

RECĀ'İZĀDE MAḤMŪD EKREM'S *TA'LĪM-İ EDEBİYAT* AND ITS
CONTRIBUTION TO OTTOMAN LITERARY CRITICISM¹

PART I

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When E.J.W. Gibb presented a summary discussion of Classical Ottoman Poetics in his *History of Ottoman Poetry* (London, 1900), he concluded by advising his readers of the revolution which had taken place in the study of Ottoman rhetoric :

«But now, so far as Turkey is concerned, this old Eastern art is a thing of the past. Its knell was sounded when in 1299 (1881-2) Ekrem Bey published his *Ta'līm-i Edebiyāt* or 'Lessons in Composition.' In that admirable work where for the first time the canons of Western literary taste were systematically placed before the Turkish student, the entire rhetorical system is revolutionised. The old divisions of *Ma'ānī*, *Beyān* and *Bed'* are abolished and nine tenths of the figures we have been considering are swept away as incompatible with earnestness and sincerity in modern times» (I, 124).

As it is now 100 years since the *Ta'līm-i Edebiyāt* was first published it is perhaps appropriate to review this work once more, and somewhat more critically than did Gibb eighty years ago.

Although the *Ta'līm-i Edebiyāt* was indeed a revolutionary work especially when compared with the *Belāgat-i 'Osmāniye* of Cevdet Paşa which appeared in the same year, one cannot ignore the works which

1 This article is based on research carried out in the course of writing a PhD thesis entitled *Ottoman Contributions to Islamic Rhetoric* (Edinburgh University, 1979). I wish to acknowledge the financial assistance offered by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

preceded it and prepared the way for this revolution in literary criticism. Sixteen years previously Nâmîk Kemâl had written the manifesto for the revolution in an article entitled «Edebîyât hakkında ba'zî Mülâhazât» published in the *Taşvîr Eflâk* of 16 and 19 Rebî'ül-Âhır, 1283 (29 July and 2 August, 1866) in which he appealed for a new rhetoric which would rid the language of many of the old figures of speech which constituted the 'ilm-i bedî'. The first to answer this appeal was Süleymân Paşa who published the *Mebâni'l-İnşâ* in two volumes in 1288-89 (1871-72). This latter work is heavily dependent on a French school book entitled the *Traité théoretique et pratique de littérature* by Émile Lefranc³. However it is clear that Süleymân Paşa possessed an insufficient knowledge of western literature to enable him to use Lefranc's framework as a basis for a new system of Ottoman rhetoric. Ten years later Ekrem Bey took the *Traité* and also used it as a model; this time however the marriage of eastern and western literary traditions was much more felicitous, if not as unprecedented and original as first presumed. The following pages are therefore devoted to a brief analysis of the *Ta'lim-i Edebîyât* in an attempt to assess the quality of the literary criticism offered by the work.

The organisation of the Ta'lim-i Edebîyât.

Recâ'izâde Maḥmûd Ekrem wrote the *Ta'lim-i Edebîyât* in order to identify and discuss the aesthetic qualities which distinguish literature from mere writing together with those features of literature which are worthy of emulation. He recognised that some of these were created by the aesthetic element and have become principles of the Ottoman language, a collection of which could form a rhetoric for the Ottoman language (bir belâgat-i 'Osmaniye). When he began writing the *Ta'lim-i Edebîyât* no such work of compilation existed, but by time of going to press, Cevdet Paşa's work had been announced and was noted by Ekrem in the introduction to his own book. However, it is clear that he did not consider that the appearance of the *Belâgat-i Osmaniye* made any of his own work redundant, since he believed that his own contribution would be much more than a treatment of classical rhetorical theory⁴.

2 This essay has been reproduced in *Külliyât-ı Kemâl : Makâlât-ı Siyâsiye ve Edebîye* (Istanbul, n.d.), pp. 102-125.

3 Originally published in Paris, 1837, in three volumes. The page references in this article are to the 1880 ed. of vol. I and the 1874 ed. of vol. III.

4 See footnote to page 13 of the *Ta'lim-i Edebîyât*. In fact two works which

Although the *Ta'lim-i Edebîyât* departs from the classical Islamic approach to rhetoric and adopts ideas which differ radically from those found in the rhetorical system of the *'ilm-i belâga*, its author is careful to preserve some of the features of the classical system, so as to present new ideas within a framework which would be familiar to the reader. Adopting divisions similar to those of the *'ilm-i belâga*, its first *fasl* deals with ideas, the second with style and the third and fourth with figures of speech, superseding the traditional division into *me'ânî*, *beyân* and *bedî'*. Ekrem, however, subtly implies a link with the classical rhetorical framework by giving titles to his chapters which suggest a fresh approach to the old system rather than a radical departure from it. Thus the whole work, which he envisaged as the first part of a two volume work, is entitled «Kısm-i Evvel: Me'ânî ve yâhüd Fıkr, Lafz ve yâhüd Uşlûb», the chapters are subsequently titled (1) «Kuvâ-yî Zihniyenî Edebîyâtda Fî'li», (2) «Kavânîn-i Uşlûb», (3) «Tezyînat-ı Uşlûb — Envâ-i Mecâz» and (4) «Şanâ'î-i Lafziye». These divisions suggest that the discussion of ideas has superseded *me'ânî*, that is the discussion of semantics in the classical system; *beyân* has been replaced by «uşlûb», and *bedî'* has been divided into two sections, the first of which deals with the topics properly belonging to *beyân* and some of the figures of *bedî'*, while the second only with those tropes classified by Islamic rhetoricians as the *şanâ'î-i lafziye*. Ekrem has thus abandoned the discussion of semantics, the *me'ânî* of the *'ilm-i belâga*, and replaced it by discussion of ideas. He has also dismantled the somewhat artificial distinction between the figures of *beyân* and *bedî'* and reinforced the division between figures of thought and figures of speech by placing the former in the same chapter as the metaphor and simile, and dealing with the latter in a separate chapter.

The work in fact combines two traditions of literary theory: the European, as set forth by Émile Lefranc in his *Traité* and the Islamic, as formulated in the *Telhîş*⁵. Although he fails to acknowledge his debt to Lefranc, there can be no doubt that he is heavily dependent on him for many of the ideas that do not develop from traditional Islamic theory.

could have possibly been described as works of Ottoman rhetoric had already been published, namely the *Belâgat-i Lisân-i 'Osmânî* (1876) by Ahmed Hamdî, and the *Zübdetü'l-Beyân* (1877) by Mihalicî Hâccî Muştafâ Ef.

5 The *Telhîşü'l-Miftâh* by El-Kazvinî (d. 739/1338), an epitome of the *Miftâhü'l-'Ulûm* of Es-Sekkakî (d. 626/1229), was the standard text book for Islamic rhetoric and indeed became synonymous with *belâga*.

In particular, Ekrem's organisation of his material into Ideas, Style and Figures of Speech mirrors Lefranc's presentation.

Émile Lefranc himself reflects the ideas of Buffon, the Eighteenth Century natural historian, best known amongst stylists for his short speech delivered before the French Academy in 1753, in which he made the remark «... *le style est l'homme même*»⁶. The thesis of this discourse held that good style amounted to little more than good thinking; if the sentiment be noble the style too will be noble, if the idea be well thought out, then the style of its presentations will be effective. Lefranc however, could do no justice to such a simple observation, for he had set himself the task of producing a text-book of literary theory suitable for students. He therefore compromised, and applied some of the methodology employed by stylists to the treatment of ideas, identifying and classifying certain qualities by which they were characterised.

This discussion, although presented as the first of the two parts into which the work is divided, consists of a mere fifteen pages, and is, in fact, no more than an introduction to the proper subject of the work. Part Two is divided into four chapters, of which the first is a general introduction, consisting of only eighteen pages, while chapter four is devoted to composition. It is the second and third chapters which serve as a model for the *Ta'lim-i Edebiyat*, the second treating of the qualities of style, both general and particular, the third with figures of speech and figures of thought. The distinction between these two chapters is one of methodology, the former identifies the adherent characteristics of style, the latter analyses the mechanism of its constituent parts. Ekrem, steeped in the tradition of Islamic literary theory, must have been struck most by two aspects of the European treatment. Firstly the division, albeit notional, of the work into the treatment of ideas and style was, for him, a revolutionary approach to stylistic analysis, traditional Islamic rhetoric being concerned, in the main, with expression and its analysis, with virtually little or no consideration of ideas *per se*. *Belāga* was concerned with concepts only in terms of their expression, their quality or character being of little import. Secondly, the method of treating style by enumerating its attributes contrasted with the Islamic practice of analysis of component features. While Islamic rhetoric was concerned with the mechanism of language, as a means of communication,

6 Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de, *Oeuvres complètes de la terre*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1874), cxlix-clx.

Lefranc's exposition provided a framework in which style could be analysed by the twin methods of identification of adherent characteristics, and analysis of its inherent mechanism⁷.

Ekrem therefore took, as his model, the first part of the *Traité* and the second and third chapters of Part Two. Having been particularly inspired by the consideration of ideas *per se*, he must have been disappointed by their rather cursory treatment by Lefranc. He was able to rectify this shortcoming by taking the characteristics of style enumerated in the treatise and applying them to ideas. The tripartite division of the *Ta'lim-i Edebiyat* therefore comprises (1) a discussion of ideas, in terms of those characteristics used by Lefranc in his analysis of style, (2) a treatment of style by European criteria, and (3) a treatise on the traditional science of *beyân* and *bedî'*.

Ekrem's purpose in writing the Ta'lim-i Edebiyat

The *Ta'lim-i Edebiyat* was written with a view to providing a textbook for students of literature in the Mekteb-i Mülkiye-i Şahâne, where Ekrem was teaching. He had begun the work some years previous to its date of publication and in 1296/1878 had it lithographed for distribution to his students. Thereafter, it was reproduced in lithograph every year and distributed in sections, many of which not only contained errors but often reached the students several days late. Finding these conditions intolerable and aware that there was a demand for such a book outside the school, Ekrem undertook to publish the work, which finally emerged in print in 1299/1881⁸.

On page t...o of the book the author briefly states the aims of the book, which he presents as the first of two volumes which would cover two years of study. The first year would be engaged in the study of the material in the first volume, and it was hoped that from it the student would acquire an appreciation of the accepted styles of the Ottoman language and the principles underlying their use. It was the dec-

7 The distinction drawn between adherent and inherent characteristics is based on two differing methods of analysis. The adherent characteristics encompass such phenomena as narrative pace, simplicity and sublimity, imagination etc. The inherent include metaphor and the other figures of speech.

8 A second edition was published in 1330/1911; but as the pagination remains the same, references to the text refer equally to both editions. The printed edition does not in fact differ significantly from the lithograph.

lared intention of the author that the student should familiarise himself with the rules of prosody and should learn some of the more important metres. One presumes that these were to be taught in class, for prosody is not treated in the book. The passages, particularly those in verse, were to serve as texts which could be committed to memory by the students, thus allowing them to become acquainted with those works upon which the author drew for his illustrations. In short, the student would be allowed to gain an elementary knowledge of Ottoman literature and its writers.

The first indication that the work would depart from the well-worn paths of classical literary theory appears in the preface, which is addressed not so much to the students but to the general public. Although he concedes that the faults which might be found in the work arise from his lack of ability, he suggests, too, that they might in some part be due to the pioneering nature of the work (*eseriñ yeñiligi*), and he hopes that it will be considered worthy of study and criticism by those scholars who were public-spirited and partisans of progress. The inescapable implication is that Ekrem is not in the least interested in the criticism of men who were not «partisans of progress». In the introduction he acknowledges his debt to French sources, borrowing ideas from them which he found of relevance to Ottoman literary theory (pp. 4-5). He does not, however, own the particular debt he owes to Lefranc, and one cannot fail to suppose that he was aware of the extent to which his indebtedness would be exposed were a comparison between the two to be made, yet one cannot really regard this as intellectual dishonesty, for the very fact that he was able to appreciate the quality of such a work is in itself commendable in an Ottoman of his background, and, moreover, there were sections of the society in which he lived who would have rejected out of hand what he had to present, if it were given a specific European identification.

Ekrem's definition of Edebîyât

The title of the work itself declares it to be a course in literature, and the title page displays a quotation from Nâmîk Kemâl to the effect that literature is the tongue of the nation and the means of propagating education (*edeb*) within it. It is therefore appropriate that the introduction to the work should dwell on the problem of defining «*edebîyât*». In Nineteenth Century Turkey the term «*edebîyât*» was a

neologism, introduced by Kemāl to translate the European concept of «literature». Although the word was familiar enough in Ekrem's time, its precise meaning had been the subject of dispute among the Ottoman literati for some fifteen years preceding the publication of the *Ta'lim-i Edebiyāt*. Its author claims to be the first to define it (p. 11).

Two definitions of literature are offered the first of which includes all written works, which is to say the *schrifttum* of the language. This is rejected as being too comprehensive in that it would include such materials as advertisements, trademen's accounts and other uses of writing which would clearly not find general acceptance as of literary quality. Ekrem suggests that literature must be born from good taste, feeling and imagination (zevķ ve hiss ve hayāl), and offers a definition :

«Eñ meşhūr erbāb-ı kalemiñ eñ müntaħab
eñ maķbūl eşerlerinden istinbāt ve aħz
olınan uşul-ü-emşaliñ ma'rifetidir.» (pp. 11-12)

These words echo Lefranc's formulation :

«*La Littérature est la connaissance des
Belles-Lettres, ou des modèles qui se
trouvent dans les auteurs, soit anciens,
soit modernes. Elle comprend ainsi les
vers et la prose, la poésie et l'éloquence,
c'est-à-dire, tous les genres de composition
littéraire, la théorie qui en fixe les règles,
et la pratique qui en offre l'exécution.*» (p. 11)

Although Ekrem's definition would seem to suggest that knowledge of literary theory and practice, rather than works which employ them, constitutes literature, the author probably wishes to stress not the word «ma'rifet», but rather «eñ meşhūr», «eñ müntaħab» and «eñ maķbūl», thus confining literature to those works which find acceptance. In order to be found worthy of inclusion within the body of literature, a work must fulfil certain conditions : prose writing must observe the general rules of the language and the laws of logic, and it must have aesthetic awareness (zevķ-i vicdānī) and euphony (āheng-i selāset); verse must, in addition, follow the rules of prosody. The aim of the

Ta'lim-i Edebîyât is to discover and elucidate the two features which Ekrem has identified as aesthetic awareness and euphony, for it is these that distinguish literature from mere writing.

Ekrem makes no attempt, however, to relate aesthetic function and stylistic refinement to the crude distinction he proposes between literary and non-literary writing. What he offers as a definition (*ta'rif*) is really no more than a partial description of literature, in which he merely alludes to some of those elements which would constitute a definition.

The word «*edebîyât*» was coined by Nâmiğ Kemâl to express a concept which did not exist in classical Islamic culture. The German word «*Schrifttum*», signifying all writing regardless of aesthetic quality, describes the classical Ottoman «*literary*» corpus rather better than the word «*literature*». Certain genres within the body of Ottoman *Schrifttum* manifest more pronounced literary qualities than others, so that taken as a whole it is possible to distinguish gradations in the aesthetic impressions they leave. While the word «*edebîyât*» had been intended to cover those genres which would have been considered *littérature* in France, to the mind of the traditional Ottoman the word would have suggested the attributes of the «*edîb*», that is, the well-mannered, cultured and virtuous man, and only in a secondary sense, the writer.

«*Edeb*» signified not only culture and refinement, but was also used for that class of Arabic writing which corresponded, in general, to *belles-lettres*. «*Edebîyât*» was envisaged as an extension of this genre, covering all writing which was intended to move the human spirit. Ekrem might well have given a definition of *edebîyât* on the basis of its etymology as those writings which express the qualities that go towards the «*edîb*», that is to say, the cultured man. Such a definition would be no more circular than the one he offers, and would reflect the ideas of Alphonse de Lamartine, who saw literature as encompassing «*la religion, la morale, la philosophie, la législation, la politique, l'histoire, la science, l'éloquence, la poésie, c'est-à-dire tout ce qui sanctifie, tout ce qui civilise, tout ce qui gouverne, tout ce qui perpétue, tout ce qui charme le genre humain*»⁹.

9 Cited by Mary Stanley Hinrichs in her study, *Le cours familial de littérature de Lamartine* (Paris, 1930), p. 5.

However, at the time when the *Ta'lim-i Edebiyat* was being written, the educated elite of Ottoman society were drifting inexorably into two divergent currents : while traditionalists held fast to the old values like men drowning in a torrent of new ideas, the modernists willingly allowed themselves to be carried along, with hardly a thought to the direction in which they were being taken. It is quite clear that any description of literature which employs the expression «the most accepted works» will inevitably raise the question «accepted by whom?». It was not even possible to suggest that the arbiters of literature should be the most cultured in society, for cultural values, too, had not escaped the divisive trends of the Tanzimat. Any definition would have to transcend the postures of the various factions. Ekrem approaches the solution when he identifies two basic elements of literature, the «zevĸ-i visdānī» and the «āheng-i selāset», but this hardly provides a definitive statement.

Ekrem's definition fails in another respect : by restricting literature to only those works which are «accepted», he precludes the possibility of bad literature, thereby rejecting the writer's intention as a criterion upon which a judgement may be made as to whether a work is worthy of inclusion within the body of literature. It is clear that a poem which is intended primarily to entertain is literature, no matter how debased its aesthetic awareness or how faulty its style. It is, in other words, bad literature.

Although he certainly recognised the importance of the aesthetic function and good style, he failed to formulate a definition which would suggest the central role they play in distinguishing genres which are literary from those that are not. To include the writer within the scope of the definition, and thereby allow for the possibility of bad literature, «*edebiyāt*» may tentatively be defined as writing in which the author allows the aesthetic function to dominate, intending to produce a reaction from the reader, beyond the immediate implication of the statement.

With this definition in mind, all writing in which the aesthetic function does not dominate can be dismissed as non-literary. This is not to accept Ekrem's position, which would suggest that the «most accepted» works are those which are literary, for a dominant aesthetic function does not in itself make a work acceptable. While a *ġazel* is a striking example of a literary form where the aesthetic function usually dominates overwhelmingly, the legal necessities of a *vakf* document, on the other hand, rarely allow it to demonstrate any literary virtuosity on the part of its author. Some genres of Ottoman *Schrifttum*, history being a prime

example, contain works of which some may be said to have a dominant aesthetic function while others are intended primarily as a vehicle of information.

The rôle of the idea in literature

Ekrem begins his course of instruction by treating the problem of the nature of the relationship between ideas and language, offering his opinion without supplying any argument for its validity (p. 15). In his view, thought (*ma'nā*) precedes its expression (*şüret*) and, consequently, he absolves himself of weighing the vexed question of primacy between the two. In this one must see not a reluctance to enter into epistemological speculation, but, rather, an adherence to the purpose for which his work was being composed; and one cannot argue against the fact that literature, such as he had already defined it, was the verbal expression of antecedent sentiments or emotions. Having accepted language as being composed of two elements, thought and expression, he devotes his first two chapters to an examination of these. The first is divided into six sections dealing with (1) ideas (*efkār*), (2) sentiments (*hissiyāt*), (3) aesthetic (*hüsn-i tabi'at*), (4) imagination (*kuvve-i hayāliye*), (5) wit (*zarāfet yāhōd nükte-dānlık*) and (6) memory (*kuvve-i hafıza*).

The qualities that characterise the idea are either intrinsic or incidental, the former being (1) truth (*hāqīkat*), (2) soundness (*selāmet*), (3) clarity (*vużūh*) and (4) order (*intizām*), while the latter are as detailed as (a) simplicity (*sādelik*), (b) ingenuousness (*sāde-dilānelik*), (c) subtlety (*incelik*), (d) forcefulness (*şiddet*), (e) brilliance (*parlaklık*) and (f) sublimity (*'ulviyet*). The intrinsic qualities are those which are inseparable from the discussion of ideas, while the incidental are those which in some way lend prominence or effectiveness to them. It is arguable that some of the incidental qualities may, also, be considered intrinsic to every expression; for just as it must be sound or true to some degree, so too must it be to some degree sincere, subtle or sublime. However, Ekrem chooses not to argue about—or indeed even explain—the difference between the intrinsic and the incidental qualities.

Ekrem defines truth—he uses «*hāqīkat*» as the substantive and «*doğrı*» as the adjective—as the correspondence of the expression with reality. For this he provides two illustrations, the first being *Qānūnī Süleymān's* famous hemistich (p. 17) :

Olmaya devlet cihānda bir nefes sihhāt gibi

This line he holds to express an indisputable truth, for one's ability to fulfil the primary obligation of worshipping God is contingent on good health, and consequently a sound body must be the source of all other forms of happiness. As an example of a statement devoid of truth he quotes a *beyt* by the poet Nābī (p. 18) :

Gurūr-ı cünbiş-i bukratıyānesi tursun
Fağat liķası hekīmüñ marīze sıķletdür

This *beyt* is taken from a *gazel* in which Nābī is obviously referring to a particular physician who was called in when he was ill; and, by isolating it from its context, Ekrem imputes to it a general meaning which he finds unacceptable to common experience, and, therefore, contrary to truth. Yet, even in isolation, and with some wider implication looked for, it would be perverse to regard a line from a poet such as Nābī as meaning no more than the apparent and prosaic statement. Thus, as well as deriding the pretensions of the physicians of his time, he could be alluding to the inefficacy of their treatment, to their remedies which are often worse than the ailment, or to the fact that they were only called in when the patient is *in extremis*. In the following *beyt*, also by Nābī, Ekrem considers the statement devoid of truth :

Olur feyż-i tevāzu'la dirah̄t-i pest bār-āver
Komişdur meyveden mah̄rüm servi ser-ferāz olmak

Ekrem makes no attempt to define truth, neither do his illustrations clarify his conceptions, although the elucidation of the second example would suggest that he envisages it as being both universal and scientific. In the first example he presents a syllogism, of which the major premise is that worship of God is the prime responsibility of man, and the minor premise, that health is a prerequisite for worship. Of these, the first would apply only to Muslims and the second is patently false, for no one could possibly argue that bad health in itself prevents a man from worship. One can only conclude that by truth, Ekrem does not intend only propositions that will stand up to logical analysis. In the second example, however, it seems that the standard by which he evaluates the truth of the statement is based on scientific grounds. When Nābī suggests that the low tree is fruitful with abundant humility, while the cypress is tall but bereft of fruit, Ekrem objects because the cypress like all trees bears fruit, whether it be edible or not. He makes no clear

distinction between the language of poetry and the language of science, for fruit in poetry can only refer to the edible variety, no matter how imprecise this may appear to the botanist. If we examine truth in the light of these two examples it would seem that it is neither universal, scientific, nor founded on logic. Neither are we allowed to entertain the possibility that by truth he means artistic truth, that is the conceptual framework within which the writer works, rather than the product of systematic thought.

Soundness (*selâmet*), the second of the intrinsic qualities pertaining to the idea, is neither adequately defined nor further elucidated by illustrations. The definition states that an idea is sound if it be completely appropriate to the thing (*şey*) which it contains, no matter what aspect it be viewed from. From this definition two extrapolations are made, namely, that the soundness in the idea is more beneficial than truth (*hakikat*), and that an idea may be true and yet unsound. The following *beyt* by *Şinâsî* exemplifies the sound idea (p. 19) :

Hakk yol aramak vâcibedir 'aql-i selîme
Tevfikini isterse Hüdâ râhber eyler

The explanation offered is that the idea expressed is sound because the sound mind follows the true path which consists of preoccupation with the constant search for the reality of things, without sparing a thought as to whether this be appropriate or not. The idea devoid of soundness is exemplified in the following *beyts* of *Nefî* :

Bir düş gibidur hakk bu ki ma'nide bu 'âlem
Kim göz yumub açınca zamânı güzër eyler

Bir yirde ki ârâma bu miqdâr ola mühlet
Erbâbı nice kesb-i kemâl-ü-hüner eyler¹

Ekrem concedes that the idea might be true, it is however unsound, for it does not accord with what is contained within it in all respects. Interpreting «*kemâl-ü-hüner*» in a rather more particular sense than the general cultural attainment *Nabî* had in mind, he refutes the notion that perfection may be a quality appropriate to mankind, and its attainment desired by mere mortals. Man, he postulates is capable of imbibing only enough knowledge to enlighten the human spirit, perfection, however, lies well outwith his reach.

The weakness of Ekrem's definition lies in the use of the word «thing». If by it, he means the content of the idea —and there is no reason to speculate that he intends otherwise— then the definition would be : the idea is sound if it accords with its content in all respects. If we are to understand the relationship between the idea and its content to be based on philosophic truths, which consist of a unity of received ideas founded on logical principles, and religious and cultural values, then the following interpretation may be made : every idea is subject to a multiplicity of laws which govern its relationship with the body of accepted knowledge current at the time, and defiance of any one of these laws would render the idea unsound. Ekrem refers to these laws as aspects (*cihet*), maintaining that all should be respected in order to present a sound idea.

The difficulty inherent in the above interpretation lies in the lack of a clear distinction drawn between soundness and truth. Ekrem indicates that these are not synonymous by creating separate categories to accommodate each one, and he crudely reinforces this distinction by baldly stating that soundness is more beneficial (*müfid*) than truth and that the true idea may nevertheless be unsound. He may consider the first category to include those instances where an idea contains a single obvious truth or alternatively an obvious untruth, while the second category deals with the congruity of the idea to the experience of the reader, which is conditioned by many diverse factors. The statement «dogs can't fly» is recognisable as irrefutable truth, it may however be considered unsound, for the ability to fly is not given to dogs. Thus, whereas it might be considered sound to affirm that ostriches do not fly, for they belong to a *genus* in which flight is the most identifiable characteristic, to state that a particular member of the *genera* which constitute the mammals, fish or reptiles, does not fly is banal and absurd, and would according to Ekrem, be unsound. While it is clear that an unsound idea may nevertheless be true, no attempt has been made to identify the advantages of soundness over truth.

The two examples and explanations of them offered by Ekrem do little to shed light on, or to further develop, his argument. The choice of the illustration of the sound idea seems to have been influenced by the fortuitous occurrence of the phrase «to the sound mind» (*'akl-i selime*). The *beyt* chosen presents a sound idea only to those who share Ekrem's conviction concerning the existence of God and man's relationship to him; an atheist would certainly find the idea extremely un-

sound. While Ekrem's economic use of words in describing this literary phenomenon renders it no more than a vague notion, he might have restored some measure of integrity to his discussion had he provided more examples, or indeed discussed the illustrative *beyts* in relationship to each other. It would have been interesting to have noted Ekrem's observations as to the soundness of those *beyts* which illustrated the true idea. The suspicion must surely remain in the mind of the reader that it is not the example which illustrated the topic of discussion, but rather the explanation of the example.

The third intrinsic quality is clarity (*vuzûh*), which renders the idea easily understood, no matter how complex it may be. The examples given, however, are not very convincing. The first example, a *beyt* by Şināsî is certainly quite clear (p. 20) :

Žiyā-yı 'aql ile tefrîk-i hüsn-ü-ķubh olunur
Ki nūr-i mihrdir elvānı eyleyen teşhîr

As an example of the unclear idea he cites a *beyt* by Rāğîb Paşa :

Ķābil-i jeng olmayan olmaz pezîrā-yı cilā
İğbirār-ı hâtır iksîr-i meserrettdir baña

This idea is not so complex as to be considered unclear, unless the level of literacy in Ekrem's classroom had reached depths of mediocrity previously unsuspected. The existence of a misprint in the first edition (bezîrā-yı for pezîrā-yı), which is repeated in the second, is intriguing, for one cannot help entertaining the possibility that the description of the *beyt* as unclear prejudiced many readers against attempting to understand it.

The fourth intrinsic quality, order (*intizām*), is dismissed in one short sentence : it exists when the truth and the essence and the relationship between them are properly constructed (*Efkārın intizāmına gelince : bu da haķıķat ve tabi'atın ve aralarındaki revābıķ-u-münāsebātın ta'yîn etdiđi tertib altında bulunmasıyle hāşildir*). The lack of any illustrations or further explanation renders this passage virtually meaningless.

Leaving aside the intrinsic qualities of the idea, Ekrem now considers the incidental qualities, the first of which is simplicity (*sādelik*). Its particular virtue is that it will produce in the mind of the reader

the idea, the reality being expressed openly with no obstacles placed in the way of its comprehension. Three illustrations are provided; the first, a *maṣrā'* by Fuzlî; the second, a short passage by Kemāl; and the third, a *beyt* from Re'isü 'l-Küttâb 'Ârif (p. 21) :

Elbette gider gelen cihâna
Dest-i cellâd-i ecelden ne cüvân-ı kavî ḫalâş
olur ne pîr-i zebûn (*Innâ li-'Ulâhi ve-innâ
ileyh râci'ûn*).

'Âkîbet cümlemiziñ menzili ḫâk olsa gerek
Kime itmiş bu felek kâm-u-merâm üzre vefâ

While these illustrate simple ideas expressed in exquisite language, one should not, however, consider simple ideas worthless if they be simply expressed. As an example of the latter he cites 'Abdülḫakḫ Ḥämîd (p. 22) :

Hep gördüğümüz gibi yazmakta ne teraḫḫî
olabilir? Bir az da düşündüğümüz gibi yazmalıyız.
İnsân hemân görmege degil göstermege de
müsta'iddir.

The definition would seem at a glance to be fairly satisfactory, but it, too, does not bear close scrutiny. The weakness in it stems from the lack of any contrast with the intrinsic quality of clarity, the definition of which does not differ from it in essence. Both are characterised by the facility with which the idea may be comprehended, the only discernible difference may be deduced from the qualification to the quality of clarity, to the effect that the clear idea may be complex. The real difficulty lies in the choice of illustrations, which serve only to obfuscate the argument, for they could equally appropriately have been cited as examples of the qualities of truth, soundness or clarity. The last example in particular does not seem to be striking in its simplicity. The idea is clear enough but the implications of the statement are profound.

Ingenuousness (*sâde-dilânelik*), the second of the incidental qualities of the idea, allows the writer to criticise and attack, while apparently merely relating an incident. The criticism, the true purpose of the writer, will appear as incidental and secondary to the narrative aim. This quality is illustrated by the well known dialogue from Fuzlî's

Şikāyet-nāme, where he describes a frustrating encounter with bureaucracy, in which he attempts to validate a certificate for a pension, given to him in recognition of his merit, only to discover that the officials in charge were determined to avoid handing over the money. The quality of ingenuousness is manifested in the dialogue in which Fuzūlī tries to remonstrate with the officials and is met by the insurmountable barrier of bemused indifference on the part of the corrupt officials, completely confident in their own immunity from the law. The writer portrays himself as the victim of a callous bureaucracy at the hands of which he is humiliated and deprived of his rights, all within the context of a theme depicting the adversity of fate. The true purpose, Ekrem implies, is criticism and reproach, rather than the mere account of the frustration he experienced.

Once again it is to the example, rather than the definition itself, to which the reader must have recourse to understand the matter under discussion. The illustrative passage is appropriate enough, although in one respect it does not accord completely with the definition. The section quoted, which consists of about a sixth of the whole letter, by being divorced from its context, leaves too strong an impression of the circumstances which prompted its composition. While no reader could possibly mistake Fuzūlī's attitude to these men, and while there is no reason to suppose that he intended anything other than their condemnation, Ekrem should have provided an illustration in which the criticism was not so direct; for the reader unfamiliar with this letter may be forgiven for presuming that the primary intention of the author was an attack on the corrupt bureaucrats. However, the passage is so well known and universally admired that we may presume that all his readers were in fact familiar with the context (pp. 22-23).

The third incidental quality is subtlety (*incelik*), by which the writer presents an idea which contains a meaning additional to the one immediately apparent. Three examples are given, the first of which is taken from the *Evrāk-i Perişān* of Nāmīk Kemāl, in which Meḥmed II is accosted by a dervish while hunting. The dervish asks for half of Meḥmed's wealth, on the basis of their brotherhood in Islam. Meḥmed's reply, «Hele şu bir akçeyi al, git; öteki kardeşlerimiz duyarsa, hışsaña o kadar işabet itmez», is an example of subtlety. Although Ekrem does not explain the levels of meaning it is clear that it is the idea rather than the words themselves which admit of a deeper interpretation. Brotherhood as a concept in Islam, pertains to the spiritual relationship among Muslims, and is to be

interpreted on the level of familial obligation; the distinction here being made is between «uḥuvvet», the abstraction, and «kardeşlik», the actual.

Having defined and illustrated this quality Ekrem proceeds to qualify it by stating that it is not peculiar to intelligence or wit, but may also appeal to the heart, the latter type being preferred. Whether subtlety is within the realms of the intellect or the heart, it remains an innate virtue, which cannot be acquired through study.

A further illustration is provided in 'Abdülhakḫ Hāmid's *maṣrā'*, which Ekrem considered one of the most beautiful instances of the use of subtlety (p. 23) :

Hakāret redd olunur muḥayyerdür

The most probable meaning is that one should not respond in kind to abuse, although «redd» can mean both «reject» or «return», and the position of «muḥayyer» gives prominence to the choice which must be made between these two meanings.

A third illustration is provided in the story which relates Fu'ād Paşa's growing irritation with a political opponent who continually attacked him from behind the banner of liberalism. Fu'ād Paşa, conceding his opponent's merits but nevertheless wishing him dead, is alleged to have uttered «Fulānı aşmalı da soñra da altına gidüb ağılamalı». Translated as «They should hang so-and-so, and then weep over him», the implication of the remark is that lofty motives do not exempt one from proper or polite behaviour.

Forcefulness (şiddet), the fourth incidental quality, serves to affirm the importance of the idea, thus making a greater impression on the mind, and often producing noble sentiments in the hearts of the readers. Two examples are given, the first consists of words attributed to Selīm I, who while gazing upon a map of the world was reported to have said : «The world is not so vast as to satisfy a Sultan». The second is taken from the plot of *Vaḫan yāḥōd Silistre* of Nāmıḫ Kemāl, in which an officer, having appealed for a volunteer to blow up the enemy ammunition depot, and having found one asks him whether he is capable of setting it on fire, eliciting the reply : «I can set it alight, even if I have to sit on it to do so» (pp. 24-25).

Brilliance (parlaklık), the fifth incidental quality, gives to ideas elegance, loftiness and imagery, forming brilliant concepts in the mind

of the reader. Ekrem, reminding the reader that the topic under discussion is ideas rather than style, emphasises that brilliance is found not only in the meaning, that is the idea itself, but also in the expression of the idea, that is the style in which it is written. Style and meaning are inseparable in their contribution to the brilliance of the idea. He illustrates this quality with a passage from Nâmîk Kemâl, in which the author conjures up image upon image to evoke the feeling of wonderment which gripped him as he beheld the sun rising over the landscape. A further example consists of beyts taken from Nedîm's *Meşnevî* describing the *Bâğ-ı Vefâ* of Kapudan Muştafâ Paşa. Each of the *beyts* is marked by its vivid use of imagery (p. 21).

Ekrem has quite correctly drawn the reader's attention to the fact that impressive imagery cannot be dismissed as belonging purely to the realms of style, for the image evoked is as much dependent on the idea as its expression. What he has failed to do, however, is justify the special treatment of the idea which evokes brilliance, and the neglect of, let us say, the idea which evokes the grotesque, the bloody, the heavenly, or the soothing. The examples would suggest that the brilliant idea exploits brilliant imagery, that is, the bright sun, the luminous moon, sparkling jewels, scintillating water, gleaming marble and glittering stars. Brilliance, as a quality of the idea, seems to have no wider application, encompassing only that imagery which is connected with luminosity. However illogical the proposition may seem, Ekrem seems to consider scintillating tinsel and like imagery of such particular virtue as to merit special mention.

The sixth and final incidental quality is sublimity ('ulvîyet), which is peculiar to the loftiest, the greatest and the most inspiring ideas, holding spiritual concepts like divinity, religious experience and love of one's homeland. The examples are taken from the *Tazarru'ât* of Sinân Paşa, a work consisting of religious and moral reflections, from an unidentified prose passage by Sâmi Paşa, and from two poems by Şinâsî and Rousseau respectively. The first three examples all consist of affirmations of the existence of God. The quality of sublimity, as evinced by the illustrations, lies in the magnificence of the truth expressed in them, and because the greatest truth is the existence of God, any assertion there of is to be considered sublime. As each of these three illustrative passages is taken from the literary stock of Islamic pious and devotional writing, Ekrem chooses a poem by Jean Jacques Rousseau, translated by Pertev Paşa, presumably to demonstrate that the quality

of sublimity is not restricted to the writings of Muslims. The poem by Rousseau, himself a sentimental deist, consists of a statement of the transient nature of our worldly existence (pp. 27-30).

Concluding his discussion of the qualities pertaining to the idea, Ekrem sums up by admitting that he has not identified all discernible types of ideas, but he nevertheless assures his readers that he has touched upon their main characteristics. He adds one further observation : these qualities are of value only if they are appropriate to the subject under discussion. The best guide to their use is the aesthetic awareness (*zevke-i vicdāni*) and intelligence of the writer.

Although Ekrem has successfully proposed a theoretical framework within which one may characterise ideas, the impression is given that no matter how valid this may be for Ottoman literature, it required an effort of interpretation to make it apply. This may be due to his failure to search out the convincing illustration, for when the definition is weak, the reader will invariably depend upon the example cited in order to understand the proposition. This, in fact, would frequently seem to be the author's intention, for he uses the exemplary passages as integral parts of the discussion, sometimes interposing observations amongst the illustrations. The instances are not few when he defines the proposition, illustrates it, modifies the definition, provides a further illustration and concludes by adding some further remarks. This approach can only be as valid as the illustrations themselves, which are often an integral part of the theoretical discussion. Unfortunately they are all too often weak, so much so, that many of the examples could equally well, if not better illustrate other characteristics. One should not, of course, be too critical of such weaknesses and incongruities, for it is in the nature of pioneering works such as this to be slavishly dependent on alien ideas, and less than totally convincing in their attempt to reconcile two different traditions.

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The second part of this article will deal with Ekrem's treatment of the role of emotion, taste, imagery, wit, memory and genius and skill in literature, his discussion of style, his treatment of tropes and figures of speech and his assessment of contemporary Ottoman literature.