a destiny is "fixed" by the gods and cannot be altered. This statement is repeated in several compositions, for example:

> "The import of the exalted word Enlil speaks is artfully wrought, the verdict he pronounces is one which cannot be altered -- who can change it?" (*Winter and Summer* 304-309)
>
> "Its fate cannot be changed. Who can overturn it? It is the command of An and Enlil. Who can oppose it?" (*Lament over the destruction of Sumer and Ur* 56-57)
>
> "The lord evaluated the hoe, determined its future destiny and placed a holy crown on its head" (Song of the Hoe 8-17)
>
> "the magnificent lady [Inana] who gathers up the divine powers of heaven and earth and rivals great An, is mightiest among the great gods -- she makes their verdicts final.
> The Anuna gods crawl before her august word whose course she does not let An know; he dares not proceed against her command" (*Inana Hymn C* 1-10)

The impossibility of changing the decree of the gods is illustrated in the Cursing of Agade which describes the end of the Old Akkadian Empire. In the text, the king Naram-Suen attempts to "alter

Enlil's pronouncement" and prevent the destruction of his city (*The Cursing of Agade* 94-99). His actions are decried as futile throughout and the composition ends with the total destruction of Agade (Akkad).

The importance of hierarchy in the Sumero-Babylonian world is exemplified not only by its thematic omnipresence in multiple compositions but also by a genre of literature called debate literature. These compositions follow a standard formula in which two people, animals or inanimate objects, engage in a verbal debate over who is superior. The debate is settled when parties involved appeal to a judge, most often the gods Enlil or Enki, or occasionally the second king of the Ur III period, Šulgi, who decrees the victor and superior party.[1] At the end of these debates we end with a hierarchy of three, the loser of the debate at the bottom, the winner above them, and the ultimate authority, the judge of the debate, at the top. The message is clear: the gods reign supreme and underneath them, every being has its place and importance in the world. The apparent need for the total establishment of hierarchy is evident in the ranking of colleagues, "sisters" and "brothers", animals and inanimate objects, groups in which theoretically equal parties could exist or who to the modern audience ranking might seem redundant:

> "Then Enki spoke to Enlil: "Father Enlil, **Sheep and Grain should be sisters!** They should stand together!.....**But of the two, Grain shall be the greater.** Let Sheep fall on her knees before Grain. Let her kiss the feet….People should submit to the yoke of Grain." (*Sheep and Grain* 180-191)

The judges' verdict (excerpt above) on such a debate indicates that no conflict was perceived between the posited sisterly relationship and one party submitting to the other. It is clear then that even among the same social rank, individuals could still be superior to one another and that hierarchical ranking between all beings was simply accepted as a fact of life. The School Dialogues also show that ranking was established between students. The position of "big brother" occurs in several compositions and it is clear that this term denoted a more experienced student who had an authoritative role over his classmates. Indeed, in *Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum*, the younger student is punished for challenging and disrespecting his "big brother". Overall, the curricular literature suggests that there was no such thing as equals in the Sumerian world.

In debate literature, the opponents display their verbal prowess through exchanging insults with one other in order to establish who was the superior party. It has been argued that this was to demonstrate to scribes their need for eloquence and hard work in order to succeed (Adams 1986).

[1] It should be noted that Šulgi deified himself during his lifetime (Kramer 1964: 69), therefore his portrayal as a god-like figure in these narratives is consistent with the utilisation of other deities as judges.

This is a believable reason for the proliferation of debate literature in the curriculum as they were doubtless desirable qualities in students and qualified scribes alike. Debate-style performances may have also been central to scribal education as proficiency in speaking and reciting was considered as important as written ability (Carr 2005: 21). However, it should be noted that the debate literature does not imply that eloquence and hard work are the measuring sticks which decide the outcome of the debate, in fact, they once again highlight that the opinion of the gods is the decider of a person's value. Sometimes the adjudicator of the debate appears to decide a person's worth based on their pedigree e.g. in *Bird and Fish* the bird (who is the victor) boasts that he delights the king with song and that "I am of first-class seed, and my young are first-born young!" (*Bird and Fish* 125-136). The fish, who is the loser, makes no such lofty claims. The argument over superiority in this debate focuses on whom each party is more useful to and the implicit message through the victory of the bird is that serving the great is more important than serving the lowly. Likewise, in *Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum*, a School Dialogue, the victor of the debate between two schoolboys at one point boasts that he is the son of a Sumerian scribe, a sign of prestige that his competitor lacks (Kramer 1964: 242). Only in *the debate between Hoe and Plough* does the object of less pedigree, the hoe ("wood of the poor man's hand, not fit for the hands of high-ranking persons"), triumph over its more exalted competitor. But it should be noted that in this case, the hoe, despite not being utilised by kings, was more important to the gods:

> "Then the Hoe addressed the Plough: "Plough, what does my being small matter to me, what does my being exalted matter to me, what does my being powerful matter to me? -- at Enlil's place I take precedence over you, in Enlil's temple I stand ahead of you." (*Hoe and Plough* 63-66)

This evidence indicates that godly favour was the pathway to success and seems to suggest that hard work, although desirable, was only as important as the value of the task to the gods.

Other curricular literature also demonstrates that the gods decide who are the "important and valued persons"[2], they "bestow" rank and kingship and also gift talented humans their abilities:

> "She [Inana] endowed its [Akkad's] old women with the gift of giving counsel, she endowed its old men with the gift of eloquence. She endowed its young women with the gift of entertaining, she endowed its young men with martial might, she endowed its little ones with joy." (*The Cursing of Agade* 25-39)

Equally, these gifts can be taken away whenever the gods choose it:

> "Not even five or ten days had passed and Ninurta brought the jewels of rulership, the royal crown, the emblem and the royal throne bestowed on Agade, back into

[2] (*Song of the Hoe* 28-34)

> his Ešumeša. Utu took away the eloquence of the city. Enki took away its wisdom." (*The Cursing of* Agade 66-76)

In a similar manner to the gods' endowment of humans, teachers also bestow wisdom upon their students. This can be seen in the School Dialogue, *Schooldays*,[3] in which a graduate of the Eduba recounts his experience at school:

> "Then did the father in the joy of his heart say joyfully to the headmaster of the school: "My little fellow has opened (wide) his hand, (and) you made wisdom enter there; you showed him all the fine points of the scribal art; you made him see the solutions of the mathematical and arithmetical (problems), you (taught him how) to make deep (?) the cuneiform script (?)." (Kramer 1964: 239)

So, despite the moral lessons for scribes that appear in texts such as not to be lazy, the emphasis is placed on the fact that value is given rather than earned. The message that powers are bestowed by a better are even present in narratives about the gods.

> "(Inana announced:) "An, my father, I greet you! Lend your ear to my words. You have made me terrifying among the deities in heaven. Owing to you my word has no rival in heaven or on earth. You have given me the.....and the šilig weapon, the antibal and mansium emblems." (*Inana and Ebih* 65-69)

Hierarchy was thus portrayed as a reflection of the natural order. Some of the moral instruction which appears in these literary texts is tied to how individuals respect and relate to this world order.

Respecting authority

Since social stratification is so intrinsic to the Sumerian world, the expectation of submission to authority is frequently depicted in narratives and also in the epithets of gods.[4] Even mundane processes like farming are steeped in the language of subjugation:

> "It is you, hoe, that extend the good agricultural land! The hoe subdues for its owner any agricultural lands that have been recalcitrant against their owner, any agricultural lands that have not submitted to their owner. It chops the heads off the vile esparto grasses, yanks them out at their roots, and tears at their stalks. The hoe also subdues the *hirin* weeds." (*Song of the Hoe* 94-106)

In a world where submission to betters was demanded, respect for authority was a moral of utmost importance. Respect is always shown through obedience, so these morals are henceforth considered as synonymous. The benefits of espousing the moral of respect are that it reinforces adherence to

[3] This composition was not included as "common" curricular literature as it was not attested at both the school sites mentioned in this thesis, however an example from it has been used because as a School Dialogue it is inexorably tied to scribal identity and behaviour.

[4] "Like a fearsome lion you pacify the insubordinate and unsubmissive with your gall." (Inana and Ebih 7-9); "Hero striding formidably into battle; Lord whose powerful arm is fit to bear the mace, reaping like barley the necks of the insubordinate.." (*The Exploits of Ninurta* 1-16)

existing social structures and cultural norms. It may have also helped maintain unity and prevent disputes among members of the elite scribal sect (Ceccarelli 2018: 142). This moral was therefore instrumental in preparing scribes for their future. It was doubtless also used to encourage good behaviour and obedience at school and home. These places repeatedly occur in the literature as locations for which the moral of respect is demonstrated, for instance in *Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum, Father and Son* and *Enkihegal and Enkitalu.*

Compositions frequently instruct that respect to authority is necessary by depicting the negative consequences and sometimes chaos which results from defying the orders of betters. This theme is clearly expressed in the School Dialogues in which teachers and more experienced students are owed obedience and disrespect of these figures is punished. In *Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum* a schoolboy stepping out of his place in the hierarchy of the school and disrespecting a more experienced student warrants punishment:

> "Komm, Enkimanšum, kleines Kind, das die Tafeln nicht kennt! Warum hast du gegenüber einem geprahlt, der deinem Geburtsstand überlegen ist und die Schreiberkunst besser als du kennt? Indem du ihn geschmäht hast, hast du ihn verleumdet und beleidigt! Mein ‚großer Bruder', höre auf die Worte der Schüler! Wenn du ihnen darauf wütend antwortest, bringst du mich dazu, – mein ‚großer Bruder' – eine Strafe aufzuerlegen. Genau, ich werde dir eine Strafe auferlegen!" (*Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum* b 32-40)[5]

Other compositions also depict the punishments that befall those who do not respect and submit to authority. In *Inana Hymn C*, *Išme-Dagan A* and *the Song of the Hoe* the ability of the gods Inana, Enlil and Ninurta to crush the disobedient is part of their exaltation.[6] In *Inana and Ebih* the subject of the composition is Inana's quest to destroy a disrespectful mountain. The text is explicit about the extreme degree of obeisance required, and the punishment suffered by the mountain for disrespecting the goddess is severe:

> "Since they showed me no respect, since they did not put their noses to the ground for me, since they did not rub their lips in the dust for me, I shall personally fill the soaring mountain range with my terror." (*Inana and Ebih* 33-36)

[5] Translated in Ceccarelli 2018

[6] "the mistress [Inana] is a great bull trusting in its strength; no one dare turn against her.....the foremost among the Great Princes, a pitfall for the disobedient.." (*Inana Hymn C* 18-28)

"father Enlil, shepherd of the black-headed....making the foreign countries bow low… a fine-mesh battle-net ..... covering the disobedient.." (*Ishme-Dagan A* 1-42)

"the hero Ninurta, has introduced working with the hoe into the rebel lands. He subdues any city that does not obey its lord." (*Song of the Hoe* 59-70)

> “The rocks forming the body of Ebih clattered down its flanks. From its sides and crevices great serpents spat venom. She damned its forests and cursed its trees. She killed its oak trees with drought. She poured fire on its flanks and made its smoke dense. The goddess established authority over the mountain. Holy Inana did as she wished.” (*Inana and Ebih* 144-151)

The authority figure, Inana, of course reasserts her dominance by the end of the composition, restoring the natural order of the world. In previous excerpts concerning the gods the punished are unspecified entities such as enemy cities or in the case of *Inana and Ebih* an anthropomorphised natural landform. In a version of *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the netherworld* from Ur the negative consequences of disrespect *for humans* is directly attested. In this excerpt, Enkidu describes the fate of individuals in the underworld according to the deeds they committed whilst alive.

> "Did you see him who had no respect for the word of his mother and father?" "I saw him." "How does he fare?" “"O my body! O my limbs!" he never ceases to cry." "Did you see him who was reached by the curse of his mother and father?" "I saw him." "How does he fare?" "He is deprived of an heir. His spirit roams about." (*Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld* 8-19)

This composition describes the dreadful fate that befalls those who disrespect their parents, authority figures who require submission. Those who acted more virtuously or gathered more advantages in life received a kinder fate in the underworld. By connecting this punishment to disrespect this literary text sends a clear message to the audience about the importance of the moral.

The literary texts also positively reinforce the moral of respect by showing the benefits that result from this good behaviour. Respecting authority figures is equated with righteousness in the following examples. In the first example, it is also made apparent that respecting authority is the command of the gods.

> “Father Enlil, the lord whose command cannot be altered, prince of all countries, has fixed among the black-headed people, and **commanded for their benefit, a time when…..a son is to respect his father**” (*the Nippur lament* 284-295)

> “You should not speak arrogantly to your mother; that causes hatred for you. You should not question the words of your mother and your personal god. The mother, like Utu, gives birth to the man; the father, like a god, makes him bright (?). The father is like a god: his words are reliable. The instructions of the father should be complied with.” (*The instructions of Shuruppag* 255-260)

> “Utu put justice and reliable words in my mouth. To make judgments, to reach decisions, to lead the people aright, to excel in rectitude, to keep the righteous on the track and to destroy the wicked, so that each man should speak justice to his brother, should make obeisance to his father, should not speak contrary words to his elder sister, and should respect his mother.” (*Išme-Dagan A* 90-99)

Many of the previous examples for both the positive and negative reinforcement of the moral involve the practice of respecting elder family members. This represents a superimposition of the human-god hierarchy onto family relations. The household unit is a microcosm of the world order in which children should respect the parents as if they were gods, as indicated by *the instructions of Shuruppag.* Despite the respect which is owed to superiors there is also clearly an expectation of reasonable treatment. Hierarchy should not result in tyranny, and the compositions which praise kings describe them as shepherds of the people and boast of their fairness (this moral is discussed fully in Chapter 3).

The compositions also project the notion that proper respect and obedience towards authority figures results in an ideal world. *Enlil in the Ekur* is a hymn which describes the ideal state of being created by Enlil in the city of Nippur, his "holy settlement" (*Enlil in the Ekur* 35-43). Among the descriptions of the idyllic city, there is a statement on respect and the benefits attained by those who abide by this moral:

> "the younger brother honours the older brother and treats him with human dignity; people pay attention to a father's word, and submit themselves to his protection; the child behaves humbly and modestly towards his mother and attains a ripe old age." (*Enlil in the Ekur* 26-34)

Likewise, in *Winter and Summer*, a proper display of obeisance by Summer after losing the debate results in restored harmony and prosperity for all.

> "Summer bowed to Winter and offered him a prayer. In his house he prepared emmer-beer and wine. At its side they spend the day at a succulent banquet. Summer presents Winter with gold, silver and lapis lazuli. They pour out brotherhood and friendship like best oil. By bringing sweet words to the quarrel (?) they have achieved harmony with each other." (*Winter and Summer* 310-315)

Through all these allusions multiple literary texts clearly demonstrate the importance of respecting and obeying superiors and enforce this as a moral of great importance for the wellbeing of individuals and the world in general.

The exception: disobedience

While the School Dialogues and other compositions forcibly promote the moral of respect, some of the literary texts also include examples of individuals disobeying instructions without consequences. Only in two of these, however, is the disobedience conducted against an authority figure. In *Gilgameš and Huwawa* and *the exploits of Ninurta* injunctions against actions are given by an inferior

party and completely ignored by the protagonists.[7] These warnings appear to be a rhetorical device used to show how the protagonist can achieve unbelievable feats rather than serious advice.

There are two texts in which authority figures are disobeyed. In a previously discussed text, *Inana and Ebih*, the mountain was “brought low” for disrespecting its better Inana, but in fighting Inana had also disobeyed the word of her superior, An, supreme ancestor of the Sumerian pantheon and described as her father in this composition.

When Inana informed An of her plans to destroy the mountain, he answered that "You cannot pass through its terror and fear. The mountain range's radiance is fearsome. Maiden Inana, you cannot oppose it.” (*Inana and Ebih* 127-130). However, Inana “did as she wished” and was successful in subduing the mountain (*Inana and Ebih* 144-151). We might consider that An’s words here were less orders or instructions than an exclamation over the impossibility of her task. In this way, his words seem similar to the rhetorical device used in *Gilgameš and Huwawa* and *the exploits of Ninurta* rather than a true flouting of authority.

A more certain challenge of authority is in the School Dialogue *A supervisor’s advice to a young scribe*.[8] In this text, a scribe rebukes his superior for patronising him when he is already a competent scribe and is ultimately acknowledged as proficient (Black *et al.* 2004: 277-280). In this case, disobedience is met with success in sharp contrast to most other literary texts. Other examples of potential disrespect to authority are present in the debate literature. The initiation of a debate (in other words, a challenge) by an inferior party would presumably be disrespectful. However, the initiators of the quarrels are almost always declared the victor and therefore the compositions avoid this impression by establishing initiator as the superior party.

Concerning adherence to the moral of respect, we might have expected that there would be different rules for gods and heroes in comparison to school children. However, the message presented by these various texts is remarkably consistent: a worthy individual may flout authority to prove their worth, while individuals who are not worthy such as the schoolboy Enkimanšum are quickly put back in their place.

[7] In *Gilgameš and Huwawa* (version A), Gilgameš ignores the advice of Enkidu to turn back and not confront Huwawa, but as the advice was from a slave, Gilgameš’ inferior, it will not be discussed here. In *the exploits of Ninurta*, Ninurta’s weapon (the Šar-ur), warns him not to battle the Asag. This semi-animate object also cannot be considered the superior or equal of the god who wielded it.

[8] This text occurs at House F but was not found in no.1 broad street.

Humility, boasting and arrogance

An instruction for scribes explicitly stated in *Enkihegal and Enkitalu* is to be humble and not boast of your perceived achievements: "You(?) are not suitable(?) for praising. Do not boast, indeed, you have no limit (i.e. control)" (*Enkihegal and Enkitalu* 9-10).[9] This moral teaching is mirrored in a large majority of the other 35 curricular texts considered in this thesis, for example:

> "You should not boast; then your words will be trusted." (*The instructions of Shuruppag* 35-38)[10]
>
> "It cuts short the life of those who speak too mightily…….egotism and boasting are abominations not tolerated within the city." (*Enlil in the Ekur* 18-25)
>
> "Summer, my brother, you should not praise yourself..you should not brag." (*Winter and Summer* 112-120)
>
> "Haughty woman whose lips are worthless, feeling (too) wonderful (about herself?), starting arguments." (*Two women* 9)[11]
>
> "Your arrogant heart will destroy itself by its own deeds!" (*Bird and Fish* 125-136)
>
> "Henceforth people shall speak of Ninhursaĝa…Great goddess who detests boasting" (*The Exploits of Ninurta* 390-410)

Humility is also sometimes directly mentioned as a virtue, instead of just implied as the opposite of the vice of boasting/arrogance. The texts establish that humility is a form of respect to betters and that it generates good feelings between the parties involved.

> "Father Enlil, the lord whose command cannot be altered, prince of all countries, has fixed among the black-headed people, and commanded for their benefit….a time to establish humility in the Land....a time when the younger brother, fearing his big brother, is to show humility.." (*the Nippur lament* 284-295)
>
> "Be humble and show fear before your monitor. When you show terror, the monitor will like you." (*Father and son*)[12]
>
> "The importance of the humble is of particular value to me, and they cannot be counter-productive to any of my activities." (*Šulgi B* 221-243)
>
> "Summer pondered everything in his head and calmed down. Summer spoke respectfully to Enlil: "Enlil, your verdict is highly valued, your holy word is an exalted word. The verdict you pronounce is one which cannot be altered -- who can change it? There was quarrelling of brother with brother but now there is harmony.." (*Winter and Summer* 297-303)

[9] CDLI P346237
[10] In line 67 there is a similar statement tying boasting to deceit.
[11] CDLI P346676
[12] Translated in Kramer 1964: 244-246

Ceccarelli (2018: 142) suggests that scribes boasting was bad for group unity which is why it was discouraged in the literature. However, it is clear from the excerpts above that displaying proper humility demonstrates an awareness of one's place in the world; this moral is therefore inexorably linked to the theme of hierarchy and the moral of respect/obedience. In relation to this, it should be considered that boasting may have been discouraged because when an unworthy individual boasted this was tantamount to stepping beyond one's place in the social hierarchy. Indeed, many of the literary texts make comments on characters who exaggerate their achievements:

> "You state your case, but afterwards never reach a decision. Your hand is not equal to your mouth!" (*A Class Reunion* 46-47)
>
> "Your work is slight but your behaviour is grand. My time of duty is twelve months, but your effective time is four months and your time of absence is eight months -- you are gone for twice as long as you are present." (*Hoe and plough* 104-108)
>
> "Enlil addressed the Hoe: "Hoe, do not start getting so mightily angry! Do not be so mightily scornful! Is not Nisaba the Hoe's inspector? Is not Nisaba its overseer? The scribe will register your work, he will register your work. Hoe, whether he enters five or ten *giĝ* in your account, Hoe -- or, Hoe, whether he enters one-third or one-half *mana* in your account" (*Hoe and plough* 186-193)
>
> "How has your heart become so arrogant, while you yourself are so lowly? Your mouth is flabby (?), but although your mouth goes all the way round, you cannot see behind you." (*Bird and Fish* 57-69)

These sentiments in favour of humility, however, are tempered by a great deal of what I will term *legitimate boasting* which establishes one's worth before an opponent and also the legitimate boasting of kings and deities. The purpose of praise poems and hymns was to exalt the kings and gods and their characters within the narratives were consequently permitted to lengthily describe their power and achievements. The boasts of several kings seem very arrogant to modern eyes:

> "Truly I am not boasting…no king of Sumer as great as I has existed for the people." (*Šulgi A* 84-7)
>
> "I have no equal among even the most distant rulers, and I can also state that my deeds are great deeds. Everything is achievable by me, the king." (*Šulgi B* 259-269)
>
> "I am the best king of the Land. From the very first origins until the full flourishing of mankind, there will never be any king who can measure himself against my achievements whom An will let wear his crown or wield his sceptre from a royal throne." (*Šulgi B* 320-336)
>
> "With my kind eyes and friendly mouth, I lift people's spirits. I have a most impressive figure, lavishly endowed with beauty……. I am a very handsome young man, fine to admire." (*Lipit-Eštar* 7-16)

It was also not considered an insult for the god Ninurta to be described as "an arrogant male", whereas for humans, animals and inanimate objects this was the case. Clearly, the expectations for

kings and gods were different to the behaviour expected of or encouraged in scribes and ordinary individuals.

The other circumstance in which boasting was permitted was during debates. By describing one's achievements and disparaging those of the opponent the participants in the debate sought to demonstrate their worth to the other and the judge. When boasting was unfounded or illegitimate it was considered arrogance. In the previously discussed *Inana and Ebih*, the mountain whose "arrogance extends grandly to the centre of heaven" was completely crushed (*Inana and Ebih* 116-120). This is because the mountain was unworthy to challenge Inana. In debates, both parties have a similar status and the hierarchical order is in question, therefore they are both allowed to boast until the victor is decided, then the loser must change their ways and submit.[13] However, those who exaggerated their achievements during debates were still criticised, as this was a form of stepping beyond one's place.

> "Summer, my brother, you should not praise yourself; **whatever harvest produce you bring as gifts to the palace has not been made by your toil: you should not brag. As if you were the one who had done the hard work**…how much through my toil is it that you enter the palace!" (*Winter and Summer* 112-120)

Even the kings wished to demonstrate that they were accurately assessing and portraying their achievements:

> "Furthermore no one will assert under oath that to this day there is any mention in my inscriptions of a single city that I have not devastated, or wall that I have not demolished, or land that I have not made tremble like a reed hut, or praise that I have not completely verified. Why should a singer put them in hymns? An eminent example deserves eternal fame. What is the use of writing lies without truth?" (*Šulgi B* 320-336)

Whether boasting was legitimate or not, therefore, depended on the context in which it took place and the inherent worth of the individuals concerned. Those who are worthy such as kings, gods and debaters are permitted this indulgence, while as we have already seen, those who are arrogant or disrespectful without foundation are punished.

[13] In *the debate between Bird and Fish* both parties have reason to believe that they were the worthiest:

"Thus Fish insulted Bird on that day. But Bird, with multicoloured plumage and multicoloured face, was convinced of its own beauty, and did not take to heart the insults Fish had cast at it. (*Bird and Fish* 51-56)"

"Fish became angry, and, trusting in its heroic strength and solidness..It took up the quarrel. It did not take to heart the insults that Bird had cast at it. It could not bring itself to submit, but spoke unrestrainedly." (*Bird and Fish* 80-85)

Conclusion

The literary texts depict a natural world order in which individuals are subservient to authority figures, kings and gods. They show how respecting authority through obedience results in an ideal world, while disobedience results in chaos and punishment. The moral of humility is advanced in compositions because it highlights the need for awareness of the social hierarchy and prevents individuals from stepping beyond their place. Only the worthy are allowed to flout these rules. In debate literature, two individuals can challenge each other because the social hierarchy is in question. At the end of this liminal state, the world order is clarified and reinforced according to the will of the gods. All these factors show how worthiness was considered innate and decided by the gods. They demonstrate that lower individuals should respect and be grateful to these exalted figures who bestowed gifts upon them. Much scribal literature and scribal professions were sponsored by the king or related to the palace (Carr 2005: 31). It is therefore not surprising that the literary texts would highlight morals that would help create adherence to the social hierarchies that nascent scribes would one day participate in.

Chapter 2: Scribal importance, wisdom and competency

Introduction

The small sect of individuals who became scribes were the transcribers, authors, curators and modifiers of all the existing literary texts and consequently, these compositions reflect their opinions and view of the world, whether this was done consciously or not (Black *et al.* 2004: 275-6). Though the original reasons for the creation of these texts were manifold, there is reason to believe that the curricular literature was selected with an awareness of the messages conveyed, as consistent themes and morals appear across the compositions. The hierarchy of the world order was the most evident theme, but another salient reoccurring theme is the importance of the scribal profession and wisdom. The scribes' view of their own importance is demonstrated by the numerous scribal characters included in compositions, the frequent mention of the goddess of scribes, Nisaba, and a focus on the acquisition of wisdom, literary and numerical skills in many texts.

A particularly illuminating sentence about the scribal class' view of its importance is in *Enlil-bani A* (178-184): "May the wise scribe in the scribal academy, the house which advises the Land, not allow your praise to cease!" Sentences such as this demonstrate how the scribes believed (and or wanted their employers to think) that they were essential to the governance of the country (Black et al. 2004: 276). The *Enlil-bani A* quote also displays the scribes' role in worshipping the gods. As has been previously discussed, godly favour or usefulness to the gods was the path to success, this link is therefore another indication of the importance of the scribal profession. The prestige of the scribal art is also demonstrated by the claim of kings to being a "proficient scribe of Nisaba" (*Lipit-Eštar A* 32-42) or "an experienced scribe who does not neglect a thing" (*Šulgi B* 11-20). In these praise poems, scribal proficiency is ranked among the other great achievements of kings such as the destruction of cities and vanquishing of enemies. Reading or reciting works in which exalted kings boasted about possessing scribal abilities would surely have helped instil a sense of pride in the trainee scribes learning this art.

As might be expected, scribes occur in four out of the five School Dialogues considered in this thesis. In these compositions, the scribes are the protagonists and the narrative focuses on their school life or behaviour. Out of the other literary texts, scribes are mentioned in *Dumuzid's dream*, *Winter and Summer*, *Šulgi B*, *Enlil-bani A*, *Išme-Dagan A*, *the Hoe and plough* and *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*. In these compositions scribes are sometimes mentioned as a kind of proverb or metaphor, as in *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld* (254-7): "Like a good scribe he is indefatigable, he enters the palace easily". They also appear more noticeably as minor characters.

> “The scribe will register your work, he will register your work. Hoe, whether he enters five or ten *giĝ* in your account, Hoe -- or, Hoe, whether he enters one-third or one-half *mana* in your account.” (*Hoe and Plough* 186-193)

> "Bring, bring, bring my sister! Bring my Ĝeštin-ana, bring my sister! Bring my scribe proficient in tablets, bring my sister! Bring my singer expert in songs, bring my sister! Bring my perspicacious girl, bring my sister! Bring my wise woman, who knows the meanings of dreams, bring my sister! I will relate the dream to her." (*Dumuzid’s dream* 19-25)

> “In the south, in Urim, I [Šulgi] caused a House of the Wisdom of Nisaba to spring up in sacrosanct ground for the writing of my hymns; upcountry in Nibru I established another. May the scribe be on duty there and transcribe with his hand the prayers which I instituted in the E-kur; and may the singer perform, reciting from the text.” (*Šulgi B* 308-319).

In these texts we get a glimpse into the important work carried out by scribes such as surveying and recording, advising and interpreting and praising the gods. These depictions forward the narrative of scribal importance as they show how necessary scribes are to maintaining everyday activities and the Sumero-Babylonian way of life.

The importance of the scribal art is also displayed through frequent mention and exaltation of the goddess Nisaba. In *the Cursing of Agade* (210-221), she is named among “the great gods” such as Enki, Utu and Inana. Nisaba is also included in the *Song of the hoe*, *the Kesh temple hymn*, *Gilgameš and Huwawa version A*, *Hoe and plough*, *Inana and Ebih*, *Dumuzid’s dream*, *Šulgi B*, *the instructions of Shuruppag*, *the exploits of Ninurta* and *Enlil-bani A*. Some of these compositions only include the brief exaltation “Nisaba be praised”, which mostly occurs as the final sentence. This occurs even in compositions in which Nisaba seemingly has no relevance to the narrative or its themes such as *Inana and Ebih*. When Nisaba is evoked without contextual relevance it serves as a (perhaps unintentional) reminder to the audience that the narrative was created by scribes and with the favour of their patron goddess. In other compositions, Nisaba has a more prominent role where her actions or abilities are relevant to the narrative.

> “Nisaba was its decision-maker (?); with its words she wove it intricately like a net. Written on tablets it was held in her hands: House, platform of the Land, important fierce bull!” (*The Kesh temple hymn* 10-20)

> “since the Lord had established it in regular furrows, since Ninurta son of Enlil had heaped up grain-piles and granaries -- Ninurta the son of Enlil entrusted their keeping to the care of the lady who possesses the divine powers which exist of themselves, who is eminently worthy of praise, to Nisaba, good lady, greatly wise, pre-eminent in the lands, her who possesses the principal tablet with the obligations of *en* and *lugal*, endowed by Enki on the Holy Mound with a great intelligence.” (*The Exploits of Ninurta* 698-711)

> “Nisaba, lady Nanibgal, the matriarch, the mother-in-law of Enlil, the lady ..... who creates (?) life ....., the book-keeper ....., the wise one, the holy woman ....., ... the oracle, has placed his (?) name on the tablet of life.” (*Enlil-Bani A* 37-48)

In the above compositions, Nisaba is not only exalted in detail, but the role she plays in maintaining the world order is also demonstrated. Like the scribes, Nisaba is a book-keeper and decision-maker. Because of her work and abilities and also the abilities with which she endows others, Nisaba is displayed as an indispensable force "without whom the civilized order of the world would disintegrate" (Black et al. 2004: 276).

Wisdom, competency, and dedication

Wisdom/intelligence (and the possession of literary and numerical skills) were greatly lauded qualities in the curricular literature. It was the frequent boast of kings and praise of gods that they were wise and learned, demonstrating that this quality was highly desirable. Examples are given in the table below.

Literary Text	Quote	Description
Enlil in the Ekur (10-17)	"the knowledgeable judge, the wise one of wide-ranging wisdom"	Describing Enlil
Lipit-Eštar (82-92)	"I am one with a far-reaching mind and intellect, examining requests. I do not hurry over anything, but research its background. I have a far-reaching heart and broad wisdom."	Describing Lipit-Eštar
Inana B (60-65)	"wise and sage"	Describing Inana
Šulgi B (1-10)	"He praises his own power in song, and lauds his own superior native intelligence"	Describing Šulgi
Išme-Dagan A (1-42)	"wise in command, re-establishing justice ....., adviser who never tires of discussion; ....., giving verdicts, ..., judge of heaven and earth whose complex judgments cannot be revealed by anyone, whose knowledge is honoured by the foreign lands"	Describing Enlil
(196-199)	"I am wise-eyed, of refined intelligence. I am full of advice, energetic in ..... I am all-knowing, singled out from the people"	Describing Išme-Dagan
Enlil-Bani A (28-36)	"husband of holy Inana, Asarluhi gave you wisdom."	Describing Enlil-bani
Lugalbanda and the anzud bird (50-89)	"Lugalbanda is wise and he achieves mighty exploits."	Describing Lugalbanda
Šulgi B (206-220)	"When I provide justice in the legal cases of Sumer, I give answers in all five languages. In my palace no one in conversation switches to another language as quickly as I do."	Šulgi boasts of being learned in five languages, as well as using wisdom to subjugate a city.
(221-243)	"When I pronounce a completed verdict, it is heartily welcomed, since I am wise and exalted in kingship……..I vanquish a city with words as weapons, and my wisdom keeps it subjected just as violence with burning torches would."	
(297-307)	"Because of my extraordinary wisdom and my ancient fame as a master, he should choose my hymns as examples, and himself beget heavenly writings."	

Bird and fish (164-167)	"Like (?) Enki, king of the *abzu*, I am successful in finding solutions, and am wise in words."	Šulgi speaking as the adjudicator of the debate

Outside of the gods and kings, wisdom was portrayed as belonging to older individuals e.g. "The instructions of an old man are precious; you should comply with them!" (*The instructions of Shuruppag* 1-13). Wisdom, eloquence and counsel, are also described as gifts to the populace (including the elderly) from the god Inana in *the Cursing of Agade* (25-39). These facts indicate two beliefs: one, that wisdom is acquired with age, in other words, experience; and two, that wisdom is gifted by gods or authority figures (who are necessarily wise). These two elements were presumably included in compositions in order to encourage hard work, piety and obedience to authority figures who could bestow wisdom. These sentiments are clearly expressed in the School Dialogue, *Father and Son*, where a father complains of his son's laziness and instructs him to go and learn from his experienced elders and teachers.

> "You who wander about in the public square, would you achieve success? Then seek out the first generations. Go to school, it will be of benefit to you. My son, seek out the first generations, inquire of them." (*Father and Son*)[14]

While wisdom was lauded, stupidity and ineptitude are also criticised in several compositions. The School Dialogue, *A Class Reunion*, particularly highlights the faults in a scribe which are worthy of ridicule.

> "Even when you parrot a classic, you cannot place it in the curriculum. (When) you write out the *ṣâtu* lists as far as the lú = *ša* list, you can't even get your tongue around the Sumerian. When you recite your times tables, you can't even make it to the end. When you're figuring out a reciprocal, the first step in the calculation never even occurs to you. You hand out the watchwords of the scribal fraternity. You volunteer (information) on my behalf, without even being asked. Your handwriting is so bad that no one can even recite for you in the schoolroom." (*A Class Reunion* 48-55)

These insults are only used to ridicule in the context of a debate, but other literary texts also display or foretell the more serious negative consequences of poor understanding and not listening to wise advice.

> "In your stupidity you caused devastation; you have spattered your hands with blood! Your arrogant heart will destroy itself by its own deeds!" (*Bird and fish* 125-136)
>
> "Enkidu, however, did not heed his master's words…He aroused an outcry and was detained in the netherworld." (*Gilgameš, Enkidu and the netherworld* 205-220)
>
> "One so exalted and yet so lacking in understanding will be devoured by fate without him ever understanding that fate." (*Gilgameš and Huwawa version A* 163-174)

[14] Translated in Kramer 1964: 244-246.

> "You seem like a man of office but you are an inept one…you reach decisions, but now in the city people's teeth chatter because of you." (*Winter and Summer* 264-273)

These texts clearly demonstrate the negative consequences those lacking in wisdom bring upon themselves and others and thereby taught the students who learned these compositions what qualities they should be striving for and seeking to avoid. Many of the texts highlight the morals which lead to the achievement of wisdom and the vices which result in stupidity. In the *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the netherworld* (254-267) a good scribe is "indefatigable". Likewise, in *the debate between Winter and Summer* (157-163) the young scribe who is "neglectful" is described as an "abomination". The morals which lead to wisdom are dedication and activeness, while laziness and arrogance lead to poor understanding and ineptitude.

> "You who wander about in the public square, would you achieve success?...I, night and day am tortured because of you. Night and day you waste in pleasures. You have accumulated much wealth, have expanded far and wide, have become fat, big, broad, powerful, and puffed. But your kin waits expectantly for your misfortune and will rejoice at it because you looked not to your humanity." (Father and son) [15]

The composition *Father and Son* demonstrates how a student that engages in hedonism and laziness will not succeed and further will bring shame and stir enmity within his family. It has been suggested that the scribal teachers who most likely authored the School Dialogues deliberately invented "shocking and incredibly incompetent" characters to discourage students from committing these poor behaviours (Matuszak 2019).

Conclusion

The literary texts frequently depict the prestige of the scribal profession and its essentialness to the world order. Wisdom is shown to be an exalted quality, the purport of kings and deities. The best scribes also have access to this wisdom due to their role as the guardians and transmitters of knowledge that ultimately derived from the gods. However, in the compositions that depict scribes, especially scribal students, competency in numerical and literary skills are focused on instead of wisdom. The criticism of stupidity and ineptitude in the literary texts makes it clear that there was a standard of behaviour that scribes, and other worthy individuals, had to live up to in order to gain respect or uphold the prestige of their profession. When wisdom is mentioned outside of the remit of kings and deities it is either a gift from the gods or possessed by an older individual (an authority figure). Likewise, competency, though linked to hard work and dedication, is also tied to instruction from authority figures as in *Father and Son*. This is another facet of the Sumero-Babylonian depiction

[15] Translated in Kramer 1964: 244-246

of the world order in which only authority figures and exalted individuals are the possessors and transmitters of wisdom and ability.

Chapter 3: Minor morals

Introduction

There are multiple other morals that appear in the literary texts; however, they receive a much smaller focus in the curriculum than the morals previously discussed because they are only mentioned briefly (or implied by the opposing vice) and are not the subject of any narratives. Only the most commonly attested minor morals are discussed in this chapter, this excludes some virtues such as bravery. The literary texts in which the most common morals appear (table 3) and the frequency with which they occur (table 4) are summarised below. A moral was counted as present in a composition (signified by x) if it was mentioned in a positive light or its opposing vice was condemned. Morals that were not explicitly mentioned but implied by the narrative were also counted as present.

Table 3. The morals according to literary text.

Literary work	Moral*								
	Friendliness	Humility	Justice	Loyalty	Mercy/ compassion/ kindness	Obedience/ respect	Righteousness	Truthfulness	Wisdom/ competency
Lipit-Eštar A	**x**		**x**		**x**		**x**	**x**	**x**
Šulgi A		**x**					**x**		**x**
Song of the Hoe						**x**	**x**		
Inana B						x			x
Enlil in the Ekur	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
The Kesh temple hymn									**x**
Enki's journey to Nippur						x			x
Inana and Ebih		**x**				**x**			
The Nungal Hymn			x		x		x		
Gilgameš and Huwawa					**x**	**x**			
A Class Reunion	**x**	**x**		**x**					**x**
Enkihegal and Enkitalu	**x**	**x**	**x**			**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**
Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum	**x**	**x**		**x**		**x**			**x**
Father and Son		**x**		**x**		**x**			**x**
Two women	x	x				x		x	x
Bird and Fish	x	x				x			x
Hoe and Plough	**x**	**x**				**x**			**x**
Sheep and Grain	x	x				x			x
Winter and Summer	**x**	**x**				**x**			**x**
The lamentation over the destruction of Sumer and Ur			x	x		x			x
The Nippur lament	x	x	x		x				x
The Ur lament		x			x	x	x		
Enlil-bani A	**x**		**x**		**x**	**x**	**x**		**x**
Išme-Dagan A			**x**		**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**
Ninurta's return to Nippur				x		x			
Šulgi B	**x**	**x**	**x**			**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**

Literary work	Moral*								
	Friendliness	Humility	Justice	Loyalty	Mercy/ compassion/ kindness	Obedience/ respect	Righteousness	Truthfulness	Wisdom/ competency
The Exploits of Ninurta		**x**		**x**	**x**	**x**			**x**
Dumuzid's dream				**x**	**x**				**x**
Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld				**x**		**x**			**x**
Inana and Shukaletuda			x	x		x		x	x
Inana's descent to the Netherworld		x		x		x			x
Lugalbanda and the anzud bird	**x**			**x**		**x**	**x**		**x**
Lugalbanda in the mountain cave			x	x		x	x	x	
The Cursing of Agade						**x**			**x**
The instructions of Shuruppag	**x**	**x**				**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**
The history of the Tummal									

*The theme of social hierarchy has not been included in this table as it is alluded to in every text. The theme of scribal importance (indicated by a reference to scribes or the goddess Nisaba) occurs in 21 texts, highlighted in bold in the above table.

Table 4. The number of compositions a moral appears in.

Moral	No. of works it appears in
Respect/obedience	28
Wisdom	28
Humility	18
Friendliness	15
Righteousness	13
Loyalty	12
Justice	11
Mercy/compassion	9
Truthfulness	9

Friendliness

The moral of friendliness and its opposing vice hostility appear in several texts. The end goal of these depictions appear to be promoting a sense of harmony in the world. Hostility and quarrelling disrupt harmony and are consequently discouraged. In *Enlil in the Ekur* hostility is mentioned as one of the "abominations not tolerated within the city" (*Enlil in the Ekur* 18-25). Hostility is also one of the negative aspects removed from the world for the benefit of the Sumerians in *the Nippur lament*:

> "Father Enlil, the lord whose command cannot be altered, prince of all countries, has fixed among the black-headed people, and commanded for their benefit, a time when no one is to speak hostile words to another…to hurl no insults at one's fellow.." (*the Nippur lament* 284-295)

In *the instructions of Shuruppag* (22-27) it is explicitly stated that "You should not cause a quarrel". While praising himself Šulgi also claims that "my heart has never committed violence against even one other king, be he an Akkadian or a son of Sumer, or even a brute from Gutium" (*Šulgi B* 259-269). It is clear from this that the principle of friendliness should be extended towards all, including foreigners and uncivilised peoples.

It was also considered a boast to be able to promote friendliness and resolve disputes: “Grain called out to Sheep: "Sister, I am your better; I take precedence over you….I foster neighbourliness and friendliness. I sort out quarrels started between neighbours” *(Sheep and Grain* 71-91). The same composition indicates that the ideal state of the world is harmony, when disputing parties act like “sisters” and “stand together” (*Sheep and Grain* 180-191).

The moral of friendliness was clearly considered relevant to scribes as it is included in the School Dialogues. In two compositions starting arguments is an insult used against the other party:

> “Inciting quarrels when you stand in the street, you even pick a fight with the diagnostician treating you” (*A Class reunion* 42-43)
>
> “In order to start arguments between neighbours, her ears are open(?), her eyes are planted” (*Two women* obv.3-4)[16]

In *Enkihegal and Enkitalu* it is shown how those who start quarrels are viewed: they are disparaged and disliked by their compatriots. It is also described as a sin to quarrel in the place of learning.

> “Insulting(?), hurtful(?) to another person, hated by his colleagues(?). Evildoer, (carrying) net of the enemy. (Possessor of) an evil mouth/words, (possessor of) a “smiting face,” one of incorrect language” (*Enkihegal and Enkitalu* 12-14)[17]
>
> “Why do you, today(?) and daily (before that?), cast down/pick up(?) quarrelling?”…The sin that is in the place of learning, I will learn of it” (*Enkihegal and Enkitalu* rev.2-8)[18]

We are shown that hostility brings negative consequences. Like boasting and disrespect hostility is unacceptable because it disrupts the world order. This may at first glance seem at odds with the proliferation in the curriculum of debate literature and School Dialogues in which arguments take place and in which hostility was necessarily a part. These compositions give participants the chance to prove their worth and display their verbal prowess, both abilities beneficial to scribes. However, these texts do not ignore the fact that disputes disrupt the world order, in fact, they highlight this consequence. In the debates, the world order is temporarily suspended and then recovered through one party submitting to the other. The debating process is a temporary liminal state whose cessation results in a renewed social hierarchy. The message in these compositions that hostility is impermissible is therefore consistent with a curriculum that dislikes disruption to the world order.

Impressing on trainee scribes that harmony was a state that must be maintained helped renew the social structures which kept the existing authority figures in place. This benefited teachers and also the future employers of scribes.

[16] CDLI P346676
[17] CDLI P346238
[18] CDLI P346239

In addition, it has been argued that avoiding hostility was intended to help promote a shared group identity among this small sect of scribal elite (Ceccarelli 2018: 141-2). This wish is clearly expressed in *Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum:*

> "Do not behave insultingly to each other(?) Do not speak out(?) brother against brother, do not initiate legal proceedings (against each other)" (*Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum* rev.3-4)[19]

By impressing upon trainee scribes that they were following a prestigious profession and preventing hostility teachers could cultivate a prestigious closed community clearly demarcated from other groups (Ceccarelli 2018: 141-142). Instruction in this moral could, therefore, serve two greater purposes.

Righteousness

Righteousness and its opposing vice wickedness reoccur in several compositions. Righteousness is not always clearly defined in the texts. It appears to be associated with treating people well, justice and destroying wickedness. It is generally implied that righteous translates to correct behaviour. It mainly appears in the praise of heroes, kings and gods. Quarrelling is equated with wickedness in *the instructions of Shuruppag* (134-142), but aside from the same equation in *Enkihegal and Enkitalu,* this moral does not appear in the School Dialogues considered in this thesis. This is an indication of the priorities of scribal instructors who chose to give more emphasis to morals that promoted scribal learning or scribal interests. Being righteous and defeating wickedness were the lofty concerns of kings and gods, not administrators and teachers.

The gods either ban or punish wickedness:

> "The borders of Nibru form a great net, within which the *hurin* eagle spreads wide its talons. The evil or wicked man does not escape its grasp. In this city endowed with steadfastness, for which righteousness and justice have been made a lasting possession…" (*Enlil in the Ekur* 26-34)

> "House, a pitfall waiting for the evil one; it makes the wicked tremble! House, a net whose fine meshes are skilfully woven, which gathers up people as its booty! House, which keeps an eye on the just and on evildoers; no one wicked can escape from its grasp. House, river of the ordeal which leaves the just ones alive, and chooses the evil ones! House, with a great name, netherworld, mountain where Utu rises; no one can learn its interior! Big house, prison, house of capital offences, which imposes punishment! House, which chooses the righteous and the wicked; An has made its name great!" (*The Nungal hymn* 1-11)

These texts warn that the inevitable fate of the wicked was punishment by the gods. *The Nungal hymn* also indicates that the gods were watchful of human behaviour:

[19] CDLI P346236

> "Nungal, its lady, the powerful goddess whose aura covers heaven and earth, resides on its great and lofty dais. Having taken a seat in the precinct of the house, she controls the Land from there. She listens to the king in the assembly and clamps down on his enemies; her vigilance never ends." (*the Nungal hymn* 27-31)

That righteousness was a desirous quality is also indicated by its usage in describing exalted gods, kings and heroes. The hero Lugalbanda is also described as the "righteous one" (*Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* 35-46). When asking for a favour from the god Suen he also praised him for being righteous and for hating and destroying evil (*ibid* 215-225). The kings also protest that they are righteous and hate the wicked:

> "I cherish righteousness but do not tolerate wickedness. I hate anyone who speaks wickedly." (*Šulgi A* 19-25)
>
> "I ..... wickedness and violence, and established justice in Sumer and Akkad. I am the shepherd who loves justice." (*Išme-Dagan A* 183-195)

The texts indicate that righteousness was a desirable quality but that it was the domain of exalted individuals. In compositions, righteousness is systematically ascribed to powerful individuals as an innate quality. This is linked to the determination of destinies by the gods: gods chose these individuals for their exalted position either because they were already virtuous or through gifting these abilities. In Shulgi B (21-38) the king claims to have been given his sceptre "because of [his] righteousness". There is much less emphasis on righteousness for ordinary individuals, they just had to be aware that wickedness would be punished. In the Sumero-Babylonian world order, it is natural that those of lower status were not associated with righteousness, otherwise, they would have been recognised or endowed by deities. The lack of compositions in which scribal characters, ordinary individuals, or even anthropomorphised inanimate objects that perform scribe-like activities such as debating, are punished for wickedness perhaps indicates that to the curators of the curriculum righteousness was not a moral that was strongly linked to scribal identity. Through this exclusion, the scribal profession was demarcated from the qualities and responsibilities of kings and deities. The moral of righteousness was not the purport of scribes and the lack of this demonstrates their social stratification beneath rulers despite their other claims to prestige.

Loyalty

Loyalty is another moral that repeatedly appears in the literary texts. The focus of loyalty is on spouses, other family members and friends. Interestingly there are no depictions of scribal characters being loyal to one another – unless we count the injunction in *Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum* to not bring legal cases against one another. This perhaps demonstrates that although there may have been the desire to promote the sense of scribal identity as part of a prestigious group, scribes were unlikely to have been working together or be placed in situations where loyalty to one another

would be necessary. While this may have been true in a professional capacity, it is also possible that scribal affairs were family dominated institutions. Scribal positions were often hereditary, and a scribe might therefore be teaching their own children along with other individuals (Carr 2005: 21). In *Ĝirinisa and Enkimanšum* the two disputing individuals are described as brothers even though the content of the argument demonstrates that they were not related by blood (Ceccarelli 2018: 141). It is possible therefore that scribes were supposed to treat each other as family and that consequently the moral of family loyalty was intended to encompass their institution despite the lack of specific scribal examples. The moral of loyalty mainly appears in narratives and epics that were likely to have performed to large audiences for entertainment purposes, perhaps indicating that it was a moral thought necessary for humanity in general rather than scribes in particular.

In the School Dialogue, *A Class Reunion*, one student is disparaged for being disloyal to his mother:

> “In your father’s house there is no more than a month’s provision, whether it is beer, malt-flour or barley. Even trading in your own mother.” (*A Class Reunion* 39-40)

Dumizid’s dream is a narrative in which loyalty and betrayal feature heavily. In the composition, Dumuzid has to hide from bandits and his sister and friend both agree to keep his whereabouts a secret. The seriousness of such a betrayal is indicated by the promise:

> "If I reveal your whereabouts to them, may your dog devour me!" (*Dumuzid’s dream* 95-97)

It is clearly expected that family members are loyal to and protect one another:

> "Who since the most ancient times has ever known a sister reveal a brother's whereabouts?” (*Dumuzid’s dream* 139-50)

Dumuzid’s sister does not reveal his whereabouts but the friend betrays him and Dumuzid praises and curses the two accordingly:

> They caught Dumuzid in the ditches of Arali. Dumuzid began to weep and turned very pale: "In the city my sister saved my life, my friend caused my death. If a sister leaves(?) a child in the street, someone should kiss it. But if a friend leaves(?) a child in the street, no one should kiss it." (*Dumuzid’s dream* 151-155)

This composition suggests that a superior level of trust can be placed in family members and that friends are false. An example of appropriate loyalty between real friends is depicted in Lugalbanda in the mountain cave (133-140) when Lugalbanda’s companions grieve heavily (“with repeated tears and moaning, with tears, with lamentation, with grief and weeping”) when they are forced to leave him in the mountains. Gilgameš and Enkidu are another example of loyal friendship. However, the majority of literary texts seem to focus on loyalty between family members.

In Inana's descent (217-225), Enki (described as her father in this composition) helps his daughter when she gets trapped in the underworld. He also helps find her rapist in *Inana and Shu-kale-tuda*. The description of Enki as Inana's father in *Inana's descent* was figurative as in the same composition she also addresses Enlil and Nanna as her father. However, the Sumero-Babylonian pantheon was a closely related set and thus Inana was a close family member of Enki if not his actual chid, so this example still represents family loyalty. Gilgameš also "stood by" Inana in *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the netherworld* (125-135) in which he is described as her brother. In *the Exploits of Ninurta*, Ninurta's mother, Ninmah also assists him. The reciprocal benefit of family loyalty is shown by his subsequent exaltation of her:

> "Lady, since you came to the Mountains, Ninmah ('Great Lady'), since you entered the rebel lands for my sake, since you did not keep far from me when I was surrounded by the horrors of battle….Lady, I have given you great powers: may you be exalted." (*The Exploits of Ninurta* 390-410)

Inana's descent also displays the consequence of loyalty and disloyalty. When she has to choose a substitute to take her place in the underworld Inana does not choose her servants who were loyal to her:

> "Holy Inana answered the demons: "This is my minister of fair words, my escort of trustworthy words. She did not forget my instructions. She did not neglect the orders I gave her. She made a lament for me on the ruin mounds. She beat the drum for me in the sanctuaries. She made the rounds of the gods' houses for me. She lacerated her eyes for me, lacerated her nose for me. In private, she lacerated her buttocks for me. Like a pauper, she clothed herself in a single garment." (*Inana's descent* 311-321)

Instead, she chooses her husband Dumuzid, who was enjoying a rich life "clothed in a magnificent garment and seated magnificently on a throne" while she suffered (*Inana's descent* 348-353). It was clearly an expectation in the Sumero-Babylonian world that individuals behaved right by their family members. The loyalty of friends was less expected, but betrayal was still clearly wrong.

Fairness/Justice

The moral of fairness also appears in several compositions. Like righteousness, this moral appears to be mainly applicable to gods and kings, probably because only those in these powerful positions had the responsibility, the right or the wisdom to carry out judgements.

> "I am one who never destroys a just person. I am a judge who, in making a decision, weighs his words fairly…..I established justice in Sumer and Akkad, and made the Land feel content." (*Lipit-Eštar A* 82-92)

> Father Enlil, the lord whose command cannot be altered, prince of all countries, has fixed among the black-headed people, and commanded for their benefit…a time when the elder child

is to treat the younger child reasonably and to pay heed to his words, a time to take neither weak nor strong away into captivity.." (*the Nippur lament* 284-295)

"The strong does not behave extravagantly towards others, the mighty does not abuse the weak any more. People are not made subject to the lordly." (*Išme-Dagan A* 200-223)

"Šulgi speaks..Like Enki, king of the *abzu*, I am successful in finding solutions, and am wise in words." (*Bird and Fish* 164-167)

"Enlil-bani…you know how to cleanse impropriety. You make justice shine like gold. You take the whip to injustice." (*Enlil-Bani A* 61-79)

"Suen, whom one cannot reach in the distant sky! King who loves justice, who hates evil! Suen, who loves justice, who hates evil! Justice brings joy justly to your heart. A poplar, a great staff, forms a sceptre for you, you who loosen the bonds of justice, who do not loosen the bonds of evil." (*Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* 215-225)

The one composition which links fairness to scribes is the School Dialogue *Enkihegal and Enkitalu*:

"(Possessor) of "two insides and two outsides" (duplicitous, hypocritical?), "eye turner" one of injustice, with the mouth of a slanderer, idiot who converses falsely" (*Enkihegal and Enkitalu* rev.6-8)[20]

Being unjust is here used as an insult against the scribal opponent. The implication is therefore that a good scribe should be fair and honest in his work. *The Nippur lament* also commands for ordinary individuals to be just. This was a moral that, while mainly the concern of gods and kings, was applicable to all humankind. However, it does not appear to have been considered of major importance for scribes.

Truthfulness

The moral of truthfulness occurs a few times within the literary texts. *The instructions of Shuruppag* advise the audience to not tell lies (35-38) and negatively describe "the liar" who "shouting tears up his garments" (134-142). Deception is also one of the "abominations not tolerated within the city" in *Enlil in the Ekur* (18-25). Three different kings, but interestingly no gods, emphasise their truthfulness. Its association with kings demonstrates the importance of this moral.

"I am one that has truth in his mouth. I am one who never destroys a just person." (*Lipit-Eštar A* 82-92)

"Furthermore no one will assert under oath that to this day there is any mention in my inscriptions of a single city that I have not devastated, or wall that I have not demolished, or land that I have not made tremble like a reed hut, or praise that I have not completely verified. Why should a singer put them in hymns? An eminent example deserves eternal fame. What is the use of writing lies without truth?" (*Šulgi B* 320-336)

[20] CDLI P346238

> "Utu put justice and reliable words in my mouth. To make judgments, to reach decisions, to lead the people aright, to excel in rectitude, to keep the righteous on the track and to destroy the wicked" (*Išme-Dagan A* 90-99)

School dialogues also discuss deceit and during arguments accuse one party of lying as an insult:

> "Speaker of hostility, conversing in lies" (*Two women* obv.3)[21]
>
> "Poor person, thief, transgressor of the oath" (*Enkihegal and Enkitalu* rev.1)[22]
>
> "Idiot who converses falsely" (*Enkihegal and Enkitalu* rev.8)[23]

In these excerpts lying is equated with stupidity or hostility. It also has clear links to the vice of boasting, as boasting without a basis was tantamount to lying. It is clear that the curators of the curriculum wanted scribes to accurately assess their own abilities and not step beyond their place. The vice of boasting may have been given more focus than lying because the exaggeration of one's abilities was probably thought more likely to occur than outright fabrication. The compositions quoted above all indicate that lying was unacceptable, however, it is more tied up in other vices than considered a significant sin on its own.

Mercy/compassion

The final moral to be discussed in this thesis is mercy/compassion. In occurs in a few compositions and was used to describe gods, kings and heroes.

> "Mercy and compassion are mine. I frighten no one. I keep an eye upon the black-headed people: they are under my surveillance. I hold the tablet of life in my hand and I register the just ones on it. The evildoers cannot escape my arm; I learn their deeds. All countries look to me as to their divine mother. I temper severe punishments; I am a compassionate mother. I cool down even the angriest heart, sprinkling it with cool water. I calm down the wounded heart; I snatch men from the jaws of destruction." (*The Nungal hymn* 75-82)
>
> "You have destroyed the hiss of hostile talkers. You know how to undo sin and its illness. You do not kill transgressors; you understand those you lead. You make words benign. Compassionate, loving the just, you cause no harm when offerings have been made (?)." (*Enlil-Bani A* 80-91)
>
> "Huwawa clutched at Gilgameš' hand, and prostrated himself before him.
> Then Gilgameš' noble heart took pity on him." (*Gilgameš and Huwawa version A* 158-160)

In *Gilgameš and Huwawa version A* Gilgameš' compassion and mercy towards Huwawa is described as "noble"; however, it is also eventually pointless as Enkidu kills the beast-man. Though both men are scolded by Enlil for this deed, the composition ends with their praise. This result seems at odds

[21] CDLI P346243
[22] CDLI P346237
[23] CDLI P346238

with the moral of obedience to betters as by executing the man Enkidu disobeyed his superior Gilgameš. This example may represent a possible exception to this moral; however, the text is very broken around Enlil's pronouncement and it is unclear for what exactly the pair were being praised. In addition, two manuscripts from Nippur preserve a variant in which *both* Gilgameš and Enkidu kill Huwawa, which would mean that Enkidu acted with and not against his superior. Because of these circumstances, it is difficult to draw solid conclusions about this matter. Returning to the moral of compassion, Gilgameš' act ultimately has no impact on the ending of the narrative. Instead of instructing a moral this brief mention seems like a way to praise Gilgameš or an element to cause conflict in the story.

The examples of compassion relating to gods and kings are more obvious indications of the value of this moral. However, as this moral only occurs a few times and is not attached to narrative themes, this praise was likely included for the purpose of maintaining the established world order rather than moral instruction. Praising those who had power over others as good and beneficent rulers reinforced the view that deference to these authority figures was beneficial to the people. However, none of the compositions mentioned above were created in the Old Babylonian period, and the mentions of the moral of compassion are so brief that the curators of the Babylonian scribal curriculum may not have even considered this moral when including the above texts in the curriculum. They may have been included because they included other morals the curators thought relevant to scribes or for pedagogical or cultural reasons. The Gilgameš epic, for instance, was of considerable cultural importance (Kramer 1964: 258).

Conclusion

The morals of friendliness, righteousness, loyalty, justice, mercy/compassion and truthfulness have been classified as minor in this thesis because they are not exemplified in narrative lessons or occur less often in compositions than those considered in the previous chapters (see tables 3 and 4). However, they do have relevance to scribal behaviour and the scribal worldview. Unlike in the previous two chapters, these morals can be firmly separated into those which apply to scribes and those which belong to exalted individuals. Righteousness, fairness and mercy apply predominantly to gods and kings. This is because only these individuals had the right to these lofty qualities or responsibilities. The favourable depiction of rulers and deities that they presented also helped to cultivate their legitimacy and reinforce the social structures in which loyalty and obedience to these figures was required. Truthfulness is another quality that belonged to kings, but it also applied to scribes because honesty led to an accurate assessment of one's place in the world. It applies to both

these groups because kings needed to justify their exalted position, while scribes needed to accurately determine their place and not step beyond it.

Friendliness is one of the two morals not significantly tied to kings. It was displayed as an indispensable factor in maintaining the proper world order and was presumably encouraged in scribes because it reinforced social structures and would also help maintain group unity which could then be used to manufacture an exclusive community. The only moral not seemingly linked to maintenance of the world order is loyalty. Loyalty is not associated with kings but with family members, both among ordinary individuals, heroes, and the gods. This moral was perhaps considered a universal virtue, but it might also have been considered applicable to scribes if schools were a family affair or considered to constitute a family-like relationship. Though some of these morals are related to scribes, their absence in the School Dialogues perhaps suggests that they were of lesser importance to scribal behaviour than the morals considered in the previous two chapters.

Conclusion

Overall, in answer to research question one, the most prominent morals in the scribal curriculum were respect/obedience, humility, wisdom/competency, friendliness, loyalty, righteousness, fairness, truthfulness, and compassion. These morals, particularly the first three, occurred with the greatest frequency or received the most focus in the literary texts. These morals are anchored in two important themes, the social hierarchy and scribal importance.

In answer to research question two, many of these morals would have been considered desirable for nascent scribes because they reinforced obedience to and maintenance of existing social structures and or helped to establish the prestigious closed group of scribes and uphold the standards of this profession. Excepting friendliness, loyalty and truthfulness, the minor morals apply mainly to gods and kings and are not linked to scribal behaviour. These qualities served to support the hierarchical order by demarcating the virtues and responsibilities of different status groups. The differences between what distinct groups were supposed to do are clear even for the major morals considered in Chapter 1 and 2. High-status groups can give orders and display their achievements while lower-status individuals must be humble and obey. While learning is of supreme importance to scribes, it is mainly gods and kings who are truly wise, while scribes must settle for being competent and knowledgeable. It can thus be seen that there were different spheres of importance in which prestigious or authoritative figures are still subject to even higher authorities such as the king, and above him, the gods.

Finally, research question three: was there a moral agenda in the curriculum or are the morals contained merely a by-product of the scribal perspective? Moral instruction was not the original purpose of most of the texts in the curriculum, but this does not preclude the possibility that their content was used for this purpose by its curators. It is difficult to determine whether a text was selected for the curriculum because of pedagogical, cultural, or moralistic reasons, if not all three. The *history of the tummal* is an exception whose purpose can probably be determined. It is a text which lists the rulers who built temples in the city of Nippur. Since its lexical forms are simple and repetitive and it lacks any moralistic content, we can probably assume that its purpose in the curriculum was cultural. There are few texts however whose remit was as limited, as many compositions contain complicated grammatical forms, morals and constitute cultural or historical knowledge. While this is a strong limitation, it is probably fair to assert that texts which included morals that opposed scribal interests or worldview would not have been included in the curriculum or otherwise would have been altered to make them more palatable to scribal concerns. Therefore, we can conclude that the morals espoused by the curricular texts were ones aligned with the scribal

worldview. We may also conclude that these texts included all the morals which were thought necessary for nascent scribes to absorb, as if a favourable moral was understated or absent the scribes could have inserted it into a composition or created a relevant one themselves. This may be the purpose behind the creation of the School Dialogues, to help reinforce the morals particularly relevant to scribes.

Agreement with the morals in the literary texts does not mean that the scribes wished to impress all these morals upon their students, and it has already been discussed how some exalted qualities served to demarcate different status groups by their exclusivity. The themes which we can be certain were meant to shape scribal behaviour were hierarchy and scribal prestige. This is due to their omnipresence in the literature and in the case of scribal prestige, their appearance even when they are irrelevant to the composition at hand such as the "praise be to Nisaba" that closes *Inana and Ebih*. As for the morals intended to shape scribal behaviour, we can assume that it was those contained in the School Dialogues as these texts were created for school use and reflect directly on the behaviour or accomplishments of scribes.

There is a focus on particular morals in the curriculum. Some qualities (e.g. wickedness) are described as vices, however, they are only attached to vague entities or unknown individuals and are never the trait of a character in a narrative. This means that the reader's impression of the wrongness of this vice is much weaker than sins such as boasting or disobedience which are perpetrated by named characters and subsequently punished in several compositions. Since narrative lessons exist for particular morals rather than others, when an example could have been created or inserted by teachers, this indicates which morals the scribal instructors prioritised.

The most prominent morals are those that are the hallmarks of an ideal scribe or scribal student: obedience, humility and competency. It appears that scribes were attempting to establish a specific moral code for their students which would result in a successful profession. Like morality in the modern sense of the Abrahamic religions, following this moral code reaps a reward. But instead of gaining entrance into heaven in the afterlife, the successful students were admitted into the exclusive sect of scribal elite. Therefore, in summary, I would argue that morality was a strong guiding factor in the curation of the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum.

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