



EBN 'AYYĀŠ, ABŪ EŞĤĀQ EBRĀHĪM

EBN 'AYYĀŠ, ABŪ EŞĤĀQ EBRĀHĪM b. Moḥammad Bašrī, Mu'tazilite theologian (d. late 10th century), member of the so-called "school of Bašra" and a partisan of the ideas of Abū Hāšem Jobbā'ī. Although it has been said that in his youth he had met Abū Hāšem, his main teachers were two eminent disciples of the latter, Abū 'Alī b. Ḳallād and later Abū 'Abd-Allāh Bašrī. He was himself the first teacher of the Qāzī 'Abd-al-Jabbār.

Very little is known about Ebn 'Ayyāš's life and works. Unlike Abū 'Abd-Allāh, he never settled at Baghdad but remained in southern Iraq and Ḳūzestān, both at that time dominated by the "school of Bašra"; he had no fixed residence and at various times taught in Šūštar, 'Askar Mokram, Ahvāz, Obolla, and Bašra. According to 'Abd-al-Jabbār, his writings consisted chiefly of replies to questions and refutations (*noqūzū*). The title of one of the latter works is known, his refutation of 'Aš'arī's *Ketāb iżāḥ al-borhān* (Ebn al-Nadīm, ed. Tajaddod, p. 221; British Library, London, anonymous ms. no. Or. 8613, fol. 128b). He is also reported to have written a work on the imamates of Ḥasan and Ḥosayn and their respective merits ('Abd-al-Jabbār, *Faḏl al-e'tezāl*, p. 328; Ebn al-Mortažā, p. 107).

On the whole, Ebn 'Ayyāš does not seem to have been very innovative, but rather to have followed his teachers very closely. Nevertheless, a certain number of original views on argumentation or doctrine have been attributed



to him. For example, on the question of the divine attributes and the demonstration that God is self-sufficient (*ḡanī*), i.e., that He has no need and thus no desire (*šahwa*), Ebn 'Ayyāš rejected Abū Hāšem's argument that only a body is susceptible to desire or aversion because desire would necessarily imply an increase and aversion a lessening. Instead, he proposed that God can have no desires whatsoever, for none of the causes of such desires could apply ('Abd-al-Jabbār, *Moḡnī* IV, p. 25; Mānakdīm, pp. 214-15; Ebn Mattawayh, *Majmū'* I, p. 212).

On the question of divine "justice" and the demonstration that God can perform good acts for the sole reason that they are good, Ebn 'Ayyāš also challenged the arguments invoked by his predecessors and returned to the simple formulation of [Abu'l-Hodāyl 'Allāf](#): God is known to perform good acts, and He is devoid of any needs; therefore, He must do good only because of its being good ('Abd-al-Jabbār, *Moḡnī* VIa, pp. 211-14; Mānakdīm, p. 307; Ebn Mattawayh, *Taḍkera*, p. 262).

On the level of doctrine Ebn 'Ayyāš rejected the thesis of Abū 'Alī and Abū Hāšem that a substance remains a substance even in a state of nonexistence. Since the attribute of a substance is "occupying space" (*taḥayyoz*), as long as a substance is nonexistent, he said, this attribute is not present, but is "awaited" (*montazara*; Abū Rašīd, p. 37; Ebn Mattawayh, *Taḍkera*, p. 57).

As concerns accidents, Ebn 'Ayyāš was inclined, even more than Abū Hāšem, to reduce the number of accidents positively recognized as real "entities" (*ma'ānī*). Just as Abū Hāšem had come to think that death is not an entity (*laysa be-ma'nā*) but only the absence of life, so Ebn 'Ayyāš considered neither unconsciousness (*sahw*) nor pain (*alam*) entities. According to him, unconsciousness is merely the absence of knowledge, "the (temporary) cessation of knowing the things that we habitually know" (Ebn Mattawayh, *Majmū'* II, p. 86, ms. fol. 201b; 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Moḡnī* VII, p. 44; Abū Rašīd, p. 341). In the same way pain is only the cessation of the bodily equilibrium (*e'tedāl*) that is characteristic of a state of health ('Abd-al-Jabbār, *Moḡnī* IV, p. 29, IX, p. 59, XIII, p. 261; Ebn Mattawayh, *Taḍkera*, pp. 307-13).

Lastly, one major innovation by Ebn 'Ayyāš was to have considered that knowledge (*'olūm*) cannot perdure (*lā yaṣeḥḥo 'alayhā al-baqā'*; 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Moḡnī* XII, p. 136; Abū Rašīd, pp. 261, 340; Ebn Mattawayh, *Majmū'* II, p. 143; idem, ms. no. C.104, fol. 203a).



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