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BY

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I

TO THE pious Muslim the exaggerated insistence on personal originality and creativity has always been precarious. And *a fortiori* this reservation holds true for the unmitigated extolment of one's own secular *faḍā'il*, strong and natural as the urge of individuals has always and everywhere been to make sure that their personal contribution to contemporary life and culture was not left unappreciated. Unbridled self-aggrandizement, *iftiḥār*, customary and accepted as it was in certain genres strongly influenced by *ḡāhiliyya* standards¹—such as poetry—, should be qualified as contradictory to the Islamic ideal. Making a case of one's own unmatched grandeur required a personality that was self-centered and astute enough either to ignore or to sagaciously circumvent the cultural stigma against excessive self-pride.

An outstanding example of this mentality is the Ottoman scholar and littérateur Muştafā ‘Ālī of Gallipoli (1541-1600). He seems to me to embody this attitude to the extreme. Fortunately for us, this prolific writer redundantly describes his sentiments and motivations with such a perspicacity that one can venture upon reconstructing his individuality and upon separating his personal traits from the stereotyped characteristics that are conventionally associated with members of his class and vocation.

Shedding off the fetters of restraint, ‘Ālī places himself in the very center of his own world. This world is the moribund Ottoman meritocracy of the sixteenth century in which unique, learned people like Muştafā ‘Ālī—as he himself saw it—were deprived callously of their well-deserved paramount position, whereas unscholarly and often venal sycophants—many of them endowed

¹ On the conflicting ideals of *virtus* (*muruwwa*) and *dīn* in early Islam see Ignaz Goldziher: *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, Halle an der Saale 1889, 13.

with inherited privileges—had the say around the enfeebled august ruler. Prominent in their ranks were, of course, the victims of ‘Ālī’s venomous attacks who, quite understandably, returned his bilious criticism in kind and thus accelerated the vicious circle of inflicting and suffering injustice, of *ẓālim* and *mazlūm*.

‘Ālī would have vehemently contradicted to the denunciation of his self-laudatory stand as being incompatible with the tenets of Islam. To the contrary, so he would argue, he and his like (and there is a whole list of equally rejected and unsuccessful scholars²) were divinely privileged because of their intellectual talents. Just as God made the angels bow in reverence to Adam because of the gift of speech granted to *him*, and not *them*, so the courtiers swarming around the sublime sultan and intriguing against unappreciated and unwelcome geniuses like himself should be humiliated.³

Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī has recently been discovered, after decades of scholarly neglect, as one of the most productive, sensitive, and eloquent witnesses of sixteenth century Ottoman history. He was one of the most outspoken commentators and critics of the prevailing system of government and of public morals during the first half-century of what is seen today as Ottoman political decadence. Andreas Tietze in his masterly editions and translations of some of his poetic and paraenetic works,⁴ and Cornell H. Fleischer in his sumptuous analysis of his life, career, œuvre, and scholarly horizons⁵ have laid the foundations for the discovery of one of the

² See the names of contemporaries (e.g. Bāqī, ‘Alī Mīnīq, and Bedrūddīn Maḥmūd of Gallipoli) given in the first *nādire* of his *Nevādir ūl-ḥikem*, «Curious Bits of Wisdom»; cf. C. Fleischer: «Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī’s Curious Bits of Wisdom», *WZKM* 76 (1986), 105.

³ See Andreas Tietze: *Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī’s Counsel for Sultans of 1581. Edition, Translation, and Notes*, vols. I and II. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Denkschrift vol. 137.158). Vienna 1979, 1982, here vol. II, 92-4/220¹-224¹². Unless otherwise indicated the first number in the text refers to the two volumes of this work, whereas the second refers to Tietze’s transliteration, page and line.

⁴ *Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī’s Counsel for Sultans* (see note 3; cf. also my review in *OLZ* 81 [1986], 377-381).—Andreas Tietze: *Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī’s Description of Cairo of 1599. Text, transliteration, translation, notes*. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Denkschriften vol. 120). Vienna 1975 (see also my review article: «Neue Forschungen zur Geschichte des osmanischen Ägypten», *OLZ* 74 [1979], 213-19).—Andreas Tietze: «Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī of Gallipoli’s Prose Style», *Archivum Ottomanicum* 5 (1973), 297-319.—Idem: «The Poet as Critique of Society: A 16th-Century Ottoman Poem», *Turcica* 9/1 (1977), 120-60.

⁵ *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire. The Historian Mustafa Ālī (1541-1600)*, Princeton 1986.

undoubtedly most captivating figures of Ottoman Islam and of Islamic civilization in the early modern age at large.

I shall not go here into the details of 'Ālī's bureaucratic career that took him, often in the companionship and under the tutelage of the *generalissimo* (*serdār*) Lala Muştafā Pasha (the only one of his superiors by whom he felt accepted and esteemed), through most of the Middle East from Damascus to Cairo, from Bosnia to the Caucasus, and various more or less humble and inconspicuous fiscal and military offices, until, towards the close of his days, he was finally granted the governorship (*şanjaqbegilik*) and trusteeship (*emānet*) of Jidda where he died in early 1600.⁶

My concern, in the following, will rather be, and this task has not been tackled by Tietze nor by Fleischer, to come to grips with his personality of an «idiosyncratic malcontent»—to use Fleischer's term⁷—who was equipped with a highly vulnerable psyche and tried to find an appropriate orientation for himself between the cultural precepts of Islam and his inner drive of asserting, at all price, the social status and prestige he believed to be appropriate for himself. We will find him ever caught in the tension between his high-flying aspirations and the inevitable, distressing professional disappointments. Measured against his exorbitant self-esteem his life was destined to appear as a *via dolorosa* of constant humiliation and rejection. He kept asking unabashedly for prestigious offices that remained barred to him: So he suggested himself in a panegyric for Sultan Murād III as future *nishānji* (II 86/213¹¹), i.e. head of the entire imperial chancery. And in 1599, a few months before his untimely death (did his frustrations precipitate his premature end?), he bluntly asked the new sovereign Mehmed III, whose attention he had originally caught with an *encomium* on the occasion of his accession to the throne in 1595, to grant him the governorship of Egypt, one of the most coveted positions in the whole Empire.

II

The degree to which 'Ālī discloses his personal feelings in the course of the two books I have had a chance to study more exten-

⁶ See part I of Fleischer: *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*: «An Ottoman Life» (pp. 13-187), where the stages of 'Ālī's career are meticulously described and interpreted.

⁷ «Muştafā 'Ālī's Curious Bits of Wisdom», p. 107.

sively, i.e. one, his memorandum of 1599 on the state of affairs in Cairo, *Ḥālāt al-Qāhira min al-‘ādāt al-zāhira*, and two, his two-volume «mirror-for-sultans» work *Nuṣṣat üs-selāṭīn* of 1581 (and not only in the final, autobiographical chapter of the latter work, II 48-95/174-224), is captivating and repulsive at the same time. Without restraint, but rather with unperturbed self-righteousness, he liberally allows us to participate in his hopes and tribulations. His predicament, of which he has a constant urge to speak to others, is basically the twin disease of melancholy and megalomania. There existed an insurmountable chasm between his feverishly over-heightened self-esteem and the estrangement he—by virtue of this very arrogance—actively imposed on, and then—as a corollary—obtained in return from, his environment. And it was the love, aid, and respect of these very people that he was yearning for and wooing so desperately. Like Firdawsī, who was cheated by his patron, ‘Ālī was thus forced to feel *nā-mūrād*, «frustrated» (II 83-210⁴⁵)⁸, «trampled underfoot in the dust of humiliation» (II 83/210²⁴ *pāmāl ... khāk-i mezzelletde*), when comparing dismal reality with his exorbitant quest for acceptance. Acceptance, to him, was synonymous with unconditional support for his claim to artistic and intellectual uniqueness. He boasts,

I am ‘Ālī, still possessing ‘Ālī’s secret power...⁹

I am a monarch who has embraced two kingdoms (i.e. poetry and prose)...¹⁰

Professing monotheism in four tongues¹¹

I comprise four elements just as the four imāms head four legal schools

My poetic taste has become like the Prophet to the taste of others
(II 60-1/188²²⁻²⁸).

Without any inhibition he suggests: «O commander, make use of your slave ‘Ālī by giving him a responsible position, for he seals the mouths of all wise men, not leaving to them a reason to open their mouths» (II 90/218¹⁰⁻¹¹). We have already heard of his demands

⁸ As Professor Tietze kindly points out to me (referring to Meninski’s dictionary of 1780) *nā-mūrād* does not mean «unwelcome,» «undesired»—beautifully as this would fit into our context—but rather «unsuccessful in one’s objectives» (*frustrato de suoi desideri...*, etc.).

⁹ On ‘Ālī as champion of the *‘ilm al-jafr*, play on numbers and occult wisdom in general, see also ‘Ālī in his *Description of Cairo*, 81.

¹⁰ i.e., poetry and prose.

¹¹ i.e., Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and, so Tietze (II 60, note 165) surmises, Chaghatay.

for offices that for a man with his background and merits were unattainable. Only the *makhlaş Khāqānī*, «imperial» (or also, pertaining to the supreme ruler) can he accept as intrinsically adequate for himself (I 45-6/13⁴⁴, II 78/206²⁵). No one equals him among his compeers: «No golden crown adorns the head of the child of my poetic taste, nor a gem-studded ring in the foot of my virgin ideas» (II 49/175³⁵⁻⁶).

His *hubris* culminates in the final paragraphs of the mirror-of-princes work *Nuṣḥat üs-selāṭīn*. These were written after the book itself had been finished, distributed, read and, evidently, subjected to vitriolic criticism, especially for the rudeness with which 'Âlî had brought all his petty jealousies to the ear of the august sultan. 'Âlî petulantly rejects the reproach that he had been unfair: «No dust of aggressiveness has touched the contents of this book» (II 115/255⁷). Rationalizing his failure, he strikes back at his critics: «I do not envy the low people¹² either for riches or for rank [if only] my perfection does not arouse their jealousy! [Otherwise] woe on me!» (II 114/253¹³⁻¹⁴). He is bound to ask himself, within the system of his neurosis, whether others are not capable of seeing the special rank of his work?

«There does not exist a means of plentiful and easily available information comparable to this one [sc. book] ... In short, the noble sultans, the honorable vezirs, the glorious generals, and the judges and administrators of our days are under obligation to peruse its paragraphs attentively» (II 115/254³²⁻³⁸).

How can they dare not rally behind him in his unselfish drive for «strengthening empire and nation» (*istihkām-i mülk u millet* [II 115/254¹⁶])?

Each set-back on the path of high-flown endeavours was taken as further proof of the veracity of his own standpoint. Of Tütünsüz Hüseyn Beg, Selīm (II)'s tutor who had humiliated 'Âlî at a young age—even before he followed Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha to Syria—he confidently maintains: «Solely because of *my* knowledge and learnedness he was my foe» (II 71/196³⁸). That there may have been—must have been—a nucleus of truth in 'Âlî's statement, is in our context of minor concern. He could not but feel misunderstood—a mental position that inevitably led to confusion and despair. «Does one throw away a precious pearl?» (II

¹² He is hinting at these very critics.

71/196³¹)—i.e., like me? As if someone was hearing his lamentations, without being able to make him out in a crowd of people, he shouts: «They cry for help comes from *me!*» (II 77/206¹³).

Tormenting himself he repeats the painful answers he received to his, as he saw them, legitimate, demands: «... ‘with all your knowledge and learning there is no place for you in the sublime capital’» (II 73/200⁴⁻⁵), he masochistically quotes one of his haughty foes. Another authority, whose mediation for a judgeship he had solicited, turned down his request and then dismissed him, joyously patting his shoulders with the cheap reply: «... I should not resign to fate» (II 71/197¹⁴). In helpless hatred he comments on Soqollu Mehmed Pasha, one of those dignitaries whose heart he had vainly tried to win: «That mighty vezir was very sensible and wise and conspicuous among the vezirs for his knowledge and learning; therefore he did not go so far as to commit the above-mentioned book¹³ to destruction and fire» (II 73/201⁴⁰⁻⁴³); thus he sarcastically ends his description of his humiliation. Hinting at his permanent state of being the object of *zulm* he admonishes his audience: «Do not let my experience become proverbial all over!» (II 88/216²²).

Dreams are eagerly taken and cited as portents of imminent liberation from all his woes (a ship seen as a sign of promotion to a higher office [II 79/207²⁶]), to be dropped all the more despondently when «the boat of my wishes could not find land in the swelling sea of my hopes» (II 79-80/207³⁷). When fighting the *jihād* against the Safavid «heretics» in the Caucasus in the 1578-81 campaign as Lala Mustafā's *münshī*, he composed, full of zeal for the saintly duty toward God: «O ‘Ālī, tell that soul-physician [*ol jān ṭabībī* = God] not to let us moan [too long]! He should beware of our sighs, we are helpless, aggrieved persons» (II 73/200³⁷⁻³⁸). In a dramatic scenario in an *‘idiyye*, a poem composed on the occasion of the *‘id al-aḥḥā*, he contrasts himself «sitting in the nook of contempt, sorrowfully biting his fingers» (!) with «*all* mankind...happy and jubilant» (II 82-3/210³⁶⁻⁴¹).

In the end ‘Ālī seems to see the only way out of his self-carpen-tered cage in dissociating himself totally from this malevolent world, which has definitely proven incapable of granting him satisfaction. He is not like the others, he is high above

¹³ ‘Ālī had meant to dedicate to him his work *Heft Mejlis*.

their standards. «The world of my existence is a different world» (II 69/194⁵). Like the Šūfī élite he regards himself as member of the *ḥāṣṣ al-ḥāṣṣ*, the noblest among the noblemen. We overhear him, so to speak, saying to himself: I may be an outsider, yet the right is on my side. «Truth triumphs and is not to be triumphed over» (*al-ḥaqq yaʿlū wa lā yuʿlā ʿalayhi* [II 87/214²⁷⁻⁸]). «Better alone than in bad company» (*al-waḥda ḥayr min ḡalīs al-sūʿ* [II 102/235¹²]), «Who associates with people that stink stinks himself» (*man šāḥaba ahl at-tuham tahima* [II 14/126³⁴]), and «Hide your gold, your course and your creed» (*ustur ḍahabaka wa-ḍahābaka wamaḍḥabaka* [II 107/243²⁵])—all these Arabic proverbs point to his inveterate sour-grape elitism. He deplores his former naïve confidence and outgoing conviviality—if these qualities ever existed!—with the *misera plebs*:

Had I only not revealed my learning to an ignorant, had I only not made myself despised on account of my knowledge!

This is what always turned my friends into enemies. I wish I had not shown my poems to anybody (II 107/244¹⁹⁻²²).

ʿĀlī is trapped in his own system of argumentation. When claiming in the supplement to his appendix (*tezṇīb*) of *Nuṣṣat üs-selāṭīn* that his book was written in a «singular manner» and not in the «character of other serious books» (II 115/254⁴⁻⁶) he is definitely right. Yet the «singular manner» (*tavr-i ʿajīb*, [254⁴]) to our objective eyes means oddness rather than the excellence ʿĀlī had in mind.¹⁴

III

ʿĀlī disposed of one vehicle for reducing the pressure of his sufferings. His best friend, so it seems, was his pen. Writing, to him, also meant writing his grief off his heart.

... I *nolens volens* abandoned my body that was blood-stained and broken in a hundred pieces like the tulip overcome by autumn, to a mood of despair. But my aged mind urged me again to describe my situation and to express my innermost thoughts... (II 81/209⁵⁻¹⁰).

We can observe the mechanism of this release when following the course of some of his poems. With gloom he sets out, then gradually loosens the fetters of depression, and finally regains his old stamina.

¹⁴ This is no value judgment; ʿĀlī's peculiarities rather enormously enhance his worth as a historical figure.

O King, is it fair that the envy of my peers constantly attacks me, the helpless one, with the sword?
 Even my own body has started to decry me, destiny has lent a sword to each bone in [my] body (II 81/209²¹⁻²⁴).

He depicts in the first section of a *qaṣīda* with the *radīf* «sword» (Persian *tīgh*) his bodily mortifications. These lines are followed by utterances of his helpless frustration, of his feeling of not finding understanding, even of being persecuted: «Since I have no position, every one that reaches me has me trampled underfoot; there is nobody that would not attack me, this sorrowful one, with the sword» (II 81/209²⁷⁻³⁰). Then, however, vitality resurges; we read the Arabic proverb: «insistence leads to success» (*al-ibrām yuḥaṣṣilu l-marām* [II 82/210²⁻³]). With almost magic self-assurance ʿĀlī tells himself in the *maqtaʿ* of this sword-poem: «Do not worry, O ʿĀlī, your protector is magnanimous. There won't be any rank nor any sword that you will not be given» (II 82/209³⁹⁻⁴⁰).

In the introduction to another poem (II 83-4/211¹⁰⁻²⁹) this process of brightening up his moods is explicitly described: «I...withdrew into silence and seclusion» (II 83/211¹⁻²) until «...the magnanimous inspirer again woke me up from my sleep of consternation and inspired me» (II 83/211⁴⁻⁵). Then the verses themselves ensue as further testimony:

The circumstances [though] seeing my depressed mood, have not helped [me] any more
 ...O ʿĀlī, be patient, don't get steamed up over the troubles of the world;
 one day you will keep lying, keep sleeping in the shadow of his¹⁵ favor (II 84/211^{16, 26-27}).

IV

ʿĀlī's autobiographical sketch in chapter four of *Nuṣṣat üs-selāṭīn* gives us some hints to the factors that may have helped constitute his depressive psychic status, epitomized in the introductory words to this paragraph: «The troubles are many...my sufferings are beyond words» (II 48/175¹⁶⁻¹⁷).

When he was born, leaving «the helpless womb of my mother» (II 49/176¹⁰), or even earlier, when he was still a «nondescript fetus in the dark depths of my mother» (II 49/176⁵), his future life was, as he puts it, «already waiting with the tub of sorrows for my arrival» (II 49/176⁶).

¹⁵ i.e., the just king's.

A cheerless childhood was followed by an abrasive youth full of exertion, tension, and resignation. «I never was fed by the nurse of the Time according to my nature, nor did I find mercy and affection...» (II 50/176⁴⁰).¹⁶ School became a prison, a trial filled with «all kinds of restrictions and frustrations» (II 50/176⁴³). His unhappiness must soon have generated his very personal escape mechanism: the conviction of his own grandeur. When he was beaten by the teacher or vexed by his fellow pupils, then this «torture was solely caused by my giftedness» (II 50/177¹⁹)—that was it. When the others played or made sports he presumptuously kept himself away, «the arena of horsemanship is too narrow for being the playground of your activity when your imagination—as the horseman—arms itself with *the lance of your pen*» (II 51/178⁵⁻⁶). Again the motto: Keep away from the lowly ones. It was not his awkwardness, rather his unadulterated mind, the «mountains of imagination» (*ğibāl-i hayāl* [II 50/177³²]) that—in his view—isolated him from his companions. And consequently he continued his journey away from those around him.

'Âlî vividly describes his life, his *Lehr- und Wanderjahre*, divided into decennia, until he finally reached age forty, when «I was perhaps by and by girt for the desert winds of the Khamsîn¹⁷» (II 57/184³) and his physical energies palpably weakened. «The pillars of the four bodily opposites (*aẓdād*, humores¹⁸) underwent an increase of spiritual delectations and a decline of sensual pleasures» (II 58/185⁹⁻¹¹). In Šūfî diction a brisk characterization of a pre-modern mid-life crisis! The passion of writing (we just heard of «the lance of your pen»), and especially the lustful feeling of achievement, «the signs of the ink of authorship» (II 58/185¹⁸⁻¹⁹), were called to assuage his growing feeling of failure, of not living up to the expectations he was carrying within himself as a burden of his childhood and education.

Caught in this system, the very pertinent question: «I wonder what crookedness I committed, what was my crime?» (I 49/175³³)

¹⁶ Correct in Tietze's transliteration of line 40, page 176, *terbiyet* into *terbiyet*.

¹⁷ *Khamsîn*, Arabic fifty, or rather, the fifth decade of his life; a pun on the fifty days of the torrid desert wind called *khamsîn* in the Arab provinces of the Eastern Mediterranean.

¹⁸ For another example of the use of the imagery of the balance of bodily humors in Ottoman letters see Cornell Fleischer, «Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism, and 'Ibn Khaldûnism' in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Letters», *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18/3-4 (1983), 199.

was bound to remain insoluble to him. All his perceptiveness and analytical insights—predicated upon the apophthegm, «He who knows himself already knows his Lord» (*man ʿarafa nafsahū fa-qad ʿarafa rabbahū*, cf. II 109/246¹⁰⁻¹¹)—notwithstanding, he was barred from seeing the basic and first cause for his misery within himself, and was therefore liable to diagnosing outside, allegedly «objective» factors. Any self-vituperation he wards off. Not he himself, but rather the stars (II 91/218³⁸⁻⁴⁰), the others, the system, the social order, are to be held responsible for all his distress.

V

This delegation of the real cause of ʿĀlī's disturbance from within his vulnerable self to the outside is a blessing to modern historians. In his rationalizing search for motives why his protectors *in spe* spurned him and a few fellow sufferers and gave priority to others who, in his value system, had to appear inferior to himself, the general decay, the downfall of the pristine order of the Empire are eagerly cited. His overly sharpened nerves made ʿĀlī aware of symptoms and processes of deterioration in state and society which other more detached, and even more conservative, memorialists—like the anonymous author of the *Kitāb-i Müsteṭāb*¹⁹, the famous Qochi Beg²⁰, or ʿAzīz Efendi²¹—noticed only much later, when the process of decadence had become obvious.

ʿĀlī readily saw himself as a victim of this development for the worse. The reasons why he was treated inequitably were for him founded in the injustice proliferating everywhere in society. Patronage was no longer reserved for the deserving, «the high persons are left out and low people are given priority» (I 37/119³⁸). «Non-entities occupy the seats of government of the time» (II 94/224²⁰). That «the services performed by upright men during their sickness are more valuable than the efforts of persons of sick

¹⁹ Ed. Yaşar Yücel, Ankara, 1974.

²⁰ On Görījeli Qochi Beg's *Risāle* of 1040/1630 see B. Lewis, «Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline» *Islam in history. Ideas, men and events in the Middle East*, New York 1973, 203-7, and C. H. Imber in *EI* V (1980), 248b-250a.

²¹ Cf. GOW 185¹ on his *Qānūnnāme-i sulṭānī*, like Qochi Beg's *Risāle* intended for Murād IV. On ʿĀlī as an early critic of Ottoman decline see now also Klaus Röhrborn, «Mustafa Âli und die osmanische Promemorien-Literatur bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts,» *ZDMG* 137 (1987), 34-43.

character in their state of health» (I 64/159⁴⁰⁻⁴²), was—in his view, a maxim long forgotten.

If God preferred Adam to the angels (who were, after all, closer to His throne) because of the gift of speech and knowledge, as was mentioned before, then—so 'Âlî argues *a fortiori*—knowledge constitutes the criterion between the masses and the élite (II 92-4/220¹-224¹²). «How then that ... learning and erudition are declining from hour to hour?» (I 77/176²⁹). In his days, so 'Âlî muses, scholarship is no longer encouraged but rather suppressed; there have been no more luminous authors (he gives some twenty famous names from the time of the sultans Mehmed II, Bâyezîd II, Selîm I, and Süleymân) since Selîm II mounted the throne (I 76). Without the support and patronage of the sublime ruler academic life is destined to desiccate.²² «Does it befit kings to forget the men of learning and erudition? To neglect the master of culture is equal to neglecting culture itself,» 'Âlî asks in a poem (II 72/198³⁹⁻⁴⁰). It is a misconception to think that men of letters «are not distinguished from the common people» (I 63/159³¹⁻³²). Family affairs and family ties have become far too important for the people in our days (II 104/239⁴⁻⁷), he remarks morosely. What the Empire needs now are servants of sincere devotion. The state is languishing for remedy, for that golden day in a (hopefully) near future, when «the lower people will no longer occupy the higher offices and the public treasure will no longer be distributed to unworthy men!» (I 85/186³⁷).

Since to 'Âlî the tragedy of state and society was his own tragedy (and vice versa), our author inextricably mixes the story of his own sufferings with assemblies of associated, spontaneously flowing episodes and reflections. Deviation from the proven path of justice, as it was followed by the glorious early rulers of the house of 'Osmân (until Süleymân), is the governing theme. Each of the three main chapters of *Nuşhat üs-selâtin* deals with the state of decay and the urgency of remedy; their headlines are correspondingly indistinguishable and interchangeable: «On matters necessary for kings» (chapter I), «on the massive decline that can be seen in our days» (chapter II), and «on the weaknesses in the general situation

²² Wryly 'Âlî utters a critical remark that one can hear over and over again also in modern *academe*: administration eats up a professor's time (*fî zemâninâ müderrislik terk-i dirâsetdür*, II 71/197¹³).

as caused by certain evil abuses» (chapter III). In an introduction he briefly, yet oddly, deals with the «gifts (*mevāhib*) of special Divine favor» (I 38/122²²), granted to the Ottoman dynasty (among them, curiously enough, freedom from plague and pestilence, *mevhibe-i sālise* [I 38/123³⁻⁷]), also a subject consistent with ʿĀlī's main concern. And in chapter IV there follows, in a logical crescendo, the story of «the plentiful torture and boundless cruelty experienced by the author of this book» (II 48/174¹⁻³). In *Hālāt al-Qāhira*, his Cairo diary, written almost twenty years later, the larmoyant complaints about his own tribulations recede—in the meantime he had gained public attention and finally reached the ear of the sultan—yet the call for the restoration of the good old order remains the red thread also in this later work.

This is not the place to recapitulate in detail the numerous comments and pieces of advice, often maladroitly expressed and chaotically arrayed, which ʿĀlī gives to his readers. The corruption of the fiscal and legal administration, as well as the reckless despotism of public servants, are the main targets of his criticism.²³ What should be mentioned, if only briefly, is the sensitivity with which ʿĀlī observed—and then tried to explain—the behavior of his contemporaries, both groups and individuals. Not surprisingly he sees vanity, an inseparable *proprium* of human nature, as a main obstacle to recovery. Face this reality, do not pretend it does not exist, he adamantly advises his lofty addressees. Send the Sipāhīs of the Porte (*bölük khalqī*), who indolently sit around in the capital «drinking wine and listening to harp and rebeck» (I 54/146⁴⁰⁻⁴²), to Egypt; there they will be attracted by swift Arabian horses, refined weaponry and gilded horse trappings, and their passions will turn from a serious drawback into an advantage for the state. Or, in another example from the world of *academe*: beware of those professors who were appointed to the *medāris* without the necessary scholarly qualification. They are especially insidious. «They never come together with their equals ... They fear that a conversation on a scholarly topic might take place» (I 77/177^{10, 12}). And caution is necessary with eunuchs, for their pride has already been incurably damaged. Wrathfully, Khādīm Mesīḥ Pasha—governor of Egypt

²³ On this subject see my review of Tietze's edition and translation of *Nuṣḥat ūs-selāṭīn* concentrating on the historical richness of this source in *OLZ* 81 (1986), 377-81.

from 1574-1579 and, briefly, grand vezir, from 1585 to 1586—retorts when charged with trespassing the *şarī'a* (II 31/149¹⁷⁻¹⁸): «Did they first ask the Divine Law before they removed my testicles so that I therefore should handle such matters according to the Divine Law?»²⁴

In general 'Âlî admonishes all, often with citations of Arabic proverbs and *hikam*²⁵, to pay more attention to human weaknesses and temptations. So he agrees that king and state need spies and that these *ğāsūsān* should be given the free hand necessary to perform their duties. Yet some institution of control—so he continues—must be imposed upon them (I 47). In another passage he somberly states that it is futile to complain about the *dīvān* secretaries and other officials embezzling funds or otherwise abusing their power, unless they are given salaries sufficient to cover their legitimate needs (I 49).

One of the most significant paragraphs of *Nuşhat üs-selâṭîn*, both historically and psychologically, is the well-hidden section fourteen of chapter three (II 42-3). For goodness sake, he demands, stop the nuisance of keeping the «victory marked» Ottoman army constantly campaigning. Don't you realize, he clairvoyantly argues, that there are limits, not only physical, to every human being? Do you want the army, exhausted as it is, to fall victim to a well-rested enemy? That 'Âlî's exhortations were justified, and that the military triumph against Shāh Muḥammad Khudābanda, the feeble and half-blind Safavid ruler in the Caucasian campaign from 1578 to 1590 proved Pyrrhic in historical perspective²⁶, must not be forgotten. 'Âlî concludes his warnings with the counsel which—in my view—magnificently epitomizes the human dimension of Islam: «God does not burden a soul with a task greater than it can carry» (*lā yukallifu Allāhu nafsān illā wus'ahā* [II 42/166¹⁸]).

²⁴ 'Âlî, interestingly enough, insinuates that for the *aghās* the excessive consumption of food—a grave nuisance to the treasury! (I 60/154⁴¹-155³⁹)—was a compensation for missing sexual activities. Sensual delectations play a conspicuous rôle in 'Âlî's texts. He wrote a treatise, *Rāḥat ün-nüfûs*, on sexual hygiene (*'ilm al-bāh* [II 57/184¹⁷⁻²⁴]). See also his description of the adventures of the old lecher 'Ömer Beg, registrar in Trebizond (II 21-4), or of Hind, an insatiable prostitute (II 57/184²⁶⁻³²).

²⁵ This treasure of Arabic *dicta* would deserve a separate study!

²⁶ Cf. Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism during the Reformation. Europe and the Caucasus*. New York 1972, 91.

It is all the more tragic to realize that ‘Alī, with his subtle consciousness of the natural limits imposed on human souls and bodies, proved, it seems, throughout his life, unable to move—to use a psychological term—from the primary to the secondary process and thus to make this very liberating insight of the limitations of one’s personal *ṭāqa* useful for his own tormented self. Knowing and writing about the humanism of Islam did not, and could not, automatically mean joyful participation in this blessing.

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