



## EŠĀRĀT WA'L-TANBĪHĀT, AL-

**EŠĀRĀT WA'L-TANBĪHĀT, AL-**, a late work of Avicenna (q.v.; Ebn Sīnā, d. 428/1037), written sometime between 421/1030 and 425/1034, which sums up his thought in a language that is often deeply personal and expressive. A relatively short book, it is a philosophical and literary classic that exerted immense influence on subsequent Islamic thought.

To a large extent, Avicenna in this work condenses and recasts both the logic and a body of core philosophical ideas which he had treated exhaustively in his voluminous *Šefā'*, bearing, however, some modification and variation. In the *Ešārāt*, for example, the classification of the premises used in different types of arguments (*borhānī* "demonstrative," *jadālī* "dialectical," *keṭābī* "rhetorical") is not identical with their classification in the *Borhān* (Demonstration) of the *Šefā'*. Again, the *Ešārāt*'s version of the hypothetical example of our being created all at once, mature but floating in space, differs (in what it intends to show) from its two other versions in the *Šefā'*. There are other differences. The *Ešārāt* omits some important ideas discussed in the *Šefā'*, for example, the discussion of primary concepts (the existent, the thing, the necessary) that are immediately known in the way self-evident propositional truths are known. More significant than this, it includes elements totally absent in the *Šefā'*. Thus in the last sections of the *Ešārāt*, devoted to eschatology, mysticism, and prophetic powers, particularly in describing the mystic's journey to God, we encounter statements found neither in the *Šefā'* nor explicitly in Avicenna's other known works.

Avicenna divides his book into two main sections. The first, consisting of ten



*anhāj* (sg. *najh* “way,” “method”), is entirely devoted to logic. The second, consisting of ten *anmāṭ* (sg. *namaṭ* “mode,” “pattern”), divides naturally into discussions of physics, which includes psychology (*anmāṭ* 1-3), metaphysics (*anmāṭ* 4-7), and religious matters, including mysticism (*anmāṭ* 8-10). While none of these three discussions is given a heading, each *namaṭ* within them has an individual title. The thought in both the *anhāj* and the *anmāṭ* is presented through individual paragraphs varying in length, each introduced normally, but not always, either by the term *ešāra* (sg. of *ešārāt*) or *tanbīh* (sg. of *tanbīhāt*), hence the title *al-Ešārāt wa'l tanbīhāt*.

The book's title, however, poses difficulties for the translator. This is because each of the terms *ešāra* (indication, directive, hint, sign, signal) and *tanbīh* (alerting, awakening, drawing attention to a specific point, admonishing, reminding) have varying nuances of meaning and are used in the *Ešārāt* (as elsewhere in Avicenna's writings) in related but different senses. Often, an *ešāra* introduces a main philosophical point and the *tanbīh* sometimes constitutes an amplification of it. At times, a *tanbīh* may draw attention to something that is known immediately, such as self-knowledge, at other times to something known inferentially, providing the argument for it. The term *wahm* (delusion), sometimes precedes the term *ešāra*, more often the term *tanbīh*. In such instances an error is pointed out and its corrective given. The proof from contingency for God's existence given in the fourth *namaṭ* begins with a *tanbīh*, followed by an *ešāra*, another *tanbīh*, a *šarḥ* (explication) and then three other *ešārāt*. The distinction between an *ešāra* and a *tanbīh* in the proof is difficult to ascertain. The terms *taḍkīr* (reminder), *taḍnīb* (addendum), *takmela* (completion), *nokta* (a point of interest), are also used.

The last three *namaṭs* of the *Ešārāt* constitute a distinctive feature of this work. The eighth *namaṭ* introduces the *'āref* (the knower, the gnostic). In the ninth *namaṭ*, devoted to the stations of the *'āref* (*maqāmāt al-'ārefīn*), we note a recapitulation of the argument in the “Metaphysics” of the *Šefā'* for society's need for a lawgiving prophet. The prophet is thus included among the “knowers.” One also notes that Avicenna refers us to the story of Salāmān and Absāl that conveys in a symbolic way the course followed by the *'āref*. Avicenna tells us that the first stage of the *'āref's* journey is that of will. This is when the individual who attains certainty either through demonstration or, significantly, through religious belief, becomes overcome with a yearning for the unbreakable bonding of faith with God. Music and goodly sermons aid the *'āref's* pursuit of gracious thought (*al-fekr al-laṭīf*) and chaste love (*al-ešq al-*



‘*afīf*) leading towards his objective. In his journey the ‘*āref* may become diverted from his objective through preoccupation with his own psychological state. It is when he forgets this, concentrating on the object of knowledge (*al-ma‘rūf*) that he plunges into the sea of arrival (*lojjat al-woṣūl*) beyond which, however, there are further stages. But the experience now is ineffable; any discourse reveals only what is in the imagination (*al-ḳayāl*).

Avicenna uses Sufiterms and there is no good reason to hold that he does not intend them as such. The purely intellectual and the Sufipaths to God seem to blend, but the relation between them in these last *anmāt* is not made entirely clear and remains amenable to different interpretations.

A Persian translation was made in the 7th/13th century by ‘Abd-al-Salām b. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad Fārsī (ed. E. Yār-e Šāter, Tehran, 1332 Š./1973).

See also [AVICENNA iii. LOGIC](#), [iv. METAPHYSICS](#).

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For a discussion of the title, see Goichon's introduction. For the use of the terms *ešāra* and *tanbīh*, in the *Psychology of the Šefā'*, see M. E. Marmura, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context," *The Monist* 69/3, 1986, pp. 383-95.

For a brief but pertinent statement of the problem of the relation of Avicenna's mysticism, as expounded in the *Ešārāt*, to his philosophy, see 'A. Badawī, *Histoire de la Philosophie en Islam*, 2 vols., Paris, 1972, II, pp. 262-64.