

AL-KINDĪ'S METAPHYSICS: THE INTEGRATION OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract: *This study aims to rectify the reductionist assumption that Islamic philosophy is merely a replication of ancient Greek thought. Specifically, it analyzes how al-Kindī, as one of the pioneers of philosophy within the Islamic tradition, systematically integrated elements of Greek philosophy—particularly Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism—into the conceptual framework of Islamic thought, with a focus on metaphysical aspects of divinity. The central theological themes examined include arguments concerning the existence of God, the essence and characteristics of God, and the concept of the creation of the universe. Using a descriptive-qualitative approach to al-Kindī's primary texts, particularly *Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*, this study reveals that al-Kindī did not merely adopt Greek philosophical ideas passively. Rather, he actively selected, reinterpreted, and reformulated these ideas to align with the foundational principles of Islamic teachings. The findings indicate that al-Kindī functioned as more than a translator or conduit of intellectual traditions; he emerged as an innovator who successfully synthesized philosophical reasoning with religious revelation. Another significant finding is al-Kindī's critical stance toward Greek metaphysical concepts—for instance, his rejection of the notion of *creatio ex materia* (creation from pre-existing matter) in favor of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing), which is more consistent with Islamic theology. This contribution marks the formation of an original and contextual Islamic metaphysical system and paved the way for the more systematic development of Islamic philosophy in subsequent periods. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of repositioning al-Kindī as a central figure in the intellectual history of Islam, one who effectively bridged two major intellectual legacies: Greek philosophy and Islamic thought.*

Keywords: *Al-Kindī, Greek Philosophy, Integration, Islamic Philosophy, Metaphysics.*

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meluruskan asumsi reduksionis yang memandang filsafat Islam semata sebagai salinan dari pemikiran filsafat Yunani kuno. Kajian ini secara khusus menganalisis bagaimana al-Kindī, sebagai salah satu pelopor filsafat dalam tradisi Islam, secara sistematis mengintegrasikan unsur-unsur filsafat Yunani—terutama Neoplatonisme dan Aristotelianisme—ke dalam kerangka pemikiran Islam, dengan penekanan pada aspek metafisika ketuhanan. Pokok-pokok teologis yang dikaji mencakup argumen mengenai keberadaan Tuhan, hakikat serta esensi keilahian, dan konsep penciptaan alam semesta. Melalui pendekatan deskriptif-kualitatif terhadap teks-teks utama al-Kindī, khususnya *Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*, ditemukan bahwa al-Kindī tidak hanya mengadopsi gagasan-gagasan filsafat Yunani secara pasif, melainkan secara aktif menyeleksi, menafsirkan ulang, serta merekonstruksi ide-ide tersebut agar konsisten dengan prinsip-prinsip dasar ajaran Islam. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa al-Kindī berperan lebih dari sekadar penerjemah atau penyambung tradisi intelektual; ia tampil sebagai inovator yang berhasil merumuskan sintesis antara rasionalitas filosofis dan wahyu keagamaan. Temuan penting lainnya adalah sikap kritis al-Kindī terhadap konsep metafisika Yunani, misalnya dalam menolak pandangan *creatio ex materia*—yakni penciptaan dari materi yang telah ada—dan menggantikannya dengan konsep *creatio ex nihilo*, yaitu penciptaan dari ketiadaan yang selaras dengan teologi Islam. Kontribusi ini menandai pembentukan sistem metafisika Islam yang orisinal dan kontekstual, sekaligus membuka ruang bagi perkembangan tradisi filsafat Islam yang lebih mapan di periode-periode berikutnya. Dengan demikian, studi ini menegaskan pentingnya mereposisi al-Kindī sebagai tokoh sentral dalam sejarah intelektual Islam yang mampu menjembatani dua warisan besar: filsafat Yunani dan pemikiran keislaman.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Al-Kindī, Filsafat Islam, Filsafat Yunani, Integrasi, Metafisika.*

Introduction

Discourse related to the issue of divinity is one of the most essential metaphysical inquiries within Islamic philosophy, intricately linked to Islamic religious doctrines. Central to Islamic thought is the concept of divinity, prompting philosophers to offer rational elucidations on the existence, attributes, and creative role of God (Habibah 2020). Muslim philosophers, while drawing from Greek philosophical traditions, did not merely adopt them wholesale; rather, they critically engaged with and adapted them by Islamic principles (Hafizah and Kharisman 2024, 358).

Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb bin Ishāq al-Kindī, known as *Alkindus*, stands out in this discourse as a pivotal figure. He is recognized as the first Arab philosopher to systematically synthesize Greek philosophical ideas within the Islamic framework, earning him the epithet "*al-Faylasūf al-'Arab*" (*The Philosopher of the Arabs*) (Kindī 1999; Atiyeh 1985; Groff 2007).

Al-Kindī's contributions to Islamic philosophy are significant, particularly in his metaphysical ponderings, which diverged from Aristotle's views on divinity. Unlike Aristotle's notion of an unmoved mover, al-Kindī argued that God created the universe from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), reflecting his departure from Greek philosophical concepts towards a uniquely Islamic epistemological framework (Wahda 2019, 41).

Researchers have explored al-Kindī's contributions to the philosophy of divinity through various approaches. Antonio Torres Fernández's study on Islamic logic highlights how tawhid serves as the foundation for understanding knowledge acquisition and rational inquiry (Fernández 2023). Hillary Wiesner details al-Kindī's synthesis of Greek philosophy with Quranic revelation to assert the unity and causality of God within a philosophical framework (Wiesner 1993). Additionally, Jarman Arroisi, Nur Hadi Ihsan, and M. Najib Abdussalam examine al-Kindī's early Islamic psychology, particularly his insights into the soul and rational faculties (Arroisi, Ihsan, and Abdussalam 2023).

These studies underscore al-Kindī's enduring impact on Islamic philosophy and the integration of philosophy with Islamic theology. Beyond these works, numerous other studies delve into al-Kindī's metaphysical contributions, further enriching our understanding of his philosophical legacy in Islamic thought. Culminating such studies, this article examines al-Kindī's philosophical perspectives on divinity, beginning with his biography and philosophical approach, and delving into specific aspects of his conception of God. Such an analysis aims to elucidate the distinctions between al-Kindī's thought and that of his Greek philosophers.

The Life of al-Kindī

Al-Kindī, whose full name is Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ ibn 'Imrān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath ibn Qays, earned his appellation "al-Kindī" from his lineage tracing back to the Kindah tribe in South Arabia (Riḍāh 1950, 1). Born in 801 AD/185 AH in the Iraqi city of Kufa, he passed away in 873 AD/260 AH at the age of 72 (Riḍā 1962, 37). His lifespan coincided with the reign of eleven Abbasid caliphs, from al-Rashīd to al-Mu'tamid (Riḍā 1962, 19). Al-Kindī hailed from a distinguished and learned family background; his father, Ishāq ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ, held governorship in Kufa during the rule of Caliphs al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd, while his grandfather, Ash'ath ibn Qays, was esteemed as a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (Adamson 2007, 4). Such noble lineage undoubtedly facilitated al-Kindī's scholarly pursuits.

His fascination with science emerged in his youth, where he commenced his intellectual journey by memorizing the Quran and delving into Arabic grammar, literature, and arithmetic in Kufa. As he matured, al-Kindī gravitated towards the burgeoning philosophical currents in Kufa (Jābar 1993, 14). However, unsatisfied with local resources, he embarked on a journey to Baghdad, the thriving hub of knowledge under the Abbasid Caliphate. Baghdad, renowned as the epicenter of scientific inquiry, witnessed rapid advancement across various disciplines, including philosophy, geometry, astronomy, and medicine. In Baghdad, al-Kindī immersed himself in the study of philosophy, particularly the works of

Aristotle and Plotinus (Riḍā 1962, 22). His intellectual pursuits extended beyond philosophy, encompassing rigorous engagements with geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and other sciences, ultimately achieving mastery in these domains (Bāshā 1945, 19). His intellectual acumen caught the attention of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, who appointed him as a teacher at *Bayt al-Ḥikmat*, the esteemed center of learning in Baghdad (Klein-Franke 2007, 168).

Bayt al-Ḥikmat provided a platform for al-Kindī to flourish academically. Proficient in Greek and Syriac, he played a pivotal role in the translation movement of Greek texts. Additionally, he was entrusted with the private education of Aḥmad, son of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, and served as a palace advisor during the reigns of al-Mu'taṣim and al-Wāthiq (Adamson 2007, 4).

However, his position was revoked during the caliphate of Al-Mutawakkil, purportedly due to influence from envious factions who opposed al-Kindī's accomplishments (Riḍā 1962, 44). It is believed that al-Kindī's dismissal and the confiscation of his library occurred amidst a transition from the Mu'tazilite school of thought to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah* during al-Mutawakkil's reign (Hamarnah 1965, 330).

Al-Kindī's affiliation with the Mu'tazilite sect is widely acknowledged, supported by his arguments in various works that align with Mu'tazilite principles (Fakhry 2000, 24). Furthermore, his familial background and social milieu were predominantly Mu'tazilite (Fakhry 2004, 68). Despite some skepticism regarding his Mu'tazilite allegiance, it is argued that certain issues addressed by al-Kindī, such as justice and the omnipotence of Allah, were not exclusive to the Mu'tazilite. Moreover, there is no explicit evidence of his acceptance of the five main teachings (*al-uṣūl al-khamsah*) of the Mu'tazilite (Adamson 2003, 47). Nevertheless, al-Kindī's ideological leanings towards the Mu'tazilite school remain evident.

Researchers of al-Kindī's biography face difficulties in tracing his teachers, as limited valid data mentioning them exists. Abū Rīdah, in *al-Kindī wa Falsafatuhu*, highlights the scarcity of references regarding al-Kindī's biography. Notably, biographers such as Ibn Nadīm, al-Qāḍī Ṣa'īd ibn Aḥmad al-Andalusī, Ṣaḥīr al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī, and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qiftī fail to mention al-Kindī's teachers (Riḍā 1950, 3–4). Despite this, al-Kindī's proficiency in various scientific fields suggests that he had numerous educators, whose names remain unknown. Identifying al-Kindī's students poses similar challenges. However, Ibn Nadīm, in *al-Fihrist*, mentions one of al-Kindī's students, Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭayyib (Nadīm 2001, 365).

Al-Kindī's contributions to various scientific fields endure through his extensive written works. Peter S. Groff and Oliver Leaman, in *Islamic Philosophy A–Z*, note al-Kindī's authorship of 260 manuscripts, though only a fraction of them have survived (Groff 2007, 121). His works span

17 classifications, including (1) philosophy, (2) logic, (3) arithmetic, (4) globular, (5) music, (6) astronomy, (7)) geometry, (8) spherical, (9) medical, (10) astrology, (11) dialectics, (12) psychology, (13) politics, (14) meteorology, (15) quantities, (16) divination, (17) metals and chemistry (Riḍā 1962, 63–77). Al-Kindī's works prove his intelligence and breadth of knowledge. History has recorded the influence of al-Kindī's works on the development of civilization, both Islamic civilization and Western civilization.

Among al-Kindī's most influential works are those in the field of philosophy. Al-Kindī is credited with paving the way for the dissemination of Greek philosophy, particularly the ideas of Aristotle and Neo-Platonism, in the Islamic world (Sharif 1963, 423). However, al-Kindī did not adopt these philosophical doctrines wholesale; rather, he adapted and refined them by Islamic thought (Klein-Franke 2007, 311).

Al-Kindī's books in philosophy include: *Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*, *Fī al-Falsafah al-Dākhilat*, *al-Baḥth 'ala Ta'alum al-Falsafat*, *Fī Qasd Aristoteles fī-l-Maqalāt*, *Kammiyāt Kutub Aristoteles*, *Fī-l-Ḥuddūd al-Asyyā*, *Aqsām 'Ilm al-Ilāhi*, *Māhiyah al-'Ilm wa Aqsāmuhu*, *Risālah fī Māhiyat al-'Aql*, etc (Qiftī 2005, 275). By examining al-Kindī's diverse works, Ibn Nadīm classified him as an expert in natural philosophy (Nadīm 2001, 255). Al-Kindī's writings have not only been scrutinized by muslim scholars but have also been translated into Latin and studied by Western intellectuals from the Middle Ages to the present day.

It was a significant feat to integrate Greek philosophical thought, which was relatively foreign to Islamic tradition at the time. Al-Kindī encountered at least two significant challenges in this endeavor. *Firstly*, Arabic lacked a sufficient lexicon of technical terms to articulate the concepts of Greek philosophy. *Secondly*, there existed biased or negative attitudes toward philosophy from certain quarters (Atiyeh 1985, 10). Remarkably, al-Kindī managed to surmount both obstacles. He addressed the first challenge by translating Greek terms into Arabic, such as rendering "hyle" as "thīn" (matter), or by introducing new Arabic terms like "ḥaylasūf" for the Greek term "philosophos" (philosopher). Meanwhile, he tackled the second obstacle by reconciling religion and philosophy (Atiyeh 1985, 12). In assuming this role, al-Kindī emerged as a significant figure in the development of Islamic philosophy.

The Characteristics of al-Kindī's Philosophy

Al-Kindī's philosophical approach undoubtedly reflects the influences of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Neo-Platonism; however, what sets him apart is his ability to refine and advance their ideas. With his keen analytical skills, al-Kindī extracted the core principles of Greek philosophy and then contextualized them within Islamic thought. For instance, in the realms of metaphysics and cosmology, al-Kindī adopted many of Aristotle's concepts

(Janssens 1994, 4) while drawing from Plato's insights in psychology (Fitzmaurice 1971, 122) and heavily incorporating Socratic ethics into his philosophy (Druart 1993, 338). Thus, al-Kindī's philosophical style embodies eclecticism, wherein he amalgamates the best elements from various philosophical systems (Antoine-Mahut 2024, 7).

As emphasized earlier, al-Kindī did not merely adopt Greek thought wholesale; rather, he adapted and expanded upon it. He achieved this through processes such as transliterating Greek philosophical terms into Arabic—like transforming "*philosophos*" (philosopher) into "*faylasūf*," or "*to ti esti*" (essence) into "*al-māhiyah*" (Atiyeh 1985, 12). Moreover, al-Kindī critically engaged with several views of Greek philosophers. For instance, while Greek philosophers maintained the concept of "*creatio ex materia*" (creation from existing matter) and believed in the eternal nature of the universe, al-Kindī argued for "*creatio ex nihilo*" (creation from nothing) through God's creative act, positing that the universe is new (Kindī 1999, 202).

Additionally, al-Kindī further developed existing Greek philosophical ideas, such as those of Aristotle, as evidenced in his work *Risālah fī Kamiyyah Polar Aristū wa mā Yaḥtajilaihi fī Taḥshīl al-Falsafah* (Kindī 1999, 360). Thus, al-Kindī's contributions extend beyond mere translation; he played a pivotal role in elucidating and advancing Greek philosophical thought within the Arabic tradition.

Al-Kindī, a prominent muslim philosopher, dedicated himself to harmonizing Islamic philosophy with religion. He proposed that philosophy should not contradict or supersede revelation, but rather complement it (Sa'īd 1912, 52). For al-Kindī, philosophy seeks knowledge of what is true (*baḥṭs 'an al-ḥaqq*), aligning with religion's aim to elucidate truth and goodness (Kindī 1999, 97).

Hence, both disciplines share a common purpose. In his work, *Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*, al-Kindī asserted that the pinnacle of human discovery is philosophy, as it endeavors toward truth. He stressed that the noblest form of philosophy is "First Philosophy" (*Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*), which investigates the ultimate cause—Allah. Al-Kindī thus advocated for harmony between philosophy and religion, as they converge in the pursuit of truth (Kindī 1948, 77).

Al-Kindī also advocated for the universality of truth, rejecting the notion that it is exclusive to certain groups, nations, or civilizations. Consequently, he encouraged muslims to embrace truth wherever it is found, regardless of its origin. This is evident in the following expression of al-Kindī:

و ينبغي لنا أن لا نستحي من استحسان الحق واقتناء من أين أتى و إن أتى من الأجناس القاصية عنا
والأمم المبينة لنا فانه لا شيء أولى بطالب الحق من الحق وليس بخس الحق ولا تصغير بقائه ولا بالآتي
به ولا أحد بخس بالحق بل كل يشرفه الحق

We should not be ashamed to recognize a truth and take it from wherever it comes, be it from former nations or foreign nations. For truth seekers, nothing is more precious than the truth itself. Taking the truth from others will not lower or degrade the seeker of truth but rather make him honorable and noble (Kindī 1999, 103).

This belief resonates with a hadith of the Prophet, as narrated by Ali bin Abi Talib, which asserts that wisdom (*al-ḥikmat*) belongs to all muslims, scattered across the world, and must be sought and accepted wherever it exists (Tirmidhī 1998, 2342). Therefore, muslims should not hesitate to integrate truths from various sources, including those found within Greek philosophy.

Metaphysics: The Concept of Divinity

Al-Kindī delves deeply into metaphysical inquiries, particularly concerning divinity, a central theme in his philosophical discourse. His reflections on metaphysics are encapsulated in his work "*Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*" (On First Philosophy), penned for Caliph al-Mu'tashim (Kindī 1948). Al-Kindī adopts Aristotle's conception of metaphysics, referred to as "*proto philosophia*" (first philosophy), which he terms "*Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*" (First Philosophy) (Tahko 2013, 3). The concept of divinity holds paramount importance in al-Kindī's metaphysical framework, as he regards the pursuit of philosophy as a quest for truth, with the ultimate truth being knowledge of God.

Central to al-Kindī's metaphysical musings is the notion of God as the primal cause (*'Illah al-Ūlā*/First Cause) from which all emanates. Consequently, concepts such as the soul, reason, and creation are intricately linked with the concept of divinity (Fakhry 2004, 71). Al-Kindī's conception of divinity draws influence from Aristotle and Plotinus, yet he uniquely tailors these ideas within the context of Islamic religious traditions (Janssens 1994, 4). His doctrine on the nature of God reflects strong adherence to Mu'tazilite principles (Sharif 1963, 428). Al-Kindī expounds upon his divine philosophy predominantly in "*Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*," where he examines evidence for God's existence, expounds upon the nature of God, and elucidates the act of creation.

The exploration of divinity in al-Kindī's metaphysical discourse unfolds across three key dimensions: (1) the existence of God, (2) the nature and essence of God, and (3) the act of creation. (Atiyeh 1985) Concerning the existence of God, al-Kindī articulates rational arguments substantiating God's existence, drawing from both Greek philosophical traditions and Mu'tazilite theology. On the nature and essence of God, al-Kindī leans towards a perspective that negates attributing specific qualities to God's essence. As for the creation of the universe by God, al-Kindī aligns with the Mu'tazilite stance, asserting that nature emerged *ex nihilo*—out of nothing—by God's divine decree. This detailed exploration elucidates al-

Kindī's multifaceted contemplations on the concept of divinity within his metaphysical framework.

1. The Existence of God

Al-Kindī posits God as a perfect being, unprecedented by any other entity. Thus, for him, God's existence is indisputable, as without Him, nothing else could exist. He designates God as the First Cause (*'Illah al-Ūlā/ Fā'il al-Awwal*) (Kindī 1999, 215). Moreover, just like any other philosopher or theologian, al-Kindī subscribes to the Oneness of God, referring to Him as *al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqq* (The True One) (Kindī 1948, 128). To substantiate the existence of God, al-Kindī presents three rational arguments: the argument for the novelty of nature (*dalīl al-ḥudūth/ a novitate mundi*), the argument for unity and diversity (*dalīl al-wiḥdat wa-l-kathrah*), and the argument for controlling nature in order (*dalīl al-nizām wa-l-tadbīr*) (Marḥabā 1985, 91). These arguments hinge on al-Kindī's depiction of God as an eternal, singular, supernatural entity and the primary catalyst for motion. Therefore, for al-Kindī, the intricate existence of nature, encompassing its diverse ecosystems, serves as compelling evidence for the existence of God, as explained in the following sections.

In al-Kindī's conception, the argument for the novelty of nature (*dalīl al-ḥudūth*) hinges on the doctrine of creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). Al-Kindī asserts that God alone possesses the ability to create something from nothing, including the entirety of the universe and its contents, as He is the ultimate cause (*'Illah al-Ūlā/First Cause*) (Kindī 1948, 121). To bolster this argument, al-Kindī marshals' logic about motion, time, and objects. Regarding motion, he poses a rhetorical question: "Is it possible for something to be the cause of itself or is it impossible? In our opinion, this is certainly impossible" (Kindī 1999, 123).

Thus, al-Kindī concludes that the world is new (*ḥādith*), implying a beginning and an end in time. Logically, if there is novelty, there must be a creator of that novelty (*muḥdith*), which al-Kindī identifies as God (Marḥabā 1985, 91–92). George N. Atiyeh, al-Kindī's biographer, notes that al-Kindī's argument aligns with the law of causality, asserting that everything created at a certain time must have a creator, thereby proving the existence of God (Atiyeh 1985, 58).

Al-Kindī's argument resonates with Aristotle's philosophical concept of *causa prima*, portraying God as the first mover, the unmoved mover. However, al-Kindī diverges from Aristotle regarding the creation of nature. While Aristotle posits that nature did not emerge from nothing and that God did not directly create it, al-Kindī insists that nature originated from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), attributing its creation directly to God (Kindī 1999, 249–50). Thus, al-Kindī's argument for the novelty of nature (*dalīl al-ḥudūth*) aligns with the theological perspectives of theologians (*al-mutakalimūn*) (Marḥabā 1985).

The second argument, the argument of unity and diversity (*dalīl al-wiḥdat wa-l-kathrah*), for proving the existence of God, revolves around the coexistence of unity and diversity within the universe. According to al-Kindī, the universe comprises elements of both unity and diversity simultaneously. This interplay suggests that unity cannot exist without diversity, and vice versa (Kindī 1999, 124). This law of uniformity and diversity necessitates a cause (*al-ṣadafat*), as such phenomena cannot occur without one. However, this cause must transcend both unity and diversity, as an endless chain of causes and effects would be untenable (Marḥabā 1985, 93). Furthermore, this cause cannot be temporal or material, as it would be subject to creation. Thus, the cause must be superior to nature and devoid of preceding causes, existing before the effect (*ma'lūl*) (Kindī 1999, 143). Therefore, the only conceivable singular cause is God, who lacks multiplicity or variation (Kindī 1999, 142–43).

The third argument, the argument for controlling nature in order (*dalīl al-niẓām wa-l-tadbīr*), employs an analogous syllogism (*qiyās tamtsīlī*), likening the natural world to human anatomy. Humans are seen as microcosms while the universe represents the macrocosm (Marḥabā 1985, 95). In this analogy, al-Kindī draws parallels between the orderly functioning of the universe and the human body, positing that just as the human body is governed by an unseen soul, the universe is regulated by an invisible entity—God. Al-Kindī argues that just as the existence of the soul is evidenced by the body's movements and effects, so too can the existence of God be inferred from the orderly nature of the universe (Kindī 1999, 174; Cicero 1950, 7). This argument appears to be an extension of Aristotle's analogy between nature and God and the relationship between body and soul (Marḥabā 1985, 95).

In addition to employing analogies, al-Kindī utilizes teleological arguments concerning the orderliness of the universe. Departing from the premise that the intricate, systematic, and awe-inspiring nature of natural phenomena cannot arise by mere chance (*shadafah*), al-Kindī contends that it must have been purposefully designed by a higher power. This omnipotent being is none other than God Almighty. In "*Al-Ibānat 'an-l-'Illah al-Fā'ilat al-Qarībat li-l-Kawn wa-l-Fasād*," al-Kindī articulates:

فإنَّ في نظم هذا العالم وترتيبه وفعل بعضه في بعض وانقياد بعضه لبعض وتسخير بعضه لبعض وإتقان
هيئته على الأمر الأصح في كون كل كائن وفساد كل فاسد وثبات كل ثابت وزوال كل زائل لأعظم
دلالة على اتقن تدبير وعلى أحكم حكمة لأن هذه جميعا من المضاف

Indeed, the marvelous structure and order of nature, in which every part is in harmony with every other part, and some parts are subject to the regulation of other parts; and the perfect organization, in which the best is always preserved and the worst is always destroyed, are the best and clearest indications of the existence of a highly intelligent organizing

system, which thus indicates the existence of a highly intelligent Supreme Designer (Kindī 1999, 215).

Al-Kindī's assertion aligns with the perspective of muslim theologians, who view the ordered universe as tangible proof of God's existence. Furthermore, it appears that al-Kindī's statement draws inspiration from verses in the Quran that highlight the signs of Allah's power, such as in Surah Ali 'Imran verse 190 and others.

2. The Essence and Characteristics of God

Discussions concerning the substance and attributes of God hold profound significance, particularly among theologians (*mutakalimūn*) and philosophers, as they touch upon the essence of faith in God. Broadly, theologians hold two major perspectives regarding the relationship between God's substance and nature. Firstly, there is the view that advocates attributing properties to God's substance (*al-muthbit lī šifātillāh*), espoused by groups like the Ash'ariyya and Salafiyya (Ibrahim 2001, 4).

Secondly, some opinions reject the attribution of attributes to Allah (*al-munfiy lī šifātillāh*), embraced by the Mu'tazila, standing in opposition to the aforementioned perspectives of Ash'ariyya and Salafiyya (Murtaḍā 1985, 13). Al-Kindī, along with other philosophers, inclined towards the Mu'tazilite stance regarding the substance and nature of Allah.

In Mu'tazila theology, it is posited that the Essence of Allah transcends His attributes. Mu'tazilite theologians assert that Allah knows, governs, and exists solely by His substance, independent of His attributes (Murtaḍā 1985, 13). They refrain from assigning attributes to Allah, contending that attributing qualities would impugn the perfection of Allah's essence (Jabbār 1965, 172). Mu'tazilite theologians typically employ rational arguments to support their views. According to the Mu'tazila, it is logically inconceivable for Allah to possess attributes, as attributes entail two possibilities: either eternal (*qadīm*) or new (*ḥudūth*). If eternal, it implies the coexistence of two eternal entities—His substance and His attributes, which is deemed impossible. Similarly, if new, it suggests that Allah is contingent and not absolute, as His perfection relies on newly acquired attributes (Jabbār 1996, 183).

Al-Shahraṣṭānī elucidates that the Mu'tazilites do not deny the attributes of Allah's absolute perfection but refute the notion of attributes as an eternal entity (*qadīm*) coexisting with Allah's substance. They recognize the concept of *i'tibarāt al-'aqliyyat* (rational considerations) (Shahraṣṭānī 1934, 180). The objective of Mu'tazilite theology is to purify the Essence of Allah from the multitude of eternal entities (*ta'addud al-quḍamā'*) believed to compromise monotheism towards Allah.

Al-Kindī's divine philosophy regarding the substance and nature of Allah closely aligns with the Mu'tazilites' perspective. This is evident in

al-Kindī's concept of the "single" nature (*al-wāḥid*), which carries dual connotations: the singular element within an object and God as the Only Substance (Atiyeh 1985, 59). Al-Kindī contends that the notion of "single" in objects is metaphorical (*majāz*). According to him, all objects comprise two elements—the particular (*juz'īy*) referred to as *'āniyat* and the universal (*kullīy*) termed *māhiyat*. However, al-Kindī asserts that God does not consist of these elements; hence, He is the One and Only (*al-wāḥid al-ḥaqīqīyyat*) (Marḥabā 1985, 93). This viewpoint echoes the Mu'tazilite theology, which denies Allah's substance being influenced by qualities beyond His essence (Marḥabā 1985, 99).

Yet, al-Kindī disagrees with the Mu'tazilite view that attributes such as knowledge and power are inherent to God's substance (*'ālim bī 'ilmihi wa 'ilmuhu dhātuhu; qādir bī qudratihi wa qudratuhu dhātuhu*), as this implies an essence, contrary to al-Kindī's stance that God lacks essence, both *'āniyat* and *māhiyat* (Adamson 2003, 56).

Al-Kindī's philosophical assertions concerning the substance and nature of God revolve around the concepts of divine unity (*waḥdaniyyat*) and the distinction between God and creation (*mukhalafat lī-l-ḥawādith*). Throughout his works, al-Kindī emphasizes God's oneness. In "*Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*," he states:

أَنَّ الواحد الحق ليس هو شيء من المعقولات ولا عنصر ولا جنس ولا نوع ولا شخص ولا فصل ولا خاصة ولا عرض عام ولا حركة ولا نفس ولا عقل ولا كل ولا جزء ولا جميع ولا بعض ولا واحد بالإضافة إلى غير مثل واحد مرسل ولا يقبل التكرير

Allah (*al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqq*) is not something that can be comprehended, not an element, nor gender, nor species, nor person, nor division, nor specificity, nor general presentation, nor motion, nor soul, nor intellect, nor entirety, nor part, neither whole, nor partially, nor anything similar to what is created and does not accept multiplication (Kindī 1948, 140).

Thus, Allah has no type, species, classification, essence, movement, soul, reason, universal, particular, whole, partial, or support (*idhāfat*) (Kindī 1999, 153, 161–62). For al-Kindī, God's essence remains unknowable, necessitating explanation through negation. He posits that comprehension is limited to what exists apart from God, which is fundamentally distinct from God.

Al-Kindī's argument rests on the logical premise that multiple gods would necessitate compositeness and plurality. Each would share a common attribute as the first cause (first agent) while possessing distinguishing characteristics. Consequently, each deity would comprise multiple attributes, indicate composition, and require a predecessor, leading to an infinite regress (Kindī 1999, 207). Thus, al-Kindī concludes that the first cause must be singular, distinct from others, and void of plurality.

3. The Creation of the Universe

In his divine philosophy, al-Kindī delves into the process of how God created the universe (*binā al-‘ālam*). Interestingly, while al-Kindī’s views align with those of Greek philosophers concerning the existence and nature of God, his perspective diverges regarding the creation of nature. Greek philosophers, from Plato to Aristotle and Plotinus, concurred that the universe emerged from pre-existing material (*creatio ex materia*), either through movement or emanation (Atiyeh 1985, 50). Consequently, they posited that nature is eternal (*qadīm/azalī*), as God’s movement or emanation is eternal (*qadīm/azalī*). Thus, in their philosophy, God is considered a mover rather than a creator. For instance, Aristotle referred to God as the unmoved Mover, asserting that if God were to move, it would imply relativity (Fuller 1907, 172).

Al-Kindī, however, rejected this viewpoint. He asserted that God is the Creator of the universe *ex nihilo*, from nothing. According to al-Kindī, creation from nothing is a divine prerogative, as God is the ultimate cause of all reality in the universe (Kindī 1948, 121). Additionally, al-Kindī posited that the universe is impermanent. He argued that the universe has both a beginning and an end, as only God is eternal (*azalī*). To demonstrate the impermanence of the universe and its temporal creation, al-Kindī presented the following premises: 1) Everything quantitative, including body, time, and motion, is finite; 2) Time serves as the measure of the universe’s existence; 3) Consequently, the universe has a finite duration, indicating a temporal beginning; 4) The universe cannot be the cause of its existence; 5) Therefore, it must be caused by another, in time, and from nothing (Kindī 1999, 202–6; Staley 1989, 360). Al-Kindī’s perspective resonates with the general views of theologians (Adamson 2003, 66). However, unlike theologians who often prioritize arguments from revelation, al-Kindī bases his arguments on philosophical reasoning. Thus, while his conclusions may align with theological perspectives, his method of inquiry relies on philosophical principles.

Al-Kindī’s philosophical rationale for demonstrating the impermanence of nature was deeply rooted in Aristotelian logic. From this framework, he formulated two key principles: firstly, the notion that the transition from the unlimited to the finite is untenable; and secondly, the simultaneous emergence of matter, time, and motion (Atiyeh 1985, 52). These principles served as foundational postulates for al-Kindī, informing his argumentation, which comprised three distinct formulations. Firstly, if the universe is posited as infinite, then logically, its actual form must also be infinite, a premise that clashes with Aristotle’s principle of limited actual existence. Secondly, altering a supposed infinite aspect of the universe creates a paradox, as it blurs the distinction between the finite and the infinite. Lastly, reintroducing a previously removed infinite aspect highlights an illogical discrepancy, showcasing the incongruity of

regarding a part of the infinite as equal to the whole (Kindī 1999, 202–9).

Al-Kindī's departure from classical Greek philosophy underscores his independent philosophical evolution. Unlike some muslim scholars who merely translated Greek works, al-Kindī engaged in a transformative process, adapting ideas to align with Islamic principles. This selective approach involved refining, modifying, and reformulating concepts to harmonize with the Islamic worldview, indicating a dynamic intellectual tradition within Islamic philosophy (Zarkasyi 2006, 287).

Conclusion

The notion that al-Kindī merely translated or replicated Greek philosophy into Arabic without further innovation is misguided. Al-Kindī indeed drew heavily from Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, but he did not treat their ideas as static or immutable. Instead, he used them as a springboard for his philosophical inquiries, often critiquing and expanding upon their concepts. In essence, al-Kindī recontextualized philosophy within an Islamic framework, reforming and refining it to suit the intellectual landscape of his time.

For instance, in his arguments for the existence of God, al-Kindī introduced the concept of the novelty of nature (*dalīl al-ḥudūth*), a departure from Greek philosophical thought. This aligns more closely with the theological perspectives of muslim scholars, particularly the Mu'tazilite. Similarly, when discussing the creation of the universe, al-Kindī leaned towards the notion of creation ex nihilo, consistent with Islamic doctrine. Thus, al-Kindī's philosophical contributions represent a distinct synthesis of Greek philosophy and Islamic thought. Rather than passively adopting Greek ideas, al-Kindī actively reshaped them, refreshing and refining philosophical discourse before disseminating it throughout the Islamic world.

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