



Harmonisation of Reason and Revelation: A Comprehensive Analysis of Al-Kindī's Philosophy in Constructing Rational Islamic Theology

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Abstract

Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindī (c. 801–873 CE), nicknamed "The Philosopher of the Arabs," systematically initiated the tradition of philosophy in the Islamic world by demonstrating the inherent compatibility between Hellenistic philosophy and Islamic theology. This study analyses Al-Kindī's intellectual project through a qualitative literature review, focusing on his primary texts, especially *Fi al-Falsafah al-Ula*. This analysis rests on four main pillars of his thought: first, the epistemological harmonisation between reason ('aql) and revelation (wahy) as two paths to the same Truth; second, the formulation of the metaphysics of Tawhid through a framework of negative theology adapted from Neoplatonism to affirm the absolute oneness of God; third, a cosmological defence of the doctrine of creation ex nihilo as a philosophical rebuttal to Aristotelian theories of the eternity of nature; and fourth, the development of a rational psychology of the immaterial and eternal soul (an-nafs) as the foundation for philosophical eschatology. The results of the study show that Al-Kindī not only translated and adapted Greek thought, but also innovatively recontextualised it to provide a rational foundation for key doctrines of Islamic theology. In doing so, he succeeded in establishing himself as a fundamental figure who laid the groundwork for an ongoing dialogue between philosophy and religion in the intellectual history of Islam.

Keywords: Reason, Revelation, Philosophy, Theology, Al-Kindī.

Glossary of key Arabic terms used

Kalām: Islamic speculative theology concerned with the rational articulation and defence of doctrinal beliefs, particularly regarding God, creation, and human agency.

Falsafa: The tradition of philosophy in the Islamic world drawing primarily on Greek sources, especially Aristotle and Neoplatonism, and characterised by systematic metaphysical and rational inquiry.



Tawḥīd: The foundational Islamic doctrine affirming the absolute oneness and uniqueness of God, excluding any division, multiplicity, or association in the divine essence.

‘Aql: Intellect or reason; the human cognitive faculty through which knowledge is acquired and, in philosophical contexts, through which intelligible realities are apprehended.

Irādah: Divine will; the concept denoting God’s absolute freedom and volitional power in creating, sustaining, and governing the world.

Introduction

The Islamic world in the 9th century CE witnessed an intellectual explosion centred in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate. Under the patronage of caliphs such as Harun al-Rashid (786-809 CE), al-Ma'mun (813-833 CE), and al-Mu'tasim (833-842 CE), Baghdad transformed into a cosmopolitan metropolis, a hub for diverse cultures, languages, and religions (Khaeruddin, 2025). This historical context provided the main stage for the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement, a monumental project that transferred the knowledge heritage of Greece, Persia, and India into Arabic. It was in this dynamic intellectual atmosphere that Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindī (c. 801-873 AD) emerged as a central figure (Hasanah, 2022). Descended from the honourable Kinda tribe, Al-Kindī earned a nickname that has stuck with him throughout history: faylasuf al-'Arab or "Philosopher of the Arabs," a recognition of his status as the first thinker of Arab descent to study philosophy systematically (Booth, 2018).

Al-Kindī's pioneering role went beyond his participation in translation; he was an intellectual architect who actively supervised, edited, and directed this transfer of Knowledge (Erlwein, 2021). He was not a passive translator, but rather an original polymath with a profound mastery of various scientific fields. The hundreds of treatises attributed to him cover a broad spectrum, ranging from metaphysics, ethics, logic, and psychology to more practical disciplines such as medicine, mathematics, optics, musicology, and even cryptography, where he pioneered frequency analysis. This breadth of Knowledge gave him unrivalled intellectual authority in his time, enabling him to build a bridge between "foreign sciences" and the Islamic worldview (Khaeruddin, 2025).

However, Al-Kindī's intellectual project arose from a fundamental challenge. At that time, philosophical—which was synonymous with Greek thought—was viewed with suspicion by traditionalist religious circles. It was considered a foreign discipline that had the potential to undermine the purity of faith and lead to heresy (kufr). Faced with this resistance, Al-Kindī formulated an apologetic project that became the core of all his work (Tahiri, 2014). The central thesis of this research is that Al-Kindī's entire philosophy can be understood as a systematic defence of falsafa, which aims to demonstrate not only that philosophy is not harmful to faith, but also that it is an invaluable tool for articulating, maintaining, and deepening understanding of Islamic theological doctrines. For Al-Kindī, reason ('aql) and revelation (wahy) are not two conflicting entities, but two different paths leading to the same goal: the recognition of Truth (al-Haqq) (Kamaluddin, 2021).

To prove this thesis, this article will systematically examine Al-Kindī's thinking. Beginning with an analysis of his epistemological foundations, which harmonise philosophy and religion, this study will continue to the main pillars of his philosophical theology. This includes an exploration of his metaphysics of God as the "True One," his cosmological argument in favour of creation ex nihilo, and his psychological conception of the immaterial and eternal soul (Erlwein, 2021). Through this analysis, it will be shown how each component of Al-Kindī's philosophical system is interrelated



and functions as part of a grand project to construct a rational and philosophically coherent Islamic theology. The originality of this study lies in its systematic reconstruction of al-Kindī's philosophical project as an integrated apologetic framework for Islamic theology. Rather than treating his writings as a loosely connected body of philosophical reflections, this article argues that al-Kindī should be understood as the earliest architect of a coherent philosophical theology in Islam, structured around interdependent epistemological, metaphysical, cosmological, and psychological pillars. By foregrounding this fourfold systematic design, the study offers a new interpretative lens through which al-Kindī's contribution to the reason–revelation synthesis can be more clearly and comprehensively assessed.

Literature Review

The study of Al-Kindī's thought has undergone a long evolution, from early criticism to in-depth analysis in the modern era. The earliest assessments, as recorded by the historian Sa'id al-Andalusi in the 11th century, tended to be critical, stating that Al-Kindī's works on logic lacked the necessary "art of analysis" and were therefore unpopular among scientists (Erlwein, 2021). However, this view has been revised mainly by contemporary research that recognises Al-Kindī's formative role in laying the foundations of Islamic philosophical terminology and problematics. Modern scholars have identified and analysed his corpus of works more comprehensively, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of his contributions (Haikal & Firdaus, 2024).

Modern studies on Al-Kindī owe much to fundamental works that serve as primary references. George N. Atiyeh's *Al-Kindī: The Philosopher Of The Arabs*, whose translation is often used as a primary source, is one of the pillars of Al-Kindī studies in the English-speaking academic world (Islam, 2023). Furthermore, *Al-Kindī's Metaphysics*, by Alfred L. Ivry, makes a significant contribution with its in-depth textual analysis of the treatise *Fi al-Falsafah al-Ula* and its careful reevaluation of Al-Kindī's relationship with Mu'tazilah theology (Ivry, 1974). However, the most comprehensive monograph to date is Peter Adamson's *Al-Kindī*. Adamson expertly places Al-Kindī in two contexts simultaneously: as an heir to the Greek philosophical tradition and as an active participant in the Islamic theological discourse of his time (Adamson, 2006). Adamson characterises Al-Kindī's project as a form of "*Evidentialism*," an attempt to provide rational evidence for religious beliefs, and as a strategic "promotion" to convince Muslim audiences of the value of philosophy (Kindī et al., 2012).

From this body of literature, several primary academic debates have emerged. The first concerns the sources of influence on Al-Kindī's thought. Although he often cites Aristotle as his primary authority, scholars agree that his thought is "*steeped in Neoplatonism*" (Klik, 2021). He often interpreted Aristotelian ideas through a Neoplatonic lens, particularly those derived from texts such as *Theology of Aristotle* (an Arabic paraphrase of Plotinus' *Enneads*) and *Book of Causes* (a summary of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*) (Kindī et al., 2012). The second, crucial debate concerns his relationship with the Mu'tazilah, the dominant rationalist theological school of his time. Although Al-Kindī reached conclusions similar to those of the Mu'tazilah on many key issues—such as the oneness of God, the justice of God, and the creation of the Qur'an—the modern scholarly consensus, strongly supported by Ivry and Adamson, is that he was not a Mu'tazilah theologian (*mutakallim*). His methodology was fundamentally different; he employed philosophical demonstration (*falsafa*), rather than dialectical theology (*kalam*) (Ivry, 1974; Adamson, 2003).

This study positions itself by synthesising these various perspectives. Adopting Adamson's framework, this article argues that Al-Kindī's genius lies in his ability to navigate these diverse



intellectual currents. He consciously used the *fa/safa* method to provide a solid rational foundation for the theological positions debated in the kalam circles of his time. Thus, he became not only the "Philosopher of the Arab Nation" but also the first architect of philosophical theology in Islam, a tradition that later thinkers would further develop (Janssens, 2007).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a historical-philosophical and hermeneutic library research design (Islam, 2023; Angraini, 2023). This approach is adopted in order to analyse and interpret al-Kindī's philosophical theology through close engagement with primary texts within their historical, conceptual, and doctrinal contexts. Hermeneutic analysis is applied contextually by situating al-Kindī's writings within the intellectual milieu of the early Abbasid period, conceptually by clarifying key metaphysical and epistemological notions, and comparatively by reading his arguments alongside both Greek philosophical sources and later Islamic theological debates. This approach was chosen because the main objective of the study was to explore, analyse, and interpret the conceptual thinking of the historical figure Al-Kindī in relation to Islamic theology. This method enables an in-depth analysis of texts as the primary source of data, allowing for a comprehensive reconstruction of the philosopher's arguments and system of thought (Fakhry, 2004).

The data sources in this study are divided into two main categories. Primary sources are Al-Kindī's original works that still exist today. The primary focus of the analysis is on his most famous metaphysical treatise, *Fi al-Falsafah al-Ula* (On First Philosophy), which contains his central arguments about God, creation, and epistemology (Soleh, 2016). This core text is read in conjunction with *Risālah fī al-'Aql* and his ethical treatise *Risālah al-Hīlah li Daf' al-Aḥzān* in order to illuminate the interrelation between metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, and ethics in al-Kindī's system (Fadhil, 2022). Secondary sources encompass relevant academic literature, including monographs, books, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Works by prominent scholars such as Peter Adamson, Alfred L. Ivry, and George N. Atiyeh, as well as articles from journals such as *Aqlania* and the *Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy*, are used to contextualise Al-Kindī's thinking, understand existing scientific debates, and sharpen the analysis.

The data analysis process was carried out using close reading techniques of primary and secondary sources. Philosophical arguments are reconstructed through a combination of logical reconstruction and thematic analysis. Each of Al-Kindī's arguments was identified, its premises were outlined, and its logical flow was reconstructed. Logical reconstruction is employed to clarify inferential structures, while thematic analysis traces the conceptual relationships between various parts of his philosophical system, for example between metaphysics and cosmology, or between epistemology and psychology. Data from secondary sources are then used to compare, critique, and enrich the interpretations constructed from the primary texts, functioning as critical interlocutors rather than merely as background references. Thus, this research not only describes Al-Kindī's thought but also synthesises his ideas into a coherent theological framework and places them in dialogue with the broader intellectual tradition (Arroisi et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

An analysis of Al-Kindī's corpus reveals a coherent and systematic intellectual project aimed at establishing a rational foundation for Islamic theology. This project rests on four main pillars that support each other: (1) an epistemological foundation that harmonises philosophy and religion; (2) a metaphysics of Tawhid that articulates the oneness of God through the concept of "The True



One"; (3) a cosmology that philosophically defends the doctrine of creation ex nihilo; and (4) a rational psychology that explains the nature of the soul and its destiny in the hereafter (Armeyanto et al., 2025).

Epistemological Foundation: Harmonising Philosophy and Religion

The starting point of Al-Kindī's entire project was his attempt to legitimise philosophy in the eyes of religious authorities. He was well aware that philosophy, as a "foreign" product of Greece, was viewed with suspicion. Therefore, his first step was to construct an epistemological framework in which philosophy and religion could not only coexist but also reinforce each other. His central argument was that both shared the same goal, namely the attainment of Truth (*al-haqq*). In his treatise, Al-Kindī defined philosophy as "knowledge of the essence of all things to the extent of human capacity" (Aravik & Amri, 2019). On the other hand, religion (revelation) is seen as the source of Truth itself, conveyed directly by God (Kamaluddin, 2021). Because the source and goal of both are the same Truth, there cannot be a fundamental conflict between them.

Nevertheless, Al-Kindī's approach to reconciling philosophy and religion was not a simple equation, but rather a strategic subordination of one to the other. Faced with accusations of heresy from traditionalist religious circles, Al-Kindī did not claim equality between reason and revelation—a position that would have sparked further conflict. Instead, he constructed a careful hierarchy of Knowledge (Ali & Almulla, 2023). Revelation, according to him, has superiority because it provides Knowledge directly, without effort, and with absolute certainty. Revelation is also capable of revealing truths that are beyond the reach of human reason, such as Knowledge about miracles, heaven, and hell (Aravik & Amri, 2019). Philosophy, on the other hand, is a limited human endeavour, using logic and demonstration to achieve the same Truth. Thus, the function of philosophy is not to rival revelation, but to be its "servant" and supporter (Mursidin, 2020). This framework allowed it to import the entire Greek intellectual apparatus under the justification of theological service. This brilliant rhetorical and political move secured space for falsafa to flourish in Islamic civilisation.

This position provided him with a foundation for launching a vigorous defence of philosophical practice. He strongly criticised those who rejected philosophy simply because it originated from non-Muslim sources. In one of his most famous quotes from *Fi al-Falsafah al-Ula*, he states: "*We should not be ashamed to acknowledge the Truth and take it from wherever it comes, even if it comes from nations far away from us and different from us. For seekers of Truth, nothing is more valuable than Truth itself*" (Kamaluddin, 2021). This statement is an intellectual manifesto that rejects exclusivism and sectarianism in the pursuit of Knowledge. For Al-Kindī, rejecting the rational truths of Greek philosophy is tantamount to rejecting the gift of reason given by God, an attitude he considers a form of ignorance and betrayal of religion itself (Booth, 2018).

Metaphysics of Tawhid: The Concept of God as "The One and Only" (al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqq)

After laying his epistemological foundations, Al-Kindī turned to the pinnacle of all Knowledge, which he called "*First Philosophy*" (*al-Falsafah al-Ula*). For him, this was the most noble branch of philosophy because its object of study was the "*First Truth*" (*al-Haqq al-Awwal*), which was the "*First Cause*" (*al-'Illah al-Ula*) of all other truths and existences (Soleh, 2016). In other words, for Al-Kindī, metaphysics is essentially philosophical theology: the rational study of God. Here, he employs Greek philosophy, particularly Neoplatonism, to articulate the central doctrine of Islam—namely, Tawhid, or the Oneness of God—in the most radical and philosophically consistent manner.



The core of Al-Kindī's metaphysics is his concept of God as "The One" (*al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqq*). This concept was greatly influenced by the idea of "The One" in Neoplatonic philosophy, as developed by Plotinus, who learned about it through Arabic translations, such as Theology of Aristotle (Kindī et al., 2012). Al-Kindī argued that God is One in an absolute sense: He is pure unity that contains no multiplicity (*kathrah*) whatsoever. Everything other than God is composed of matter and form, or has a genus and species, all of which imply multiplicity. God, on the other hand, is absolute simplicity. From this premise, Al-Kindī draws a significant theological conclusion through the method of *via negativa* or negative theology. He states that because all language and predication (attribution of properties) inherently imply multiplicity, no positive attributes can be applied to the essence of God. To say "*God is wise*" or "*God is powerful*" is to impose a concept (wisdom, power) on His essence, which would create a duality between essence and attribute, thereby undermining His absolute simplicity. Therefore, God is beyond the reach of human linguistic descriptions and categories (Adamson, 2003).

Al-Kindī's use of Neoplatonic metaphysics can be seen as a "philosophical weapon" to defend Tawhid. At that time, Mu'tazilah theologians were struggling to purify the concept of God from all forms of anthropomorphism and plurality. One of their central doctrines was the rejection of God's attributes (*sifat*) as entities that are eternal and separate from His essence, because this would lead to "multiple eternals" (*ta'addud al-quḍama'*) and violate Tawhid (Adamson, 2003). Al-Kindī, using a philosophical approach, arrived at the same conclusion. He saw that the Neoplatonic concept of "The One," which is transcendent and indescribable, provides a perfect philosophical parallel to the Mu'tazilah's theological position. Thus, he showed that the pinnacle of Greek rational thought actually affirms the purest form of Islamic monotheism. Philosophy, which was once suspected of being a threat, has now become the most vigorous defender of Tawhid (Davis, 1996).

In addition to being the First Cause, God in Al-Kindī's view is also the "*True Agent*" (*al-Fā'il al-Ḥaqq*). This sharply distinguishes Him from the Aristotelian concept of the "*Unmoved Mover*," who moves the universe not through will, but as an object of love and longing that inevitably draws the universe towards Him. In contrast, God, according to Al-Kindī, acts through will and choice. His actual action is *ibdā'*, that is, creation from nothingness, an action that is unique and possessed only by Him. All other agents in the universe act only metaphorically, because they only transform existing matter. Only God is an agent in the true sense, because only He can give existence from non-existence (Janssens, 1994).

Theological Doctrine	The Position of Mu'tazilah (Method: Kalam)	The Position of Al-Kindī (Method: Falsafa)	The Basis of Al-Kindī's Philosophical Argument
The Oneness of God (Tawhid)	Rejection of attributes that differ from the essence of God in order to maintain absolute simplicity.	God is "The True One" (<i>al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqq</i>), without any plurality whatsoever; positive attributes cannot be applied to Him.	Neoplatonic Negative Theology (Plotinus's "The One")
Creation of the Universe	The universe was created from nothing	The universe has a beginning in time, as	The philosophical arguments of John



	(ex nihilo) as proof of God's power and to uphold His justice.	evidenced by the impossibility of actual infinity in bodies, motion, and time.	Philoponus and Aristotelian logic to refute the eternity of nature
The status of the Qur'an	The Qur'an is a created being, not eternal, because if it were eternal, there would be two eternal entities besides God.	(Implicitly) Nothing is eternal except God; his cosmological argument supports this principle universally.	The metaphysical principle that only the First Cause is uncaused and truly eternal
God's Justice & Free Will	Humans have the freedom and ability to act (qudrah), which is the basis of God's justice in meting out rewards and punishments.	The rational soul can choose good (the intellectual world) over evil (the sensory world), which is the basis for eternal happiness.	Platonic/Neoplatonic ethics and psychology emphasise the role of reason in controlling the passions.

Table 1. Comparison of the Theological Doctrines of Mu'tazilah (Kalam) and Al-Kindī (Falsafa) and Their Philosophical Foundations

Source: Author, 2025

The comparison in the previous table explores the theological position of Mu'tazilah (using the kalam method) and the philosophy of Al-Kindī (using the falsafa method), as well as the philosophical foundations behind Al-Kindī's thoughts. Broadly speaking, both start from the affirmation of the oneness and justice of God, but their approaches are different epistemologically. The Mu'tazilah is within rationalism, but it is still theologically guided, so as to avoid the witticism of theism by pure monism and divine justice. In the meantime, Al-Kindī formulates philosophical systems of arguments from Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism to buttress the fundamental philosophical backbone of the unitive and eternal God. God, in Al-Kindī's perspective, is 'The One and True' (al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqq) who is without ascription of plurality, positive attributes of any kind and the only being who is self-subsisting. He also argues rationally about the creation of the universe, particularly on the actual infinite in bulk, motion, and time, in terms that are consistent with the principle that nature has a beginning. The justice and free will balance rationally on Al-Kindī's side, with reason being the ethical instrument to achieve eternal happiness, whereas the Mu'tazilah dominate the discourse on human freedom as the basis of divine justice. Thus, this table describes the similarities and differences in Islamic rational theology and early Islamic philosophy with respect to how both relate to God, nature, revelation and human ethics.

Cosmology of Creation: Philosophical Arguments for Creatio Ex Nihilo

One of the most heated points of contention between Greek philosophy and Abrahamic theology is the origin of the universe. Aristotle and his followers believed that the universe is eternal (*qadim*), having no beginning or end in time. This view directly contradicts the doctrine of creation, which is the foundation of the Qur'an. This is where Al-Kindī took a firm stance that differed from the majority of Muslim philosophers after him, such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. He vehemently rejected the concept of the eternity of nature. He constructed a series of sophisticated philosophical arguments to prove that the universe is finite and was created in time (*creatio ex nihilo*) (Atiyeh, 1994).



Al-Kindī's main argument centres on his rejection of the possibility of "*actual infinity*". He distinguishes between potential infinity (for example, a line that can be divided indefinitely) and actual infinity (an unlimited quantity that exists at a given time). For him, actual infinity is a logical impossibility. The Impossibility of an Infinite Body: Al-Kindī presents an elegant proof by contradiction (*reductio ad absurdum*). He asks us to imagine an actual infinite body. If we take a small (finite) part of that infinite body, the remainder of the body must remain infinite. However, if we return the part we have taken, the body does not become larger because something infinite cannot be added to it. This leads to an absurdity: a whole (the body after the part has been returned) is not larger than one of its parts (the body before the part was returned). Because this is impossible, the conclusion is that there cannot be an actually infinite body. Since the universe is an actual body, it must be finite (Atiyeh, 1994; Doko, 2014).

The Impossibility of Unlimited Time: A similar argument applies to time. If the past is unlimited, then to reach the moment of "now", an unlimited span of time must have passed. However, crossing something unlimited is a contradiction. Something unlimited, by definition, has no end, so it cannot be "completed" or "crossed". The fact that we have arrived at the "present" moment proves that the span of time we have traversed must be finite. Therefore, time must have a starting point (Atiyeh, 1994; Meguid, 2018). The Concomitance of Body, Motion, and Time: Al-Kindī then linked the two arguments above with the Aristotelian principle that body, motion, and time are three inseparable things (concomitants). There is no body without motion, no motion without time, and no time without motion to measure it. Since it has been proven that the body of the universe is finite and time is finite, motion must also be finite. In conclusion, the universe as a whole—consisting of body, motion, and time—must be finite and have a beginning (Atiyeh, 1994; Meguid, 2018).

From the conclusion that the universe had a beginning, Al-Kindī logically concluded that there must be a Creator. Something that has a beginning cannot have initiated itself; it requires a Cause that brought it from non-existence into existence. He called this act of creation *ibdā'*, a term he used specifically to denote God's unique creation that did not require prior matter, form, or time. Al-Kindī's cosmological argument had profound theological implications. At the time, one of the most significant theological debates centred on the status of the Qur'an, culminating in the Mihna. The Mu'tazilah, with the support of the state, imposed the doctrine that the Qur'an (as the word of God) is created, not *qadim* (eternal) (Adamson, 2003). Their argument was theological: if the Qur'an were eternal, then there would be two eternal entities, namely God and His Word, which would violate the concept of *Tawhid*. Al-Kindī's philosophical argument provided strong rational support for this position. With "proving that nothing can be eternal except God—not even the physical universe—he provided a universal principle that indirectly reinforced the theological conclusion that the Qur'an cannot be eternal either.

Rational Psychology: Soul, Reason, and Philosophical Eschatology

The final pillar of Al-Kindī's philosophical theology is his psychology, namely the study of the soul (*an-nafs*). If his metaphysics and cosmology explain God and His creation, then his psychology explains the position of humans within that creation and the ultimate purpose of their lives (Rahman et al., 2022). Here, Al-Kindī was greatly influenced by the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions, which viewed the soul as an entity fundamentally different from the body. For him, the soul was a simple, immaterial, uncompounded, and eternal substance (*jawhar*). The soul has a divine origin, as he states, "its substance comes from the substance of the Creator" (*jawharuha min jawhar al-barī*), which indicates its nobility and superiority over the body (Stefaniuk, 2020). The body is merely a temporary tool or "vehicle" for the soul; the soul is the giver of life, and



without it, the body would be a decaying corpse.

Following the Platonic model, Al-Kindī divided the soul into three powers or faculties. The first is the faculty of desire (*syahwat or appetitive*), which is related to physical desires such as eating and drinking. The second is the faculty of anger (*ghadab or spirited*), which is related to emotions such as courage and anger. These two faculties are bound to the body and function to maintain biological life. The third and highest faculty is the rational faculty (*'aql or rational*), which is the true essence of the human soul. The task of the rational faculty is to control and regulate the two lower faculties, as well as to direct humans towards the pursuit of Knowledge and virtue (Mursidin, 2020).

This dualistic conception of the soul and the body serves as the foundation for Al-Kindī's philosophical ethics and eschatology. Since the soul is immaterial and eternal, while the body is material and mortal, true happiness cannot be found in things that are bound to the body and the sensory world. Worldly pleasures, wealth, and honour are all temporary and will eventually disappear, causing sadness and suffering (Puspita et al., 2023). True and eternal happiness, according to Al-Kindī, can only be achieved in the "world of reason" (*'alam al-'aql*), that is, by purifying the soul from its attachment to the sensory world and focusing on acquiring Knowledge about universal and eternal realities—that is, by philosophising. Death is not the end, but a moment of liberation, where the purified soul separates from the "prison" of the body and returns to its origin in the world of intellect, uniting with the Light of the Creator and achieving perfect and eternal happiness (Stefaniuk, 2020).

Al-Kindī's psychology serves as an important bridge between his metaphysics and a rational and ethical worldview (Armayanto et al., 2025). Islamic theology teaches the existence of life after death, with rewards and punishments. Al-Kindī's proposed model of an immaterial and eternal soul provides a philosophical "container" for existence after death. Furthermore, by linking salvation and eternal happiness to the process of purifying the soul through rational contemplation and virtuous actions (controlling one's desires), he created a philosophical ethic that is very much in line with Islam's emphasis on Knowledge (*'ilm*) and righteous deeds (*'amal salih*) as the path to salvation. Thus, his psychology provides a rational foundation for life and the ultimate destiny of humans, aligning with the teachings of revelation (Rahman et al., 2022). The comparatively limited reception of al-Kindī's thought, when set against later philosophers such as al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā, is commonly attributed to the fragmentary survival of his works and to the subsequent dominance of more comprehensive philosophical systems. Consequently, many of his ideas were transmitted indirectly through later thinkers rather than developed as an autonomous philosophical tradition.

Conclusion

As the "First Philosopher of the Arab Nation," Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindī successfully initiated a monumental intellectual project: legitimising and integrating rational philosophy into the heart of Islamic civilisation. An analysis of his thinking shows that he systematically demonstrated that rational inquiry, inherited from the Hellenistic tradition, was not a threat to faith, but instead its essential partner. He constructed a paradigm in which the conceptual apparatus of philosophy was effectively used to articulate, defend, and deepen the understanding of the fundamental principles of Islamic theology. Through his work, Al-Kindī proved that reason and revelation are two wings that carry seekers of Truth towards the one Divine reality.

His main contributions span various fields of philosophical theology. In metaphysics, he provided a sophisticated philosophical language for the doctrine of Tawhid by adapting Neoplatonic



negative theology, affirming the oneness and absolute transcendence of God. In cosmology, he became the first philosopher to present a systematic set of rational proofs to support the Qur'anic doctrine of creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), a direct refutation of the Aristotelian view of the eternity of nature. In psychology, he formulated a theory of the immaterial and eternal soul, providing a rational foundation for ethics and eschatology consistent with Islamic teachings on the afterlife and moral responsibility. Al-Kindī's legacy is fundamental and long-lasting. Although later philosophers, such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, would develop more complex systems that differed from his in some respects—particularly on the issue of the eternity of nature—they all built upon the intellectual foundations he had laid. Al-Kindī was a trailblazer who legitimised philosophy as a valid and valuable discipline in the Islamic world. He set the agenda and terminology for the dialogue between reason and revelation that would continue for centuries, making him an irreplaceable figure in the history of Islamic thought.

This study's principal strength lies in its systematic reconstruction of al-Kindī's philosophical theology as an integrated project uniting epistemology, metaphysics, cosmology, and psychology, grounded in close textual analysis and contemporary scholarship. Its limitations stem from a focus on al-Kindī's extant philosophical writings, leaving broader social contexts and reception histories beyond its scope. The findings contribute to the disciplines of Islamic philosophy and theology by clarifying al-Kindī's foundational role in legitimising rational inquiry as a partner to revelation, while offering a conceptual model for philosophical apologetics within religious traditions. Future research may extend this analysis by tracing the reception of al-Kindī's ideas in later thinkers, exploring comparative Abrahamic philosophical theologies, or examining the relevance of his synthesis for modern debates on reason, science, and faith.

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