

STUDIES IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

GENERAL EDITOR: S. NOMANUL HAQ

THE PHILOSOPHICAL
WORKS OF
AL-KINDĪ

PETER ADAMSON

PETER E. PORMANN



OXFORD

Studies in Islamic Philosophy

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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Published in Pakistan by
Ameena Saiyid, Oxford University Press
No.38, Sector 15, Korangi Industrial Area,
PO Box 8214, Karachi-74900, Pakistan

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First Edition published in 2012

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ISBN 978-0-19-906280-5

Second Impression 2015

Printed on 80gsm Local Offset paper

Printed by The Times Press Pvt. Ltd., Karachi

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INTRODUCTION

Al-Kindī was born into one of the most vibrant periods of human history, the heyday of the ‘Abbāsīd age. The ‘Abbāsīds had seized power in the 750s from the Umayyads, who had reigned in their capital Damascus from 661 to 750. Although the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs hailed from excellent Arab stock, they had assembled a large number of supporters in the East, notably non-Arabs and also some non-Muslims.¹ The ‘Abbāsīds founded a new capital, the ‘City of Peace (*Madīnat as-Salām*)’, better known today as Baghdad. Although they moved their centre of power from a Greek-speaking to a Persian- and Aramaic-speaking environment, they pursued an extremely philhellenic cultural and scientific policy. They partly justified this stance with a mythical story. When Alexander the Great conquered the Achaemenid Empire, he stole Persian wisdom, had it translated into Greek, and stored it in the library of Alexandria. Therefore, when the ‘Abbāsīds sponsored the translation of Greek thought into Arabic, they merely reclaimed their own lost heritage.

The newly founded capital Baghdad quickly expanded and probably grew into the largest metropolis on earth in al-Kindī’s lifetime, boasting perhaps as many as one million inhabitants at a time when in most European cities there lived fewer than one hundred thousand inhabitants.² Baghdad became a melting pot of different cultures, languages, and religions: if you could make it there, you could make it anywhere, to misquote Sinatra. The buzz of this city also attracted al-Kindī from his native Baṣra on the Persian Gulf. He would have encountered there in the 810s and ’20s a vibrant intellectual scene that enjoyed great sponsorship from the ‘Abbāsīd elite. The court became a centre not only of imperial power and politics, but also of intellectual debate.

The so-called *maḡlis* figured prominently in the ‘Abbāsīd court culture. *Maḡlis* literally means ‘place where one sits down’, and the caliph and his entourage regularly organised sessions where he and his boon companions would invite the intellectual and cultural elite to discuss the prominent topics of the day. Religious controversies

such as the Christian doctrine of the trinity, for instance, could be debated, with different exponents arguing for and against the merits of such an idea. At times, medical matters would attract the attention of the court, especially if important courtiers or the caliph himself fell ill. Last, but not least, scientific and philosophical points of debates stirred the curiosity of the nobility, and could, at times, lead to violent disagreements.

The atmosphere at court can best be illustrated through one of the many anecdotes that later sources report. The most famous translator of the 'Abbāsid age, Ḥunayn ibn 'Ishāq (d. c. 876) was allegedly tricked by one of his rivals at court, the physician Buḥtīšū' ibn Ġibrīl (d. 870). Buḥtīšū' brought a wonderful icon before the caliph al-Mutawakkil (reg. 847–61), and the caliph admired and respected it greatly. Buḥtīšū' then alleged that Ḥunayn was a freethinking heretic who did not respect such holy things as icons. Ḥunayn was summoned by the caliph. Before he got there, however, Buḥtīšū' falsely advised Ḥunayn to show contempt for the icon, insinuating that the caliph did not condone the worship of idols, such as icons. Ḥunayn then displayed his disrespect for the icon by spitting on it. This angered the caliph who had him thrown into jail, and nearly executed. Ḥunayn lingered there for six months. Then the caliph fell ill, and during the night, Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream. Jesus told the caliph that he had forgiven Ḥunayn his sins, and that the caliph should release Ḥunayn from jail to treat him. When Ḥunayn did so successfully, the caliph reinstated Ḥunayn with even greater power than before.

We should state at the outset that this anecdote, reported by the medical historian Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a (d. 1270), is of doubtful historicity.³ But the atmosphere that it illustrates undoubtedly reflects the intrigues and competition for patronage that existed at court in the mid-ninth century. In this case, different doctors vie for the position of personal physician to the caliph that entails not only considerable prestige, but also immense material rewards. Prominent power-brokers such as the Banū Mūsā, the three sons of a famous highwayman turned plutocrat, sponsored many scientific and cultural endeavours, not least many translations from Greek and Syriac into Arabic. Al-Kindī's was also the age when most medical practitioners were still Christians or Jews. The famous litterateur al-Ġāḥiẓ could make fun of a Muslim miserly physician who complained that potential patients expected him to dress and

speak like the inhabitants of Gondēšāpūr, a city in south-western Iran then famous for its Christian medics, among them the Buḥtīšū' family.⁴

For a vivid example of the way intellectuals were integrated into the political elite—and the dangers that such integration could involve—we might consider also the case of al-Kindī's protégé as-Saraḥsī (d. 899). Although as-Saraḥsī's philosophical output is largely lost, we know that the titles of his works often duplicated those of al-Kindī's, and their contents most likely did as well. But the parallels do not end here: just as al-Kindī served as the tutor to Aḥmad, son of the caliph al-Mu'taṣim (reg. 833–42), so as-Saraḥsī taught the son of the later caliph al-Mu'taḍid (reg. 892–902). For as-Saraḥsī, this association with the court had an unfortunate end. Although an erstwhile boon companion of the caliph, as-Saraḥsī fell from grace in 896: he was imprisoned and beaten, and eventually executed.⁵ As we will see, al-Kindī, too, was harshly treated by the caliph al-Mutawakkil in a court intrigue.

Beyond the fates and fortunes of these elite figures, the ninth century witnessed a great amount of wider social, political, and religious disagreement and unrest. Certain groups within society strove to reassert their identity, as, for instance, in the Šu'ūbiya movement. The movement, made up of non-Arabs and especially Persians, demanded equality with their Arab overlords, and gave rise to an eventual rebirth of the Persian language in Arabic letters. Owing to political and military tensions, the caliph al-Mu'taṣim (reg. 833–42) abandoned Baghdad as his capital and settled some 125 kilometres to the north in the city of Sāmarrā'; its official name became 'Surra man ra'ā (He who saw [it] rejoiced)'. Yet, although the administration remained in Sāmarrā' for the next sixty years (until 892), Baghdad remained the cultural and intellectual centre. On the religious front, various factions debated topics ranging from the createdness of the Qur'ān to the attributes of God, and human free will.⁶ The caliph al-Ma'mūn (reg. 811–33) sided with the Mu'tazila, a rationalist group of theologians. In 833, shortly before his untimely death, he even declared their doctrine that the Qur'ān was created as official, and instituted an 'inquisition (*miḥna*)' to make sure that the major clerics and theologians in his empire adhered to this and other doctrines.⁷ It was in these exhilarating and exciting times that al-Kindī grew up.

The Man

In four of mine four of yours are sweet,
 But I do not know which one causes me agony.
 Is it your face in my eye, your taste in my mouth,
 Your words in my ear, or the love in my heart?

Love verses attributed to al-Kindī^a

Compared with the pre-Socratics, we know a lot about al-Kindī, or so it would appear. His elder contemporary al-Ġāḥiẓ (776–868), the most prominent prose author of the ‘Abbāsīd age, devoted a chapter to him in his *Book of Misers*, and he has entries in many of the so-called bio-bibliographical dictionaries, beginning in the late tenth century with Ibn an-Nadīm’s *Catalogue* (*Kitāb al-Fihrist*). But just like the episode reported by Ibn ‘Abī Uṣaybī‘a about Ḥunayn and the icon, a lot of the information that we have about al-Kindī is of doubtful historicity.⁹ The second major source for al-Kindī’s life is obviously his considerable œuvre. These two types of sources—the external evidence in writings about him, and the internal evidence in the works by him—allow us to give a brief sketch about his life, in which a few facts escape all possible doubt.

Al-Kindī hailed from a famous Arab family that traced its origin not only to the Companions of the Prophet, but to no less a personage than the mystical Qaḥṭān, the ancestor of the South Arabian people.¹⁰ His Arab credentials were therefore impeccable. Al-Kindī was probably born in Baṣra, the original centre of the Mu‘tazila. Yet he must have found his way fairly quickly to Baghdad where he rose to prominence at the courts of the caliphs. He dedicated a number of his epistles to high-ranking members of the court, not least his most important philosophical work *On First Philosophy* to the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim. As al-Mu‘taṣim moved his court to Sāmarrā’, it is likely that al-Kindī spent some time there. The long list of al-Kindī’s works, more than three hundred items, shows that he took an interest in nearly everything. He wrote not only on philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and astrology, but also music, zoology, geology, swordsmanship, perfume-making, sexual hygiene, and theology, to name but a few topics. Moreover, he took an active interest in translating works from Greek into Arabic. He probably did not know much Greek himself, but rather relied on others to produce useful Arabic versions; more on this below.

The verses quoted at the beginning of this section, if they are really by al-Kindī, may illustrate a prominent feature of his character: his fondness for numbers and divisions. He appears to have rationalised even the most human and most intimate feeling of love. The person who quotes these verses rightly exclaimed: 'By God, he even divides philosophically' in poetry and matters of the heart. Al-Ġāḥiẓ portrays al-Kindī also as having a great fondness for numbers, especially when they relate to money. In his *Book of Misers*, a parody of greedy behaviour, al-Kindī appears as a landlord eager to squeeze every penny out of his tenants. Once, the head of a family of six who rented from al-Kindī mentioned that two guests would be staying with him for a month. Al-Kindī promptly increased the rent by thirty-three per cent (or two sixths, for the additional 'tenants'). The head of the family asked al-Kindī about the reason for the increase; after all, his guests would occupy the same space. Al-Kindī retorts by writing a long epistle, in which he demonstrates by various means that the increase is justified (additional water usage; waste production, and so on). In conclusion, he says:¹¹

We have shown to you that temporary guests should be treated in the same way as tenants, and that each visitor has to bear part of the expense.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ also relates al-Kindī's advice on how to resist the temptation of buying fruit early in the season when it is still very expensive. He discusses the state of the soul, saying that it is prone to temptation and novelty:¹²

Things that have freshly arrived bring sweetness and joy, and new things happiness and desire. When you resist it [the soul], it will retreat (*irtaddat*); and when you hold it back, it will be restricted (*irtada'at*).

Both these anecdotes reflect aspects of al-Kindī's writing. In the long letter, he proves a minor point in many different ways; and in his discussion of the buying of fruit, he gives advice about how to counter the affections of the soul.

Previous scholars have argued about the question whether or not al-Ġāḥiẓ's Kindī is the same as the philosopher of the Arabs, that is, the author of the present philosophical works. But this question

rather misses the point: al-Ġāḥiẓ's *Book of Misers* is a work of 'Adab, of carefully constructed prose literature, aiming more to entertain than to inform. Al-Ġāḥiẓ undoubtedly had our al-Kindī in mind when he wrote his parody of the miserly landlord who writes long epistles about why it is meet to charge for guests, and gives advice on how to avoid the temptation of buying fruits early in the season. Yet, this account should not be taken at face value, nor as a true representation of al-Kindī's behaviour and character. It is certainly a fictitious account, but one that may well contain a grain of truth. More importantly, al-Kindī appears to have been notorious enough to merit the witty sarcasm of the most prominent author of Arabic prose.

We find other interesting anecdotes about al-Kindī in later literature. One is the canal episode that also features two prominent courtiers, Muḥammad and Aḥmad, two of the three Banū Mūsā. It is a story of rivalry and envy, and vying for influence that resembles in some respects that related above about Ḥunayn. The caliph al-Mutawakkil (reg. 847–61) commissions the two Banū Mūsā to build a canal. But rather than doing the job themselves, they entrust the task to a sub-contractor. The latter commits a serious error in the construction of the canal. Previously, the two brothers had developed an enmity against al-Kindī, as the latter used astrology to predict the future. They even managed to get al-Kindī beaten (and probably also jailed). This allowed them to purloin his extensive library. But now, al-Mutawakkil hears of the problems with the canal project, and gets very angry about the great expense and insufficient progress. He sends out one Sind ibn 'Alī to inspect the construction. When he comes, the two Banū Mūsā beg Sind not to report the truth about the canal project. Sind, however, is so appalled by how the Banū Mūsā treated al-Kindī that he refuses to help them unless they restore al-Kindī's library to him. They comply. Sind then agrees to conceal the real extent of the problems, but warns them that in two months' time the floods will recede and the truth will then come out. But, he adds, the astrologers predict that al-Mutawakkil will die very soon. If they are right, the Banū Mūsā will live, otherwise, they shall perish. Like al-Ġāḥiẓ's portrayal of al-Kindī, or Ibn Abī 'Uṣaybi'a's report about Ḥunayn, this anecdote is carefully constructed. The Banū Mūsā reject astrology at the beginning of

the narrative, but are saved by it in the end. It is difficult to ascertain the historical truth of it. But irrespective of this, this anecdote illustrates the kind of competitive climate in which al-Kindī operated at court.¹³

The Birth of Philosophy

[P]hilosophy died...around 610...; and it was resurrected, perhaps around 830, by the Arab al-Kindī in Baghdad.

Dimitri Gutas¹⁴

Everything comes out of water; and the magnet has a soul. With these statements, in a way, begins Greek philosophy, as they are nearly the only doctrines that can safely be attributed to the first Pre-Socratic philosopher, Thales of Miletus.¹⁵ Unlike Greek philosophy, one could well say that Arabic philosophy was born in the full light of history. The person who helped bring it into this world more than any other was al-Kindī: he represents the exciting beginnings of a tradition that was to revolutionise thinking not only in the Arab and Muslim world, but also the Latin West, Renaissance Europe, and beyond. As we have seen, al-Kindī is very much a child of his time: the interest in all things Greek had been accruing for decades by the time that al-Kindī became a student. And yet, he appears to have created philosophy in Arabic through a combination of overseeing translations of Greek texts, and writing treatises on philosophical topics that interested him and his entourage.

The massive Graeco-Arabic translation movement of the ninth century is associated with two 'circles' or 'schools' in particular, namely that of al-Kindī and that of Ḥunayn ibn 'Ishāq (d. 873 or 877). Yet already before the early ninth century, an important number of translations of Greek works had been produced. They mostly belonged to the study of the stars (that is, both astrology and astronomy), basic logic, and mathematics. Especially the *Elements* by Euclid (d. c. 300 BC)—perhaps the most fundamental classical work on mathematics in thirteen books dealing with plane geometry (books 1–6), arithmetic (7–9), and stereometry (11–13)—appear to have exercised a singular fascination on al-Kindī. Euclid erected a complex construction built on definitions, axioms, and postulates: from them he derived the mathematical theories. It appears that

the *Elements* were first translated into Arabic by the somewhat elusive al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ ibn Yūsuf ibn Maṭar who seems to have been active one generation before al-Kindī.¹⁶ Another mathematician who exerted influence over al-Kindī is Nicomachus of Gerasa (2nd c. AD), one of the most important figures in the history of Pythagoreanism.¹⁷ Both Endress and Gutas have suggested that an interest in mathematics led al-Kindī to engage in philosophical pursuits.¹⁸

This indebtedness to mathematics can, for instance, be seen in al-Kindī's argumentative style. Quite often, he will set up a number of alternatives (say A, B, and C), which are then further divided into alternatives (Aa, Ab; Ba, Bb; Ca, Cb, Cc). Al-Kindī then proves that each of these alternatives is wrong (not Aa, not Ab, etc. until not Cc), and then concludes that the original proposition must have been wrong. In other words, he uses the technique of *reductio ad absurdum*, frequently employed in mathematics. All that is missing in al-Kindī's conclusion is Euclid's famous phrase 'which was to be proven (ὅπερ ἔδει δεῖξαι)', better known in its Latin form *quod erat demonstrandum* (or q.e.d.). To put it in yet another way, al-Kindī transferred the method of geometric proof from mathematics to philosophy. In this, he followed the Neo-Platonic philosopher Proclus (d. 485) who had adopted a similar approach in his *Elements of Theology*; and this text became available in Arabic through al-Kindī's efforts.

As a result of his interest in mathematics, al-Kindī thus adapted Greek philosophy to questions which partly arose from the religious texts of the Muslim tradition, and first and foremost, the Qur'ān. One of its most important messages is the affirmation that God is One (*tawḥīd*). That God is One, of course, is also a fundamental doctrine for Neo-Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans. From the third century AD, figures such as Plotinus (d. 270), Porphyry (d. c. 305), and Iamblichus (d. c. 325) followed earlier Platonists of the Imperial Roman period, fusing Plato's philosophy with the Pythagorean idea that the One is the origin of all existence. To account for the multiplicity of the world of ideas and its 'shadow', the sublunary world, they postulated a hierarchical system of entities below the One: for Plotinus these were a universal Intellect, followed by Soul, and finally the material world. Moreover, both Plotinus and his successors identified the One with the highest good, or God. The profession of the Muslim faith begins with the statement that 'there is no god but God (*lā 'ilāha 'illā llāhu*)', and in the Qur'ān God is

described as the 'one god' ('ilāhun wāḥidun') 29 times.¹⁹ Moreover, the one God of the Qur'ān is also the the creator of everything. These affinities between Neo-Platonic philosophy and Muslim revealed religion will undoubtedly have fascinated al-Kindī and piqued his curiosity. For this and other reasons he constituted what Fritz Zimmermann has called 'al-Kindī's metaphysics file'.²⁰

This metaphysics file consisted of some key Neo-Platonic texts, notably the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* ('Uṭlūḡiyyā 'Aristūṭālīs) and *Aristotle's Explanation of the Pure Good* (al-'Idāḥ li-'Aristūṭālīs fī l-Ḥayr al-maḥd),²¹ known mostly by its Latin title of *Book of Causes* (*Liber de Causis*). Despite these titles, the two works do not go back to Aristotle, but rather to Plotinus and Proclus (d. 485) respectively. Both these texts, along with other Neo-Platonic material, were translated from Greek into Arabic by translators working in al-Kindī's circle. Let us take the *Theology of Aristotle*, the most important text in al-Kindī's metaphysics file, as an example. It is a paraphrastic Arabic translation of parts of Plotinus' *Enneads*, books iv to vi. These books of the *Enneads* contain discussions of questions such as metaphysics, cosmology, psychology, and ethics. Especially the relation between Plotinus' transcendent One, the emanations, and their relation to the material world come under discussion. Yet, following the trends of late antiquity, we find a clear tendency to harmonise the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. For instance, when discussing 'the immortality of the soul' in *Ennead* iv. 7, Plotinus also mentions its tripartite character (ch. 14): he implies that pure souls will only retain the rational part (*logistikón*), whilst shedding the two baser ones, namely the appetitive (*epithymetikhón*) and spirited (*thymoeidés*).²² In the *Theology of Aristotle*, however, the three parts of the soul are listed as 'vegetative, animal, and rational (*nabāṭiyya wa-ḥayawāniyya wa-nuṭqīyya*)'.²³ This, of course, is the division that Aristotle develops in his treatise *On the Soul*, classifying the different types of souls inherent in different living beings such as plants, animals, and humans. In this way, Platonic concepts are fused with Aristotelian ideas.

Another striking example of subtle, yet significant change comes from *Ennead* v. 2. This short chapter deals with the hierarchy of beings after the One; it explains concisely the theory of emanations mentioned above. At the beginning of the *Ennead*, Plotinus says somewhat cryptically:²⁴

Τὸ ἐν πάντα καὶ οὐδὲ ἓν· ἀρχὴ γὰρ πάντων, οὐ πάντα, ἀλλ' ἐκείνως πάντα· ἐκεῖ γὰρ οἷον ἐνέδραμε· μᾶλλον δὲ οὐπω ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἔσται.

The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the beginning [*archē*] of all things, not all things, but all things are thus; for there they have occurred, as it were; or rather they are not [there] yet, but they will be.

This statement that the One [i.e., God] is all things and nothing clashes with the monotheistic idea that God is one, that is to say, not many, nor nothing. In the *Theology of Aristotle*, this idea is therefore paraphrased quite differently:

The pure One is the cause (*'illa*) of all things, not like any of the things; rather he is the beginning (*bad'*) of the things. He is not the things, but all the things are in Him; he is not in anything, for all things pour forth (*inbaḡasat*) from Him; through Him they exist and subsist, and to Him they return (*'ilayhi marḡa'uhā*).

The paraphrase eliminates the provocative suggestion that the One is somehow to be identified with 'all things'. Instead, the idea of causation, not explicitly found in the Greek source, is introduced in the first line, as is the notion of all things flowing out of the One. The result is a rather different text from what we find in Plotinus—albeit one with which Plotinus could perhaps agree. One might see in this, and in many other passages of the *Theology*, a tendency to correct or at least interpret the source text even as it is being translated. Moreover, the author of this paraphrase introduces Qur'ānic phraseology. For in the second surah, called *The Cow* (*Sūrat al-Baqara*, v. 28), we find the following verse:

How do you deny God, although you were dead, and He brought you to life; moreover, He will make you dead [again], and bring you to life [again], then you shall be made to return to Him [*tumma 'ilayhi turḡa'ūna*]?

The verse obviously talks about God's power to create and destroy, to let live and let die. The last two words, expressing the idea that all men return to their creator became particularly famous. Neo-platonists frequently speak of a process of procession of each thing from its cause, followed by a 'reversion (*epistrophē*)' towards

this same cause. It is striking that in the *Theology of Aristotle*, this idea is recast in Qur'ānic language.

These two examples illustrate the key characteristics of the Arabic translations of Greek philosophical texts that were produced in al-Kindī's circle. First, they reflect the philosophical tendencies of Late Antiquity, and notably the fusion of Aristotelian and Platonic thought. Second, they include instances of giving the philosophical message a subtle Islamic overtone. We shall return to both these points below, as they deserve further investigation.

Gutas said that philosophy died in Alexandria and was resurrected in Baghdad.²⁵ And indeed, a famous story, the 'from Alexandria to Baghdad' narrative, tells of the transfer of knowledge from Egypt to Iraq. According to this story, an uninterrupted chain of philosophers transmitted philosophy from the capital founded by Alexander to that of the 'Abbāsids.²⁶ Although the story belongs rather in the realm of myth,²⁷ it does hint at a historical truth, namely that the schools of Alexandria, both medical and philosophical, had a tremendous impact on later developments in Baghdad.²⁸

In Late Antique Alexandria, thinkers eagerly discussed a number of topics that were to acquire significant importance in the medieval Muslim world. Aristotle and later Neo-Platonists such as Proclus held that the world is eternal. Jews and Christians agreed that God created the cosmos, as they shared the book of Genesis as the beginning of their respective holy scriptures. But against them was arrayed almost the entire pagan philosophical tradition. Aristotle had argued extensively that the world is eternal. Apart from a few authors in the time before Plotinus (such as Atticus and Plutarch, both 2nd c. AD), Platonists were united in finding agreement on this point between Aristotle and Plato's dialogue on the generation of the world, the *Timaeus*. Even the Stoics, while accepting that the world exists in temporary cycles, thought the sequence of cycles to be endless and thus were far from accepting a creation out of nothing with a first moment in time. The Christian philosopher John Philoponus (d. 575) wrote tracts against both Aristotle and Proclus regarding the question of whether the world is created.²⁹ He tore apart Aristotle's arguments, which were based on the purportedly indestructible nature of the heavens. And he questioned the Platonist consensus which read the *Timaeus* as endorsing an eternal world.

Like the Jewish author Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. AD 50) and many Christian apologists, Philoponus thus strived to reconcile revealed religion with philosophical truth. But these tensions were not confined to the question of the world's eternity. For instance, could human autonomy be safeguarded once we ascribe omnipotence and omniscience to God? If God is almighty, He determines everything; and if He is omniscient, he knows what we will do in advance of our acting. Boethius (d. AD 526) and Augustine (d. AD 430) both struggle with this problem in the Latin tradition.³⁰ The same issue will arise after al-Kindī in the Muslim tradition.³¹ Faith and philosophy also threatened to clash when it came to characterising God's nature. God is depicted in the Hebrew Bible and its Greek translation, the Septuagint, as having the form of a human being; after all, man is created in God's image.³² A good deal of ingenuity is required to reconcile such ideas with Aristotle's vision of God as a disembodied intellect which engages in no activity other than thought.

Likewise, a significant shift happened in the teaching of medicine and philosophy in Late Antique Alexandria. From the sixth century onwards, professors of medicine in particular focused on a number of works by the medical authorities Hippocrates and Galen (who lived respectively in the fifth century BC and the second century AD), in addition to four fundamental logical works from Aristotle's *Organon*.³³ At the same time, they wrote abridgments on those particular Galenic works that were core curriculum for the students. These abridgments, called *Alexandrian Summaries* (ġawāmi' al-'Iskandarānīyīn), have a number of characteristics that reflect the didactic situation for which the professors wrote them. First, they often contain information derived from sources other than the Galenic work which they summarise. Second, the information is often arranged hierarchical and through divisions. For instance, medicine is divided into theory and practice, but there are many other divisions and subdivisions.³⁴ This feature of division, called *dihairesis* in Greek, also appears in branch diagrams such as the so-called Viennese Tables.³⁵ Third, on the content level, the *Alexandrian Summaries* overlap significantly with so-called *apò phōnês* commentaries, that is, commentaries based on notes taken by students 'from the voice' of the professor.

This short excursion into medicine may look out of place in a book on al-Kindī's philosophical works. Al-Kindī did also write on medicine, and some of his ideas in this area have philosophical

implications.³⁶ But more importantly, the medical curriculum of late antique Alexandria had an important impact on al-Kindī's philosophical thought. Division is an obvious example: al-Kindī used this technique repeatedly in his arguments. Another aspect is his knowledge of the Aristotelian *Organon*: he appears to have been familiar with those texts of the *Organon* that became core curriculum for medical students, such as the *Categories*. Apart from medicine, the debates and discussions that raged among philosophers and theologians in Late Antique Alexandria also occupied al-Kindī's mind, as we shall see shortly when we turn to discuss a number of concrete philosophical questions.

More generally, al-Kindī, like his Greek-speaking Jewish and Christian predecessors in Alexandria, had to face the powerful problem of how to justify philosophical enquiries against the background of a revealed religion, Islam. By al-Kindī's birth, Islam could already look back at a long and sophisticated history of exegesis.³⁷ Suffice it here to name only three 'sciences' ('ulūm) that dominated the study of the Qur'ān. The first investigated the text of the Muslim Holy Writ, and notably the collection of variant readings that various reciters recorded; it is called the 'science of readings' ('ilm al-qirā'āt). The second interpreted its text, including the many ambiguous passages that required further elucidation; it became known as *tafsīr* (exegesis) or *ta'wīl* (hermeneutics). One type of work, such as the famous *Commentary* (*Tafsīr*) by aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. 923), considers each verse of the Qur'ān separately. The author often adduces divergent interpretations, and argues for one on the basis of evidence (*ṣawāhid*) that he quotes. And finally, the third science considered the meaning of the Qur'ān not merely in the narrow confines of textual interpretation, but rather the more general points of what it had to tell about God and his creation; this was what one may call 'speculative theology' (*kalām*). One group, the Mu'tazilites (originally hailing from Baṣra), became particularly prominent during al-Kindī's lifetime, although more conservative elements, for instance certain scholars in Kūfa, attacked their teaching. The Mu'tazilites argued, for instance, that God created the Qur'ān; that distinct attributes such as 'the knowing (*al-ʿālim*)' and 'the powerful (*al-qādir*)' do not subsist in him; and importantly, that man's reason constitutes an important source in the understanding of God's will and creation. For instance, they held that God cannot

justly punish humans without granting them free will—this restriction on divine justice is knowable to human reason.

To be of any value, the new Hellenic science emerging in the translation movement had to find a place alongside these Qur'ānic sciences and other indigenous intellectual pursuits, such as the study of grammar. Within a generation or two of al-Kindī's death attitudes will harden: famously, the grammarian as-Sīrāfī (d. 979) argued that the study of Greek logic is pointless and pretentious, since grammar can discern the nature of 'correct' speech.³⁸ But philosophy also had its detractors in al-Kindī's day, as we can see from a celebrated passage in his major work *On First Philosophy* (§§II–III), an impassioned plea for the dispassionate pursuit of knowledge, no matter where it comes from. Truth, he argues, can be found among any and all nations, and one should not disdain it. Responding to certain unnamed conservatives who rejected the idea that foreign peoples like the Greeks had anything substantial to offer, al-Kindī claims that their view does not in fact constitute a defence of true religion, but rather undermines it. Here he seems to foreshadow the view of the great Aristotelian commentator Averroes (Ibn Rušd, d. 1198) in his famous *Decisive Treatise* (*Faṣl al-maqāl*): since religion is true and urges the faithful to seek out truth, it cannot clash with any pursuit which is likewise devoted to truth.³⁹

But al-Kindī elsewhere goes still further, suggesting that philosophical and religious truth are one and the same, even if prophetic and philosophical knowledge about it differ fundamentally. This is a bolder claim than the mere assertion of the compatibility of Islam and philosophy. (After all, geometry does not contradict biology, but neither does it convey the same truths.) In the rather unexpected context of an enumeration of Aristotle's works, al-Kindī takes up the question of how human knowledge relates to prophetic inspiration. He says, basically, that prophecy is much more immediate. Human beings actually require the tools of logic and other propaedeutic subjects in order to arrive at truth, whereas the prophets such as Moses, Jesus or Muḥammad know it without any intermediary, having received it directly from God.⁴⁰

Al-Kindī applies this idea on a number of occasions by using philosophy to expound the Qur'ān itself. This occurs most prominently in his treatise *On the Bowing of the Outmost Sphere*. At the beginning of this epistle, al-Kindī insists that one should interpret the Godly message contained in the Qur'ān through reason

(‘aql). The problem is how to understand that the stars and trees prostrate themselves in front of God (*yaṣḡudān*).⁴¹ Al-Kindī resorts to an allegorical explanation: prostration here means obedience in the sense that the stars, living beings endowed with reason, heed God’s command and maintain His creation through their action. Interestingly, al-Kindī uses the methods of *tafsīr*, that is, of the Islamic commentary tradition, to make his points.⁴²

Another religious topic that al-Kindī discusses in his extant philosophical œuvre is prophetic dreams. He explains why some dreams correctly foretell the future by drawing on Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle’s short works on psychology, the so-called *Parva Naturalia*.⁴³ And yet, when doing so, he clearly also has the Qur’ānic text in mind, and notably the story of Joseph, told in the eponymous surah (*Sūrat Yūsuf*). Al-Kindī explains the etymology of a Qur’ānic term there, namely ‘a hotchpotch of dreams (‘*aḡḡātu ’aḥlāmin*)’.⁴⁴

These examples show that religion occupied a position of prominence in al-Kindī’s thought. Theological questions are also paramount in his conception of philosophy itself. For al-Kindī, ‘first philosophy’, the highest kind of philosophy and the topic of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, deals with questions about God. One can therefore clearly discern an endeavour to address theological problems on the basis of late antique philosophy in Arabic translation. This is shown by many aspects of al-Kindī’s work, and even in his activity as a coordinator of translations—consider the so-called ‘metaphysics file’—which brought together Greek wisdom on the divine, and related issues such as providence and the soul. This concern with the one God, with monotheism, also appears in al-Kindī’s refutation of the Trinity. His close collaboration with Christian translators did not stop him from scorning the Christian doctrine as patently absurd. God cannot be eternal and multiple at the same time, as the Christians claim. He refutes them by using the tools of Aristotelian logic, especially as they had been exposed in Porphyry’s *Introduction* (*Eisagōgē*), a text that he expects them to know. This illustrates again an important aspect of al-Kindī’s programme: to demonstrate religious truth by philosophical means.

But we can say something more specific than merely observing that Islam is central to al-Kindī’s thought—this much is, after all, not very surprising. He was drawn to themes and theological positions associated particularly with the aforementioned

Mu'tazilite strand of speculative theology (*kalām*). Their emphasis on God's divine unity finds an echo in al-Kindī's thought, as we shall see now.

Philosophical Topics

The philosophical corpus that has come down to us from al-Kindī is a fortuitous one: we know most of these works from a single manuscript, now held in Istanbul.⁴⁵ As will be clear from only a glance at our translation of the list of his works in this volume, a great deal of al-Kindī's output, on both philosophical and other topics, is lost. Nonetheless, thanks to the precious Istanbul manuscript, enough remains to testify to al-Kindī's work in most fields of philosophy. We have divided the volume into works on God and the world's eternity; psychology (that is, the study of the soul); cosmology; and ethics, with a somewhat miscellaneous group at the end which display al-Kindī's efforts at organising the Greek intellectual tradition to which he was heir. The following brief overview of these works is divided into the same areas, although we will here discuss cosmology before psychology.

God and Eternity

The central theme of al-Kindī's greatest work, *On First Philosophy*, is the oneness of God. This is most obvious from sections three and four of the extant 'first part', in which al-Kindī argues that all things in our world are characterised by both unity and multiplicity, and that there must be a cause of the unity that these things possess. This cause will be external to the one-and-many things around us—a transcendent 'true One'. In what way this cause is transcendent is then revealed, as al-Kindī explains that the true One outstrips all 'terms' or 'utterances' (literally 'sayables', *maqūlāt*, which somewhat confusingly was a standard Arabic translation of Aristotle's 'categories'). For, any type of term we choose—and al-Kindī provides what he apparently takes as an exhaustive list of such terms—implies that it possesses both multiplicity and unity. For example, any term which designates a class of items (in al-Kindī's terminology, a genus or species) implies that numerous class members exist. Thus the term 'man' implies that many men exist.

Here one might conceivably object that some terms only designate one class member—what about ‘sun’ for example? Al-Kindī might here respond that, in principle, more than one object like the sun could exist; if this were the case, then the term ‘sun’ would refer to these other objects equally well.⁴⁶ Proper names represent an even greater challenge to this view, since they seem to be ‘terms’ only designating one object (e.g., ‘Sean Connery’, or ‘The Bodleian Library’). This raises the intriguing possibility that God might be fittingly called by names but not described with any terms that could also apply to other things; yet, al-Kindī does not explore this idea.

In any case, the upshot of al-Kindī’s treatment of God as the ‘true One’ is a fairly rigorous apophatic or negative theology, meaning that his account demonstrates that human language (or most human language) cannot apply to God. This reflects the spirit of contemporary Mu‘tazilite discussions of divine attributes.⁴⁷ Agreement with the Mu‘tazila could also help to explain the apparently unrelated discussion which comes earlier, in section two of *On First Philosophy*. Here al-Kindī, drawing on the arguments of the aforementioned John Philoponus, argues that the world is not eternal; rather, eternity is the prerogative of God alone.

This question of the world’s eternity was very important to al-Kindī. He returned to it numerous times, in a pair of works, *On the Oneness of God* and *On the Quiddity of What Cannot be Infinite*, both of which have extensive direct parallels to section two of *On First Philosophy*. They may in fact be preparatory sketches or just short works whose material was then incorporated into the fabric of al-Kindī’s masterpiece. A third short work lends support to a key premise of al-Kindī’s anti-eternity arguments, namely that nobody can be actually infinite in magnitude. This work probably stems from a later time than al-Kindī’s other treatments of infinity (note the back reference to discussions in other works, at §9); it notably approaches the problem in explicitly geometrical terms. All three shorter works on infinity, as well as *On First Philosophy* itself, share a feature which may seem curious: al-Kindī spends most of his effort proving that the world cannot be infinite in magnitude, which seems to mean simply that the body of the world cannot be infinitely big. In this, al-Kindī and Aristotle share common ground. Al-Kindī disagrees with Aristotle, however, by arguing that a finite body

cannot possess *any* infinite features: if the world is finitely large, it cannot contain anything infinite.

This leaves the question of why al-Kindī lavished so much attention on the issue of the world's eternity. In his refutation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (mentioned above), al-Kindī saw eternity and oneness as tantamount to one another. The rigorous opposition of the 'created' and 'eternal' ought to remind us of contemporary theological debates, and in particular the dispute over the createdness or eternity of the Qur'ān itself.⁴⁸ In *On the Oneness of God* and *On First Philosophy*, al-Kindī linked the proof for the world's finiteness in time to that of God's oneness. Al-Kindī thus deployed anti-Aristotelian arguments, taken largely from the Christian Philoponus, in order to show how Greek philosophy is in agreement with, and can lend support to, the tenets of Islam.

Cosmology

To judge from a fragment belonging to the lost portions of *On First Philosophy*, al-Kindī may have gone on from his demonstration of God's unity to a treatment of divine providence.⁴⁹ In addition to this fragment, al-Kindī's extant works provide ample evidence that al-Kindī had a keen interest in this topic. We have already mentioned *On the Bowing of the Outermost Sphere*, in which al-Kindī interprets the Qur'ānic phrase that the heavens prostrate themselves before God in cosmological terms. The motion of the heavens is ordained by a divine command, and transmits God's order to the sublunary world. In other words, God exerts His providence on our lower world indirectly, through the action of the stars.

In another treatise al-Kindī further expands on this idea. He explains that the heavens are the 'proximate agent cause of generation and corruption'. With this theory al-Kindī draws on the Aristotelian tradition. Aristotle himself provides authority for the view that the heavens have a special causal relationship to God. He draws a connection between celestial motion and God in both the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*. Indeed, Aristotle even uses the eternity of the world as part of a proof for God's nature, contending that God must be immaterial if He is to cause infinite motion, because no material body has infinite power. Of course, as al-Kindī denies the world's eternity, he cannot agree with this argument. In fact, he employs materials from Philoponus to turn the tables on Aristotle:

as finite bodies, the heavens cannot possess eternity by their own nature.⁵⁰ Furthermore, al-Kindī speaks at least sometimes as if God has a direct relationship with each created object and brings it into being without any intermediary. Yet there are conflicting indications on this point. In the digression on creation at *On the Quantity of Aristotle's Books*, §§ VI.5–8, al-Kindī seems to envision that God created each thing directly, whereas he states explicitly in *On the True Agent* that God acts through the mediation of His effects (but al-Kindī does not identify which effects are meant).

Be that as it may, al-Kindī clearly thinks that God's providence, if not his originating creative act, is mediated by heavenly motion. He gets this notion not only from Aristotle but also from Aristotle's most faithful ancient exegete, Alexander of Aphrodisias (2nd c. AD). Alexander composed a treatise *On Providence* which is lost in Greek but was translated two times into Arabic, notably once in al-Kindī's circle; both resulting Arabic versions survive today.⁵¹ This treatise exerted a strong influence on al-Kindī,⁵² even if al-Kindī apparently departed from Alexander on one crucial point. For Alexander, as we know from both *On Providence* and a work *On Fate* (preserved in Greek), heavenly providence produces a regular order in nature. But it does not concern itself with particular events, since that would imply that the divine directs its attention to things that are inferior to it, which would be unfitting. This amounts to the claim that providence ensures the cyclical preservation of natural *species* but does not bring about events concerning *individuals* which belong to those species. Al-Kindī's position comes closer to that of Plotinus: especially in *Enneads* iii. 2–3, his great treatise on providence, the latter accepts that the divine forces do bring about the best possible order down to the level of individuals. Al-Kindī's extensive output on astrology is eloquent testimony that he accepted this idea. Al-Kindī firmly believed that man could predict and discern particular events and facts by looking to the stars.⁵³

How, then, do the heavens bring about this providential order of the sublunary world? The exact mechanism seems to vary from one Kindian work to another.⁵⁴ Particularly difficult to integrate into his more 'Aristotelian' works is *On Rays*, a text preserved only in Latin. Here he makes heavenly influence the result of 'rays' projected by astral bodies to sublunary bodies—only one example of a general phenomenon, in which all bodies emit mutually influencing rays. In *On Rays* heavenly influence is a major topic, but the theory is also

applied to sensory phenomena like colour, and to the efficacy of talismans, magic and the like (our translation in this book, however, is a partial one and deals only with the opening, more theoretical parts of the work).

In any case, al-Kindī consistently holds that the heavens affect our world by affecting the elements. Following Aristotle and Plato (and before them Empedocles), al-Kindī accepts the common ancient theory of four sublunary elements: air, earth, fire and water. If left to their own devices, the elements would sift apart into four concentric spheres, with the heaviest element, earth, at the centre of the cosmos, surrounded in order by water, then air, then fire. The elements do not separate, because the heavens move over them and mix them together, resulting in the compound bodies populating the world we see around us. The heavens are made of an incorruptible fifth element which is distinguished by circular motion rather than the rectilinear motion typical of these four sublunary elements. Al-Kindī argues for this in *On the Nature of the Celestial Sphere*, very much in the spirit of Aristotle's physical treatises. But he shows his syncretism by elaborating a Pythagorean theory of the five elements in a treatise which explains why 'the ancients' (that is, Plato in the *Timaeus*) associated the elements with the five Platonic solids, that is, cube, pyramid and so on. Here the correspondences are explained in numerically symbolic terms. For example, the earth is associated with the cube because the cube has six faces and six is a 'perfect' number, which befits the way the earth sits unmoving at the centre of the cosmos (§6).

Al-Kindī applies the theory in some detail when he comes to consider phenomena in the world below the heavens. Here one of the best examples is meteorology, a subject to which al-Kindī devoted considerable attention. He wrote treatises on such phenomena as fog and rain, for example.⁵⁵ In this volume we have translated only one of these works, which explains why the air in the upper atmosphere is colder than that close to the ground (a phenomenon which would be clear to anyone who ventured into mountainous regions). Al-Kindī explains that vapours ascend from the ground because astral bodies, especially the sun, heat the earth. This treatise should be read alongside al-Kindī's epistle on the reason for the sky's blue colour, which we have included in the psychology section along with his account of which sublunary element is the cause of colour in bodies.

As with atmospheric phenomena, al-Kindī analyses the sublunary bodies on the surface of the earth in traditionally Aristotelian terms: natural physical objects are substances which endure over time by virtue of having an essence or substantial form. These substances then serve as the subject for further features, which are accidental (these can change without the substance being destroyed).⁵⁶ Texts like *Proximate Agent Cause* strongly suggest that all these forms result from elemental combination and the recombination of already compounded bodies, yielding steadily increasing complexity. Al-Kindī even goes so far as to state, echoing Galen, that the dispositions of soul depend on the mixtures of the body.⁵⁷ For example a certain level of heat in the body will cause a man to be more irascible. This would fit well with what he claims elsewhere, for instance, that a lute player can affect people's souls (their emotions, for instance) by playing in such a way as to manipulate the elemental components of their body.⁵⁸

Soul and Intellect

Yet, when al-Kindī turns his attention to the human soul itself, it becomes hard to see how he could think any of this. The soul, as he states or proves in several works, is a separate, immaterial, simple substance. This is the opening principle which underlies the doxographical survey of ancient theories in his *Discourse on the Soul*. He proves this with arguments drawn, surprisingly, from Aristotelian logic in *That There are Incorporeal Substances*.⁵⁹ For al-Kindī, the soul can certainly outlive the body, and it would seem that its relationship to the body is a rather casual one. It projects its activities through bodily organs, but al-Kindī makes little provision to explain how the body could affect it, as required by the theory of physically-grounded dispositions in *Proximate Agent Cause*. (Al-Kindī takes up questions about the soul's relation to heavenly and sublunary bodies in the fragmentary *Brief Statement about the Soul*.) But al-Kindī's view is more coherent than it seems at first. For him, the distinctive activity of the separate soul is really thinking. He ascribes even the 'lower parts' of the soul, the irascible and appetitive faculties, more to the body than to the soul, because the soul opposes, and is opposed by, bursts of anger, for instance.⁶⁰ Since the soul and the irascible faculty are opposed, they must be distinct—an argument that al-Kindī ultimately borrows from Plato's *Republic*.

Al-Kindī locates fairly advanced psychological capacities in the ensouled body, rather than the soul itself, as his account of dreams demonstrates. He situates dreams, as well as other functions of the imaginative faculty, in the brain: in this, he follows the ancient precedent of authors like Galen and Nemesius of Emesa (fl. ca. 400 AD).⁶¹ But al-Kindī's *On Sleep and Dream* gives a gratifyingly detailed account of how exactly the higher, rational soul relates to this embodied faculty. On the one hand, the imagination deals with sensible forms and has an organ, namely the brain (§III.7). On the other hand, the soul can entertain forms in the absence of their bearers, for instance by picturing a friend who is absent. When we sleep and are not distracted by senses, the imaginative faculty has free rein to conjure images, and these images are dreams. The soul taken by itself and without body is able not only to engage in intellection, but also to foresee future events and 'announce' these by producing dream-images in the imaginative faculty while we sleep; it often does so symbolically, which is why dreams require interpretation (§IX). The purer the soul and the purer the organ in which the dream is realised, the more accurate the foretelling (§IX.2). (Purity of soul is a theme also emphasised in *Discourse on the Soul*, yielding a tight connection between al-Kindī's psychology and his ethics).

In both this treatise and other psychological works, al-Kindī insists that the soul becomes *identical* to its object. As he says in *On Sleep and Dream*, the soul and the form grasped by the soul are one and the same, whether the form so grasped is sensible or intelligible (§VIII). The soul's ability to become identical to both kinds of form shows that for al-Kindī, as for Plotinus before him, the soul is intermediate between the sensible and intelligible worlds. On the other hand, the soul is becoming identical with forms, not bodies; its psychological capacities can be realised even though it is an immaterial substance. In the area of sensation, vision most interests al-Kindī. He wrote numerous technical works on optics and catoptrics (that is, the study of mirrors), which have come under ample scholarly scrutiny and are not included in the present volume.⁶² We do, however, include two short treatises on the subject of colour. In one of these, mentioned above, al-Kindī discusses the blueness of the sky. In the other, he engages with the ancient debate about which element is responsible for colour; he comes to the conclusion that it is earth, whose solidity allows it to 'block' vision.⁶³

The highest of the soul's faculties is of course neither sensation nor imagination, but intellection. This is explored in one of al-Kindī's best known works apart from *On First Philosophy*, a brief but dense epistle *On the Intellect*.⁶⁴ Here al-Kindī again focuses on the soul's ability to become identical with its objects in form (§3). But where do the forms come from when they are intellectual rather than sensory forms? In order to answer this question al-Kindī postulates a 'first intellect', which seems to play the role in intellection that sensible objects can play in sense-perception (§5). In other words, the first intellect is a seat of intelligible forms from which the soul can receive forms into itself, so as to grasp them—the way it might receive the form of redness from an apple when seeing an apple. The intelligible forms that al-Kindī has in mind here are species and genera (§3). This would seem to mean, rather surprisingly, that although the soul can get a sensible form like *red* from seeing an apple, it cannot get the species form *apple* by looking at an apple. But it is hard to believe that we could come to an intellectual understanding of this species form without having ever seen any apples. Presumably the sensible encounter with apples is thus necessary—but not sufficient—for bringing the soul to grasp the relevant intelligible species.

Another text on epistemology, called *On Recollection*, sheds more light on this. Here al-Kindī, following a tradition which goes back to Plato's *Meno* and *Phaedo*, argues explicitly that the human soul requires more than sensation to understand intelligible objects. Such objects possess no body, time or place (§IV.2). Therefore, our impression that we learn about them on a given occasion and at a given location must be an illusion. Rather, when we learn we are actually remembering what the soul already knew before entering into a body. This would certainly solve the problem of how sensible experience helps us to know intelligibles: it plays the relatively minor role of prompting our memory. If this is al-Kindī's considered view he departs from the more empiricist epistemology of Aristotle in favour of the Platonic tradition. But it must be said that he nowhere else endorses the idea that the soul exists *before* the body. Yet, he does think that it can live on *after* the body's death, as numerous other texts demonstrate.

This highly intellectualist theory of knowledge did not, however, stop al-Kindī from exploring the physical world around him with enthusiasm. In fact, he turned his attention to a staggering range of

topics, some of them quite practical (the making of swords and perfumes, the removal of stains from clothing). One can gauge the breadth of his interests by looking through the list of his works, translated in this volume along with biographical information about him. If the ninth century was a kind of Renaissance in the Islamic world, then al-Kindī was that century's Renaissance man, or one of them. Yet the eclectic range of his interests can obscure the fact that his activities do seem to be animated by just the kind of intellectualism that we have been discussing. For instance, when he investigates an apparently empirical and practical topic like the making of compound drugs, he does so by means of a highly abstract arithmetic theory, insisting in effect that the proportions which govern the mixtures in medicines must conform to the most 'perfect' arithmetic ratios.⁶⁵ Al-Kindī is convinced that mathematical structure can be *assumed* to underlie physical structure, as dramatically illustrated in the aforementioned text on why the ancients associated the elements with geometrical figures.⁶⁶

Ethics

Al-Kindī's intellectualism is also on display in the area of ethics. In one sense, his ethical writings address 'practical' concerns. The longest ethical—and probably the most charming—work from his pen is devoted to 'dispelling sorrows'. To this end, al-Kindī relates memorable anecdotes; and he recommends what one might call psychological exercises: one should reflect on the way in which other people have suffered, but still achieved happiness in the long run. One should not think, however, that his advice is undemanding: on the contrary, his ethical hero is Socrates, the paradigm of self-control and disdain for physical possessions. Al-Kindī is so fascinated with Socrates that he not only mentions him in *On Dispelling Sadness*, §§IX.5 and 9, but also authors a separate work collecting sayings and anecdotes ascribed to Socrates. Nonetheless, the bulk of *On Dispelling Sadness* addresses practical concerns. Only in the opening paragraphs does al-Kindī fly his intellectualist colours, insisting that the apparent goods in the sensible world do not possess any real value and invariably lead to unhappiness, as one loses them in the end. Therefore, we should prefer the objects in the 'world of the intellect' (§I.2).⁶⁷

Systematising Philosophy

In addition to the philosophical epistles just discussed, in which al-Kindī tackles a variety of specific philosophical themes, he also produced works intended to help his readers understand the fruits of the translation movement. Here the most significant text authored by al-Kindī—or at least emanating from his circle—is *On the Definitions and Descriptions of Things*.⁶⁸ This text presents itself neither as an epistle nor as a discursive treatise, but rather as a kind of glossary of al-Kindī's specialised vocabulary. Some Greek loan-words appear in the list, such as *al-hayūlā* ('matter'), derived from Greek *húlē*. Other terms come from Persian, such as *ḡawhar* ('substance'), originally designating precious stones in both Persian and Arabic. The vast majority of entries, however, are Arabic words that acquired a terminological meaning, and therefore require further definition and elucidation. Examples include 'difference (*al-ḥilāf*)' and 'otherness (*al-ḡayrīya*)', in need of differentiation; or 'moisture (*ar-ruṭūba*)', which takes on a specific meaning in a scientific context. Of course defining a philosophical term is itself a philosophical enterprise; the list of definitions may not make for riveting reading, but it sheds light on terms and ideas found in other works.

A rather different kind of systematising work is *On the Quantity of Aristotle's Books*. We have already mentioned that it includes a striking digression on divine creation (§VI), one of the most interesting passages in the whole corpus. The main argument of this treatise, however, also arrests the reader's interest: it surveys Aristotle's corpus, probably on the basis of a Greek model or models. It shows us which works in it al-Kindī knew well, and which ones he did not know. He displays a close acquaintance with the *Categories*, for instance, but shows little if any direct knowledge of the treatises on ethics and politics. Moreover, he characterises the purpose of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in a striking manner:

to explain things that subsist without matter and, though they may exist together with what does have matter, are neither connected nor united to matter; to affirm the oneness (*tawḥīd*) of God, the great and exalted; and to explain His beautiful names, and that He is the agent cause of the universe, which perfects [all things], the God of the universe who governs through His perfect providence and complete wisdom (§IX.5).

In this last section of the book, we have also included a number of texts on miscellaneous philosophical subjects. First comes *On the Five Essences*, in which al-Kindī briefly discusses five key ideas in Aristotle: matter, form, place, motion and time. This text resembles *On the Definitions and Descriptions of Things* in its aims and objectives. The final translation covers a few fragmentary texts found in the Istanbul manuscript; they deal with topics like the meaning of 'composition', and the imaginative faculty. One can hardly define the requirements for being a philosopher in a better way than does al-Kindī in the first fragment: 'skillful intelligence, constant desire, admirable steadfastness, piercing ability, the beginnings of understanding, and a long life.' We feel confident in attributing most of these qualities to al-Kindī himself.

Al-Kindī's Legacy

The perusal of this volume, if not the foregoing overview of al-Kindī's thought, will probably persuade the reader of the depth and breadth of his work in philosophy. There can also be little doubt of his historical importance as the first to undertake the process of absorbing Greek philosophy into Islamic civilisation. Even if his direct influence had been minimal, this would be sufficient to justify the careful study of his writings, and we hope these translations will be a spur to such endeavours.

Al-Kindī's direct influence, however, was not minimal, even if overviews of philosophy in the Islamic world often leave the impression that his writings fell stillborn from the press (to borrow Hume's phrase). Luminaries like al-Fārābī (d. 950), Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 1037) and Averroes rarely engage directly with al-Kindī, though Averroes did mention and criticise al-Kindī's views on pharmacology.⁶⁹ But numerous thinkers in the generations directly succeeding al-Kindī not only engaged with him, but were deeply influenced by his works and his approach to philosophy. Here we can start with his student as-Saraḥsī, who has been mentioned above. From the indications we possess, as-Saraḥsī appears to have closely modelled his own writings on those of his master.

Another student, 'Abū Zayd al-Balḥī, has left few works to posterity, but one extant treatise is extensive: the *Benefits for Bodies and Souls*.⁷⁰ It shows how the generation directly after al-Kindī integrated his approach to philosophy into the cultured literary

practices, called 'Adab.⁷¹ (Al-Kindī himself had written poetry, and a look through his list of works shows that he too already cultivated the literary arts to some extent.)⁷² Interestingly, both 'Abū Zayd and as-Saraḥsī came from the eastern part of the Islamic world, from Balḥ and Saraḥs in Ḥurāsān, as their names suggest. We can perhaps perceive here the beginning of a tradition in the East that embraced a Neo-Platonising, syncretistic philosophy pioneered by al-Kindī. By contrast, in al-Kindī's former stomping grounds of Baghdad, a group of mostly Christian thinkers adhered to a more faithful Aristotelianism. These included Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, from whom we have the quotations of the otherwise lost treatise of al-Kindī *Against the Trinity*.

Another associate of al-Kindī's, perhaps his most important one, also hailed from Balḥ: the astrologer 'Abū Ma'ṣar al-Balḥī. He dominated astrology in the Arabic world, and al-Kindī had a hand in bringing him to this discipline. *The Catalogue* by Ibn an-Nadīm tells the story of the enmity that first pitted 'Abū Ma'ṣar against al-Kindī; but then, the latter enticed the former, first to study the mathematical sciences, and eventually to become an astrologer.⁷³ 'Abū Ma'ṣar was an astrologer and not a philosopher, but in his most important work, the *Great Introduction*,⁷⁴ he provides a scientific rationale for astrology that resonates with al-Kindī's cosmological writings.⁷⁵ Along with al-Kindī's own sizeable astrological output, the conversion of 'Abū Ma'ṣar to Hellenic science, and astrology in particular, would form a major part of the Kindian legacy.

In fact, the Latin reception of al-Kindī as a thinker revolved especially around this side of his thought. The astrological and magical text discussed above, *On Rays*, acquired particular significance in the Latin tradition and attracted criticism in a work entitled *Errors of the Philosophers*, which is ascribed to the bishop and philosopher Giles of Rome (d. 1316).⁷⁶ The *Errors* decries the astrological determinism set out in the remarkable fourth chapter of *On Rays*, entitled 'On Possibility'. *On the Intellect* and *On Sleep and Dream* also circulated in medieval Latin versions, and we have taken them into account in our translations in the present volume. *On the Five Essences* only survives in Latin. We should note that another work preserved in Latin, *On Logical Demonstration*, is thought to be incorrectly ascribed to al-Kindī; we have not included it here.⁷⁷

Returning to the Islamic world, we can trace al-Kindī's influence well beyond his immediate associates. The most striking and

puzzling case is that of the Jewish thinker 'Ishāq ibn Sulaymān al-'Isrā'īlī (d. 955, better known as Isaac Israeli): he drew on several Kindian treatises, for example *On the Definitions and Descriptions of Things*. These textual borrowings are clear to see but not easy to explain, since we do not know exactly how Isaac would have been exposed to the Kindian corpus, to say nothing of his possible reasons for adopting so many of al-Kindī's ideas (even verbatim, in some cases).⁷⁸ Another more or less direct link can be drawn to the students of 'Abū Zayd, who would of course be second-generation students of al-Kindī's. One was the mysterious Ibn Farīgūn, author of a fascinating encyclopaedic work produced in a diagrammatic format rather than conventional prose.⁷⁹ 'Abū Zayd also taught al-'Āmirī (d. 992), who continued the philosophical project begun in al-Kindī's circle. For instance, al-'Āmirī elaborated on the *Book of the Pure Good* (called in Latin the *Book of Causes*), mentioned above. He reworked and reorganised this text, produced in the Kindī circle, just as the Kindī circle had reworked and reorganised the *Book of the Pure Good*. Al-'Āmirī also brought philosophical ideas more explicitly into contact with Islam; for example, he identified certain principles of the Neo-platonic system, intellect and soul, with God's 'tablet' and 'pen' with which He wrote the Qur'ān.⁸⁰

In this way, various thinkers engaged with the output of al-Kindī's circle; but al-'Āmirī would not be the last. Certainly al-Kindī's influence was felt most deeply and widely thanks to the translation of Greek works into Arabic that he oversaw. Here one could mention the Kindī-circle version of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, a translation which Averroes still consulted when he wrote his *Long Commentary* on that work in the twelfth century.⁸¹ The *Book of the Pure Good* also exerted enormous influence in the Latin world; no less a personage than St Thomas Aquinas commented on it, pointing out that it was based on Proclus rather than Aristotle, as often claimed. And speaking of pseudo-Aristotle, the *Theology of Aristotle* helped transmit Neo-Platonism into the Islamic world in a major way; and even during the Safavid period (16th–17th c.), members of the 'school of Isfahan' still read it attentively.⁸²

Al-'Āmirī represents more, though, than just the abiding enthusiasm for the Neo-Platonic writings produced under al-Kindī's supervision. He also illustrates the widespread adoption of al-Kindī's whole philosophical programme among a certain type of intellectual in the tenth century. This 'Kindian tradition' began, obviously, with

al-Kindī himself and ran through the tenth century.⁸³ A broad-minded appraisal of al-Kindī's influence would credit him with being a forerunner, and progenitor, of the 'popular Platonism' displayed by many literary and philosophical figures of this period. Thinkers would combine Platonic ideas with Islamic symbolism, mixing them into a heady brew; al-ʿĀmirī can illustrate this tendency, as well as ʿIsmāʿīlī authors and especially the 'Brethren of Purity' (Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā'), a group of Neo-Platonic philosophers in tenth-century Baghdad.⁸⁴ A broadly Kindian understanding of the Greek philosophical inheritance came easily to well-rounded intellectuals like the literary figure at-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), and the historian and philosopher Miskawayh (d. 1030), who in fact quotes from *On First Philosophy* in a work on the soul.⁸⁵ While the full range of al-Kindī's influence on these figures remains a subject for future research, all of them drew heavily on texts like the *Theology of Aristotle*, and adopted the characteristically Kindian project of fusing the teachings of Islam with those of Greek philosophy. (Here one might contrast the approach of al-Fārābī, who instead portrayed religious statements as dialectical or rhetorical versions of the truths that are established demonstratively in philosophy.)

Of course, al-Kindī's legacy is inseparable from that of the translation movement in which he played such an important part. This legacy ensures al-Kindī a prominent place in any history of science and philosophy in the Islamic world. Yet al-Kindī's achievement as a transmitter of Greek ideas should not distract us from the fact that he was an original, creative thinker in his own right. Al-Kindī represents not only the enthusiastic adoption of the Hellenic tradition—with his rallying cry, from section one of *On First Philosophy*, that 'we must not be ashamed to admire the truth or to acquire it, from wherever it comes' (§II.4). He stands, too, for the need to interpret and develop the truths of the Greeks, so that they might be more congenial to the truth of Islam.

Notes

1. See Kennedy 2004 for a fascinating narrative of how the 'Abbāsids came to power.
2. Lapidus 2002, 56.
3. ed. Müller 1882, vol. i, p. 194, line 2–p. p. 197, line 3. Strohmaier 1965 considered this anecdote to be authentic, as did Bergsträsser 1913, 10, whereas Rosenthal 1937, 18–19 and Cooperson 1996 doubt its historicity.

4. Al-Ġāhiz, *Book of Misers (Kitāb al-Buḥalā')*, ed. Vloten 1900, 109–10, ed. al-Ḥāḡiri 1958, p. 103; tr. Serjeant, p. 86.
5. For a wealth of information about as-Saraḡsī see Rosenthal 1943.
6. Van Ess 1991–7, iv. 353–737 offers a masterly overview of the main points of discussion.
7. See Van Ess 1991–7, iii. 446–508.
8. See *Biogr.* §IV.14.
9. For further details, see our translation in the present volume of reports about his life and works.
10. See *El'*, art. 'Kaḡṡān', iv. 447b–449a (A. Fischer, rev. A.K. Irvine).
11. ed. van Vloten 1900, p. 94, lines 13–14.
12. ed. van Vloten 1900, p. 98, lines 2–4.
13. See also Rosenthal 1942.
14. Gutas 2004, 195.
15. For a new interpretation of his fragments, see now Wöhrle 2009.
16. Brentjes 1994.
17. Endress 2007.
18. Gutas 2004; Endress 2003.
19. art. 'Tawḡīd' *El'*, x. 389a–b (D. Gimaret).
20. Zimmermann 1986, 131.
21. This is at least the title of the oldest manuscript, Leiden, Universiteitsbibliothek, MS Or. 209; see de Jong and de Goeje 1865, 312.
22. Although Plotinus does not spell out the three parts of the soul here, he clearly has the Platonic division of *Republic* 440e8–441a2 in mind; see Adamson 2002a, 59–60.
23. ed. Badawī 1955, p. 20, line 12.
24. v.2.1, tr. Armstrong 1966–88, v. 59 [slightly modified].
25. See the quotation opening this section on p. 25.
26. Meyerhof 1930.
27. Strohmaier 1987; Lameer 1997; Gutas 1999.
28. It is important to note that there was not just one 'School of Alexandria' in late antiquity; see Vinzent 2000, and Pormann 2010b.
29. *Against Proclus On the Eternity of the World*, tr. Share 2004–10; *Against Aristotle, on the Eternity of the World*, tr. Wildberg 1987.
30. See Marenbon 2003; Zagzebski 1991; Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, tr. Williams 1993.
31. For al-Fārābī on the famous deterministic argument presented in Aristotle's *On Interpretation* 9, see Adamson 2006c; more generally, see Adamson 2010b.
32. Genesis 1.26: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'.
33. Iskandar 1976, and Gutas 1999.
34. Pormann 2004, 12–13.
35. Gundert 1998.
36. See Adamson 2007a, 161–6.
37. van Ess 1991–7.
38. See Margoliouth 1905; Endress 1986b.
39. See R. C. Taylor 2000.
40. *Aristotle's Books* §§VI.1–2.
41. Qur'an, 55:6.
42. Cf. Janssens 2007.
43. Cf. Hansberger 2008.

44. See our introduction to the treatise in the present volume.
45. Aya Sofia 4832, which also contains works by the mathematician and philosopher Ṭābit ibn Qurra.
46. The point is made already by Aristotle, *Metaphysics* vii.15, 1040a27–b4, and found for instance in Avicenna, *The Healing: Demonstration* (aš-Šifā': al-Burhān), ed. 'Afifi, Madkūr 1956, 360.
47. For this parallel see Adamson 2003.
48. See Adamson 2007a, 98–105, and on the topic see, for instance, Patton 1897 and van Ess 1965.
49. The fragment, reported by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-'Andalusī, is translated in this volume at the end of the chapter containing *First Phil*.
50. See Davidson 1969, and for al-Kindī's use of arguments from the finiteness of the world's body, *First Phil*. VI–VII.
51. See Ruland 1976.
52. See Fazzo, Wiesner 1993.
53. See Adamson 2002b.
54. On this problem see Adamson 2007a, 184 and 194.
55. For his works in this area see Lettinck 1999; Adamson 2007a, ch. 8.
56. See for instance *First Phil*. §VI.9, §§X.2 and 5.
57. *Prox. Agent Cause* §VII.1.
58. See Adamson 2007a, 174; this is again related to Galenism, since al-Kindī invokes the four humours.
59. Our translation of this work, along with further commentary, has been published already as Adamson and Pormann 2009.
60. *Discourse Soul II*.
61. For Galen, see Rocca 2003, and Donini 2008; for Nemesius, see Sharples, van der Eijk 2008.
62. See Rashed 1997.
63. See further Adamson 2006b.
64. On this text see especially Jolivet 1971.
65. In his work *On Degrees* (*De Gradibus*), for which see Gauthier 1938; see further Adamson 2007a, 161–6.
66. For the relation between mathematics and al-Kindī's philosophy, see again Endress 2003; Gutas 2004.
67. For this intellectualist reading see further Adamson 2007a, 153–6.
68. For the question of authenticity, see the introduction to this work below.
69. See Langermann 2003.
70. *Maṣāliḥ al-abdān wa-l-'anfus*, ed. Cairo: 2005.
71. On this phenomenon see Rowson 1990.
72. Rosenthal 1942.
73. Ed. Flügel 1871–2, p. 277, lines 1–8. The story is translated below, in Biogr. §§IV.4–5.
74. Ed. Lemay 1995–6.
75. As argued in Adamson 2002b.
76. See Koch (ed.), Riedl (trans.) 1944. This authorship has been disputed, however.
77. The Latin works of al-Kindī are edited in Nagy 1897. For the history of *On the Art of Demonstration* see Baffioni 1994.
78. See the fundamental Altmann and Stern 1958.
79. See Biesterfeldt 1985 and 2000.

80. As highlighted in the title of an excellent recent study of this work, Wakelnig 2006. On this author see also Rowson 1988.
81. Cf. Bertolacci 2005.
82. On this see Rizvi 2007.
83. Adamson 2007a (Kindian tradition).
84. For the former see Walker 2005; for the latter see El-Bizri 2008.
85. Adamson 2007c, 52–4.



Section Four

Ethics





On Dispelling Sorrows

Dispelling Sorrows is al-Kindī's most significant surviving work on ethics. In fact, it comprises mostly practical advice on eudemonics, the art of achieving happiness. Al-Kindī's epistle follows a long Greek tradition of writing short philosophical treatises on this subject, notably in the Epicurean and Stoic traditions. He includes anecdotes and legends, some of which are likewise drawn from the Greek tradition, but reworks some central ideas for the Islamic context in which he writes.

After the opening address, al-Kindī defines sadness as a psychic pain caused by loss (§§I.1–2), and distinguishes between losing things which belong either to the world of the ideas, or that of sense-perception (§§I.3–4). Since all things in the latter perish eventually, we should not seek to possess them at all (§§I.5–6). Rather, one ought to be indifferent towards things which give pleasure (II). One should train oneself not to desire anything; in this way one acquires good habits (III). We should pay much more attention to curing the soul by freeing it from desires than to our physical well-being, as the soul is eternal and noble, whereas the base body perishes (IV). These first four paragraphs mainly argue that the material things in this world do not last, and therefore ought not to be desired, whereas the contemplation of ideas can provide pure pleasure.

Al-Kindī now moves to the more practical question of how one can dispel sadness when it is already present (V–IX). First, he deploys his favourite technique of *reductio ad absurdum*: through some clever logical bifurcations al-Kindī ends up with an impossible contradiction (V; see also §VI.8, IX). Here (V) he enjoins the reader to dispel sadness by realising that sadness is irrational, in the sense of actually involving self-contradiction. Remembering past events also offers consolation, as good memories lighten the mood, and thoughts of other people's sufferings provide succour (VI). Goods in this world are shared with others (VII), and ultimately, God provides

everything (VIII). We should therefore be thankful for what we have, and not attach any importance to losing material goods, as they were never ours in the first place. Sadness can thus be avoided by not having worldly possessions, as shown by the positive example of Socrates and the negative example of Nero (IX).

In the last part (X–XIII), al-Kindī strikes an even more religious note. He begins by praising the Creator for His divine providence (X). Then al-Kindī embarks (so to speak) on a long simile in which he compares our life in this world to a sea voyage interrupted by a landing (XI). Human beings are like passengers on a ship which drops anchor at an island. Some stay in  ship, thus securing the best seats, whereas others go ashore and  are distracted by the island's beauties to varying degrees. The more they linger and lust for the pleasures of the island, the more difficult their subsequent journey on the ship will be. The trinkets which they take with them will only burden them; because they will decay with time, they offer no real benefit. Al-Kindī explains the simile, saying that pleasures and distractions in this life are like those available on the island; what ultimately matters is to arrive ashore, in the next world. After the simile, al-Kindī turns to the question of death (XII). Man as a living being must by definition die; therefore, death is not bad, but a blessing, and ought not to be feared. In the last section (XIII), al-Kindī insists that loss is never complete, as we still have the fond memories of past pleasures. He concludes with a peroration warning against being ruled by desire for worldly goods; and he closes with a valedictory address to his friend who sought advice on how to dispel sadness.

On Dispelling Sorrows is unusual in the Kindian corpus in drawing heavily on ideas from Hellenistic philosophy. The various Hellenistic schools—Cynic, Stoic, Epicurean and Sceptical—all valorised the goal of *ataraxia*, ‘undisturbedness’. The happiness of the true philosopher ought to be invulnerable to both desire and misfortune. Even the hedonism propagated by Epicurus and his followers warned against excessive pleasures of the flesh, as they invariably lead to pain. The Stoics developed an important theory of how to avoid suffering.¹ For the Stoics all emotions and desires are in fact judgements or beliefs. Suffering occurs when we make the wrong judgements, in particular by taking things to be crucial when in fact they are unimportant. For the Stoics almost everything is ‘indifferent’ (*adiáphora*). Only virtue has true value. This is a point of agreement with the Cynics,

whose notorious lifestyle of ‘dropping out’ from society, by living in a wine barrel and embracing poverty, was the practical consequence of locating all value in virtue.² But the Stoics depart from the Cynic position by classifying indifferents into three groups: the *proēgména* (preferable), the *apoproēgména* (not preferable), and those which are neither. Examples of preferables include, for instance, health, while disease is dispreferred. Thus for the Stoics, it is rational to pursue health rather than illness. Yet it is not decisive for happiness whether one is ill or not, for with the right mindset one will simply decide that either state is preordained by fate which cannot be avoided. The alternative is that one will succumb to affections (*páthē*), which is bad: it is the belief that being ill is a horrible thing that makes you suffer to the point of being unhappy, not the illness itself.

Like the Stoics and Sceptics, al-Kindī takes Socrates as his main ethical hero. He cites a pair of anecdotes involving Socrates (§§IX.5, 9), which also appear in al-Kindī’s collection the *Sayings of Socrates* (see our translation in this volume, at §4). As mentioned in our introduction to that collection, al-Kindī’s Socrates is strikingly Cynic; indeed he is conflated with Diogenes, the founder of the Cynic tradition, a conflation repeated here at §IX.9.³ But in *On Dispelling Sorrows*, al-Kindī’s attitude towards apparent goods in the physical world seems to be tempered by an inclination towards the more moderate Stoic view. Thus in II, he speaks of welcoming and enjoying the ‘good’ things in life when they come, while making sure not to be distressed when they depart.⁴

This inclination towards Stoicism is underscored by other aspects of the epistle,⁵ most strikingly the simile of the sea voyage (XI) which turns out to derive from the *Encheridion* of Epictetus (c. 7), a sort of guidebook on practical ethics which became extremely popular in Late Antiquity.⁶ But al-Kindī significantly expands on Epictetus’ description. Other similarities with Stoicism include the idea that death should not be feared (§XII.1—though this of course is a sentiment found in other ancient schools); that one should accept fate (§II.4); and more generally that one ought not to wish to alter things which are not in our power (§§I.3–6; §V.2; VII). Again, it is our own attitude, or ‘position’ which determines whether we are sad or not, and not nature (§VI.5).⁷

As usual, though, al-Kindī is not content to repeat antiquities, but adapts them for a monotheistic and Islamic context.

To be sure, many philosophical schools of late antiquity share the idea of divine providence (*prónoia*); and Galen is only one of many antique authors who erupts in praise of the demiurge who made man and did nothing in vain. Yet especially in the last part of the epistle (X–XIII), al-Kindī uses well-known stock phrases such as ‘the maker of the universe—great be His praise’ which display more than just Islamic overtones.

When Walzer first discussed this epistle (Ritter, Walzer 1938), he argued that apart from the introductory and concluding sections, we have here the otherwise lost treatise of *On Avoiding Sadness* (*Peri alupías*) by Themistius (d. 385), mostly known for his commentaries on Aristotle. This suggestion has, however, found little favour with other scholars.⁸ There is no positive evidence for the attribution, and Themistius largely draws on Cynic philosophy in his treatise *On Virtue*.⁹ This is in some contrast to the more Stoic outlook which we find in al-Kindī’s epistle, though as mentioned above there are Cynic strands in al-Kindī’s ethical thought as well, especially his understanding of Socrates.

The Stoic references and parallels in this treatise are puzzling, as no Stoic works were directly translated from Greek into Arabic. They rather became known in the wake of Arabic versions of Greek authors discussing Stoic doctrine such as Galen, Nemesius of Emesa and the commentators on Aristotle.¹⁰ Al-Kindī’s exact sources for this epistle will probably remain a mystery. But he certainly drew on Greek ‘popular’ ethical writing.¹¹ We have already mentioned the material featuring Socrates. The anecdote about Alexander’s mother in VI is taken from a version of the Alexander romance. It comprises a last letter from Alexander to his mother Olympias where he enjoins her to say to the mourners that they should be joyful, not sad.¹² In this way *Dispelling Sorrows* is probably in large part an original adaptation of Stoic and Platonic themes.

Ed.: and tr.: Ritter, Walzer 1938. Ed.: Badawī 1973, 6–32; Fakhry 1979, 16–26. Tr.: Jayyusi-Lehn 2002; Mestiri and Dye 2004, 49–84; McGinnis, Reisman 2007. Studies: Adamson 2007a, ch. 6; Butterworth 1992; Druart 1993; Groff 2004.

Letter On the Method of How to Dispel Sorrows

May God keep you, beloved brother, from all vileness, protect you from any harm, and grant you to succeed on the paths which please Him and lead to abundant rewards. I understand that you ask me to put down in writing arguments which counteract sadness, show its weak spots, and fortify one, by possessing them, against pain. An excellent soul and a just character like yours recoil from possessing vices and strive to fortify themselves against the pains which they bring and against the tyranny of their rule. I have therefore written for you [this epistle] which I hope will be sufficient for you. May God protect you from all preoccupations.

I (1) Every pain for which one does not know the causes is incurable. We therefore ought to set out both what sadness (*ḥuzn*) is and what causes it in order to find a cure and to apply it with ease. (2) Hence we say that sadness is a psychic pain occurring because one loses what one loves or is frustrated in obtaining what one seeks. Therefore, the causes of sadness are already apparent from what has just been said: it occurs because one loses what one loves or is frustrated in obtaining what one seeks. Thus we ought to investigate whether anyone can be free from these causes. Yet it is impossible that someone obtain all that he wants, or be safe from losing all that he loves, since stability and constancy do not exist in the world of coming to be and passing away, in which we live. Necessarily, stability and constancy only exist in the world of the intellect, which we can contemplate. (3) Therefore if we do not want to lose the things we love and do not want to be frustrated in obtaining things we seek, we must contemplate the intellectual world and form our conceptions of what we love, possess and want from it [sc. the intellectual world]. If we do this, we are sure that no one can rob us of our possessions, and no power can seize them from us; and that we will not lack the things we love, since disease does not touch them, death does not attain them, and no striving after them is to be frustrated. For the intelligible things which one seeks are interconnected in a constant way without moving or fading; they can be grasped and do not frustrate.

(4) Sensible possessions, on the other hand, and sensible things which we love and seek out, can be interrupted (*mawqūfāt*) by anyone and seized by any power.¹³ It is impossible to protect them,

and one cannot be sure that they do not perish, fade away, or change. Once all this is perceived from close quarters, it turns out to be depressing; after trusting that something will obey, it becomes disobedient; and after something has come close, it turns away. (5) For it is not natural that something which is not natural exist. If we want the states and character of shared things (*muštarikāt*)—in which there is nothing proper to any one of them, which nothing else has, but is rather a [common] possession for all—to be proper to us; and [if we want] something corruptible to be incorruptible; something which both comes close and turns away only to come close; something that fades from every state to be stable in every state, then we want from nature something which is not natural. He who wants something unnatural wants something which does not exist. (6) Someone who wants what does not exist will seek in vain. And he who seeks in vain, will be distressed. He who wants things which can be interrupted (*mawqūfāt*) and wants to possess and love them will be distressed. Yet, he whose wish is fulfilled will be happy.

II (1) Therefore we ought to strive to become happy, and guard ourselves against becoming distressed. Our wish and desire should be directed towards things within our reach, and we should not be disappointed by something transitory, or demand from the sensible something beyond our reach. (2) But when we contemplate objects of desire which bring people pleasure in the intellect (i.e. insofar as the soul needs it) in a certain [state of] stability in its [the soul's] form for the duration of its allotted time and its ability to produce both something similar to it and something which protects it from pain and affords it rest, then we take them [sc. the objects of desire] in the best way as the need may be. Yet, we do not advance towards them, driven by desire, before we come in touch with them and encounter them, nor, after they have left us, do we let ourselves be affected by regret and our thoughts be preoccupied. (3) For it is in the manners (*ʿaḥlāq*) of exalted kings not to advance towards a person, when he approaches, nor to see him off, when he departs. Rather, they enjoy whatever they encounter, acting most calmly and displaying most clearly that they have no need for it. The opposite are the manners of common people, who are of low extraction, evil baseness and extreme greed; for they advance towards anybody approaching them, and see them off when they depart. It befits

persons of intellect not to choose the manners of common people of low extraction and baseness rather than those of venerable kings.

(4) Likewise we say: if that which we want is not present, then we ought to want something [else] that is present and ought not to choose continuous sorrow rather than continuous happiness. If someone is saddened by the passing of transitory things and the loss of things which can be lost, then his sorrow will never disappear, for all his life he will lose something he loves, and something he strives after will pass away. Sorrow and happiness are [mutually exclusive] opposites, which cannot be established together in the soul. (5) If someone is sad, he cannot be happy; and if someone is happy, he cannot be sad. Therefore, we ought not to be sad because of transitory things passing away, or because of losing things we love; through good habituation we should accustom ourselves to be content in any state, so that we can always be happy.

III (1) We see that this clearly exists in [people's] habits, and that the [different] states in which people are and the difference in their wants and desire clearly indicates this. (2) For instance, we see that someone who enjoys food, drink, women, clothes and similar things which give pleasure on the level of sense-perception is made happy and made joyous by these things, and regards anything contrary to these as a loss and a misfortune. (3) We notice that someone addicted to gambling, despite his being deprived of his money, his wasting his days idly, and the constant sequence of sorrows brought about by his losses, is nonetheless made joyous and happy by his situation; for him anything contrary to this, or being deprived of it, is a misfortune and a loss. (4) We see that a criminal, with his evil practices, his crude way of doing things, and with the monstrous and frightful dangers attached to [these practices]—ranging from being whipped or dismembered, having terrible wounds and pains inflicted on him, and being constantly at war, to his desires' making him end up on the cross—nonetheless considers these dangers to be his glory and honour, and still is delighted by all of this, while the opposite of this, a life of well-being (*āfiya*), is for him loss and misfortune. (5) We find that someone effeminate, with disgraceful foibles and debased manners by which everybody is disgusted and which is contrary to any thought, who disfigures his appearance by plucking his beard and trying to be similar to women, is nonetheless

joyful, cheerful and proud. He is of the opinion that he has surpassed everybody by this [behaviour], and that others who forego this are deprived of the greatest fortune, and that they are excluded from the most exquisite joy and most splendid boon. In his opinion, the opposite of this is loss and misfortune.

(6) It is therefore clear that the sensibles which one loves or hates are not something determined by nature, but rather by habit and frequent use. (7) Since the way towards attaining happiness goes via our experience, and since finding solace from what we have lost is easily and clearly achieved by way of habit as we have explained, we ought to apply ourselves to bringing our souls to this [state] and to educating ourselves so that this becomes our necessary habit and acquired character (i.e. we mould ourselves a character if we do not naturally possess this [character] in actuality, i.e. prior to acquiring our habits), so that we live a good life for the rest of our days.

IV (1) Since sorrow is caused by pains of the soul; since it is incumbent upon us to remove pains of the body from ourselves by way of nasty drugs, cauterisation, amputation, bandaging, abstinence and similar things which cure the body, and to bear the great expense consisting of the moneys owed to the person who cured the illness; and since the welfare of the soul and curing it from its diseases is superior to the welfare of the body and curing it from its diseases in the same way as the soul is superior to the body—for the soul rules and the body is ruled, and the soul remains while the body is obliterated, and the welfare of that which remains and the care for sustaining and improving it are more suitable and more noble than ameliorating and improving that which will inevitably be obliterated and pass away because of its nature—therefore it is much more incumbent upon us to improve the soul and cure it from its ailments than it is that we improve the body. For it is through our souls that we are what we are, not through our bodies, because what all bodies have in common is corporeality, whereas every living thing has life in common, and this is through the soul.¹⁴ Our soul is essential to us; and the welfare of our essence is more incumbent upon us than the welfare of things alien to us. Our body is an instrument for our soul, through which its [i.e. the soul's] activities are made apparent. Improving our essences is much more befitting for us than improving our instruments. (2) When improving our souls, we ought to [be ready] to bear many more times the ugly

and difficult treatment and meet the costs than we do when improving our bodies. Furthermore, improving our souls is much less ugly and expensive than what is involved in improving our bodies. (3)¹⁵ For we improve our souls by firmly resolving to adhere to whatever can better us; not through potable drugs, nor through the pain of cautery and fire, nor by paying money, but by accustoming the soul to the right behaviours, [first of all] in a small matter where this can be easily done, and [later] moving from this up to something greater. Once the soul is habituated to this, one ascends on a continuous scale to something greater still, until habit has accustomed the soul to the greatest thing in the same way as to smallest of things. Habit makes this easy [if you proceed in the way] just described. This makes it easy to bear the disappearance of things, and to console oneself against losses.

V (1) One of the easy remedies for this consists in thinking about the sorrow and dividing it into its [different] parts. Therefore we say the following: The sorrow which occurs must be brought about either (A) by us or (B) by something else. If it is (A) brought about by us, then we ought not to do what make us sad. For if we do what makes us sad and it is up to us to cease doing it,¹⁶ then we are able both to do it and to cease doing it. Furthermore, when doing something, we either do what we want, or we do what we do not want. If we do what we want, and we do not want to be sad, then we want what we do not want.¹⁷ That is characteristic of people of no intellect, so we would therefore be people of no intellect. (3) If (B) that which causes our sorrow is something else, we must either be (B1) able to repel it or (B2) unable to repel it. If (B1) we are able to repel it, then we ought to repel it and not be sad. If (B2) we are unable to repel it, then we ought not to be sad before that which causes sadness occurs. For maybe something able to repel it will do so before it befalls us; or perhaps that which might cause the sorrow does not do so [in the end], and what we have feared is not brought about. For if we are sad before that which causes the sadness occurs, then we impart to ourselves a sadness which might not occur because that which was going to cause sadness desists from doing so; or because something which is able to repel it from us does so. Then we impart to ourselves a sadness which nothing else imparts to us [i.e. no outside factor]. (4) He who makes himself (*nafs*)¹⁸ sad causes damage to himself; he who damages himself is ignorant,

boorish, and unjust to the highest degree, for he brings damage to himself. If he did this to someone else, he would be ignorant and unjust; yet doing it to himself is worse. (5) We should not content ourselves with being the most ignorant, most boorish, and most unjust people. Even if sadness were something necessary, then there would be sufficient sadness caused when the reason for sadness occurs. We ought not¹⁹ to anticipate it before it occurs. To experience it before it occurs is a kind of evil and malignancy. (6) Also, it is necessary not to experience it when it occurs before it is repelled. For it is harmful, as we [said] before. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to repel it, when it occurs. Whatever causes sadness is necessarily repelled by consolation after a while, if the sad person does not perish together with the sadness or shortly after the onset of sadness [i.e. if he does not die before being consoled]. (7) It is in the nature of sadness to disappear, for all things subject to coming-to-be also pass away and do not remain in [their] individual parts (*fī ġuz'iyāt al-'ašyā'*). We therefore ought to make every effort to alleviate and shorten (*taqṣīr*) the duration of the sorrow. If we shorten (*qaṣṣara*)²⁰ it <...while if we do not shorten it>, we shorten in others the repelling of the affliction that we can repel from ourselves. (8) This is characteristic for someone ignorant, wretched, boorish and unjust, for unjust is he who remains afflicted, and the most wretched is he who makes no effort to repel affliction from himself as best he can. We should not content ourselves with being wretched while we can be happy.

VI (1) A nice method for this is to remember the things which made us sad in the past, and from which we were consoled, as well as the things which made other people sad, whose sadness and consolation we have witnessed; and to see in our [present] state of sadness one of the saddening things of the past or one of the saddening thing which we perceived in other people, and the consolation which was brought about in the end. This gives us a great ability to console ourselves, as it did for instance in the case of Alexander, son of Philip, king of Macedonia, who persuaded his mother to be steadfast when he was on his death-bed. (2) Among his writings we find the following letter to her: 'O mother of Alexander, always bear in mind that everything subject to coming-to-be and passing-away is going to be obliterated, and that your son does not content himself with the manners of minor kings, nor should you be content for yourself,

when he dies, with the manners of minor mothers of kings. Order a great city to be built when you receive the message about the death of Alexander, and send word that all the people of Libya, Europe and Asia should throng to you on a set day; and that on that day, they will gather in that city to eat, drink and be merry. Order it to be announced to them that no one should come to you who has been afflicted by a misfortune, in order that Alexander's funeral be celebrated joyfully and differently from the funerals of other people which take place in sadness.' (3) After she had given orders accordingly, nobody came to her at the appointed time. Then she said: 'Why do people stay away from us, even though we have previously [sent for them]?' It was said to her: 'You ordered that no-one come to you who has [in the past] suffered from a misfortune, yet all people have suffered from misfortunes, therefore no one has come to you.' She said: 'O Alexander, how similar are your last deeds to your first. You wanted to make me completely steadfast against my loss of you; for I am not the first to suffer from misfortunes, nor are they specific to any one human being.'

(4) Let us also remember that whatever we cannot obtain or whatever we lose, these same things could not be obtained, or were lost, by many others, all of whom were content with being unable to obtain it or to lose it, or were even visibly happy, and far from being sad. There are many such people whose child died or who do not have children; some do not have children and are still content; others, whose child died, get over this and are happy [again]. Likewise with money and all other sensible possessions of this world, and all other objects of desires of the human soul. (5) Sorrow is only by position (*wad'*), not by nature.²¹ For if we find that someone is robbed of his money and becomes sad, then given that many people lack this money, without being sad, he has only put (*wada'a*) this sadness into himself because he was robbed or unable to obtain something. (6) But we ought not to put into ourselves something bad; since sadness is something bad, as we have set out above, then he who puts something bad into himself, lacks intellect. Yet we ought not to lack intellect, for this is the height of vileness, since someone lacking intellect is no different from the other irrational animals. In fact, they are better than he, for each of them has from birth a necessary, lasting, specific property which is like a law (*nāmūs*, from Greek *nómos*); and it follows this law in all situations. (7) Yet someone lacking intellect has no order and

steadiness in his actions, but is rather like someone confused or deranged. We ought to be ashamed of being in such a vile state, in which people are pitied by those having an intellect, and derided by the foolish.

(8) We also ought to pay attention to the fact that if we do not want to be affected by misfortune, we wish not to exist at all, for misfortunes occur only through the passing-away of perishable things. Yet if there is no passing-away, then there is nothing that comes to be [either]. Therefore, if we do not want any misfortunes to happen, we want there to be no coming-to-be or passing-away in nature. If we want that something natural does not occur, then we want the impossible. He who wants the impossible, is deprived of what he wants, and therefore miserable. Yet we ought to be ashamed of such manners and scorn such a station, i.e. [that of] ignorance and misery, for one of them (I mean ignorance) imparts vileness and the other (I mean misery) imparts baseness and malice.

VII (1) We ought to pay attention to the fact that all things which the hands can reach are shared by all people; they are indeed our neighbours, and we are no more entitled to them than someone else; whoever takes them, keeps them. The things which [truly] belong to us and which are not shared by anybody else are those which no hand can reach and nobody can take away from us, i.e. the psychic goods which our souls possess. If we, ourselves, lose these goods, we are excused for being sad [i.e. we are rightly sad]. (2) Yet, to be sad about something which is only ours through a quirk of fate does not befit us, because he who is sad that he does not possess what other people naturally have is [only] envious. We should not acquaint ourselves with envy, for it is the most complete evil. (3) For he who wishes that his enemies be afflicted by evil, wishes evil; and he who wishes evil is evil. Even more evil than such a man is he who wishes that something evil befall his friends. He who wants to withhold from his friends something that he wants to possess (while thinking that it is good to possess it) wishes that a state which according to him is evil befall his friends; he wishes evil to his friends. He who wishes that no-one but himself possesses that which others could [rightly] possess, wishes that neither his enemies nor his friends have his possessions. (4) He who is sad because someone else has his possessions is envious. We should not content ourselves with such vileness.

VIII (1) We also ought to pay attention to the fact that all our possessions which are shared are loaned to us but belong to a lender who is the creator of the possessions (great be His praise); He can bestow His loan whenever He wants, and transfer it to whomever He wants. If He did not transfer them to whomever He wanted, they would never have come to us in the first place. We may think that if He should take them away from us and place them in the hands of our enemies, He acts against us in an evil way. (2) Yet we must bear in mind that a lender is entitled to give what he lends and to take it back from whomever he likes. In this matter there is no shame or disgrace upon us. Rather, shame and disgrace for us consist in our being sad when the loans are taken back from us, for this is characteristic of evil, mean and undiscerning people. (3) If someone thinks that he owns whatever is lent to him, he is ungrateful, for the least that gratitude requires is to return the loan to the lender when the lender wants to take it back, and to do so in good spirit, joyfully, speedily and with kind affection for the lender. Therefore, if someone is saddened because he returns what was lent to him, he is ungrateful. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves if our character is so unjust. (4) We [also] should be ashamed of giving childish and silly excuses for our being sad because the lender takes back [his loan]. Let us not say that we are sad only because the lender took back his loan and placed it into the hands of our enemies, for the emissary of the lender is under no obligation to take back his loan in keeping with our preferences as to how and in what way this is done, with what care for us or at what time it is done; for there is no obligation. On the contrary, we are obliged not to be sad because the emissary has changed his attitude towards us, for this [being sad] would be characteristic of a child, or anyone who lacks discernment.

(5) We ought to pay attention to the fact that the lender does not take back from us exactly what he has lent us, but only pitiful remains of what he has originally lent us. He has acted towards us in the most beautiful way, and we ought to be extremely glad that the exquisite and noble loan remained with us; we ought not to be distressed that we have lost what is taken back from us. (6) For even if everything that was lent to us were taken back, we still ought not to be sad, but glad, for our joy about this is a sign of our gratitude and our consent to his love. He left the best and greatest part, I mean that which no hand can reach and in which nobody has a

share. We ought to return to ourselves, even if we would love to keep that which is taken from us, and should say: 'even if he has taken back a small and pitiful amount, he has allowed the greatest and best part to remain, as long as we ourselves remain.'

IX (1) We ought to pay attention to the fact that if it were necessary for us to be sad about things we lost or were unable to obtain, then it would be necessary for us to be sad all the time. Yet it is necessary that we be not sad at all; so this is a monstrous contradiction. (2) For if the reason for being sad is the loss of possessions outside us, or not being able to obtain them, and if sadness is something horrible which should not affect us, and the reason for this is what we have mentioned, then if we have no possessions outside us, and do not strive after them, sadness does not befall us, because we do not lose possessions, and are not frustrated in obtaining them. We therefore ought not to have possessions in order not to be sad at all. (3) But if it is necessary that we do not have possessions, we would be sad, because we do not have them. Therefore sadness is always necessary, if we do not have possessions. Therefore, sadness is always necessary whether we have possessions or not. All this is contradictory and incoherent.

(4) It is therefore not necessary to be sad; a person of intellect should not think about that which is not necessary, and not be occupied by it, especially if it is harmful and damaging. Rather, we ought to minimise our possessions, for losing them and not being able to obtain them (since they are outside us) is the cause for our sadness <...>²² for it is from this thing alone.

(5) It is reported about Socrates, the Athenian, that someone said to him: 'Why are you never sad?' He answered: 'Because I do not possess things which, if I lost them, would make me sad.'²³

(6) It is reported about Nero, the king of Rome, that someone gave him an expensive and marvellously designed crystal pavilion (*qubba*). It was shown to him, while a group of people were present, among whom there was a philosopher²⁴ of the time. He was immensely pleased about it and frequently described its beauty to whoever was in his company. He turned to the philosopher and asked: 'What do you say about this pavilion?' The philosopher replied: 'It shows a loss which you shall incur, and indicates a great misfortune that you shall know.' Nero said: 'How so?' The philosopher answered: 'If you were to lose it, you would despair

because you will never own its like again, and will always miss having such a thing. If something evil were to deprive you of it, a great misfortune would come upon you.' What I have to say, then, is this and anything else to the same point.²⁵ (7) The story has it that things came to pass as the philosopher said. According to this story, in springtime the king left on an excursion to one of the islands close to him. He ordered the pavilion to be brought to him, so that it be set up in his excursion retreat. Yet the vessel carrying the pavilion sank, and nothing could be done. Hence a great misfortune befell the king which was apparent to all those in his company. He endeavoured to acquire something similar, but failed until the end of his days.

(8) Therefore we say that if you want to have few misfortunes, you should have few possessions outside you.

(9) It is also reported about Socrates, the sage, that one day he took refuge in a broken barrel in the camp ('askar) in which they were. He said one day in the presence of slanderers²⁶ during one of his dialogues: 'We ought not to have possessions lest we be sad.' One of the slanderers countered: 'What if your barrel is broken into pieces?' Socrates replied to him: 'Even if the barrel is broken, the place [where it is] is not broken.'²⁷ The philosopher spoke truly, for there is a replacement for whatever one may lose.

X (1) Therefore we say that the maker of the universe—great be His praise—created nothing having an imperfect nature, but everything is sufficient. (2) For we see the great whale and the marvellously created elephant,²⁸ each of which needs food to sustain it, and refuge and shelter. The basic needs of these and all other creatures are sufficiently provided for, and they are shaped in a way that allows them to survive and have a good life without lacking anything, the lack of which would concern them. They all have a good life and need not be preoccupied that any harm touches them, except for man. (3) The latter, having increased the [natural] advantage which was given to him over all the other animals, and having been made to rule and govern them, does not know how to govern himself; this is, indeed, a sign of the absence of intellect ('adam al-'aql). We ought to be ashamed of lacking intellect. For after having increased in rational discernment, he [i.e. man] wants to possess many things for which he has no need in order to sustain himself, and to improve his quality of life by having colourful food and spectacles involving

animals and other things, and by painting and embellishing all the things which one sees, and likewise the sounds which one hears and smells which distract him from his real interests and disturb his rest while he is in this world. All these things bring fatigue when one strives after them; pain when one loses them; and grief when one fails to obtain them. For each thing which one desires and loses is accompanied by a misfortune; each thing which one fails to obtain is accompanied by grief and regret; and each expectation of a loss is accompanied by sadness and agitation (*qalaq*); after each instance of safety comes fear, for when one is afraid, one is preoccupied, disturbed and hindered (*ma'qūl*).

(4) Therefore we say: he who is preoccupied with adorning²⁹ things outside himself loses his eternal life and spoils the quality of his temporary life; he suffers from many diseases and his suffering does not wane.

XI (1) Those passing through this perishing world—with its fleeting states, its fading pleasures, and its false fancies, when outcomes belie beginnings [of our undertakings] and where he who trusts in it [sc. this world] is lost, and he who is dazzled by it is to be pitied—resemble most, in their situation, people who board a ship in order to reach the destination of their homeland. The captain takes them to an island (*marqā*)³⁰ for one purpose or another; he drops anchor and those on the ship debark, each for his respective purpose. (2) Some secure [for themselves] what they have shipped for, and return to their vessel without stopping for anything; they get the best places on board and the softest seats, without being hindered from doing so, having no one to compete or vie with. (3) Others stop to look at the fields covered with all sorts of different flowers in bloom; they draw in the various sweet scents emanating from those flowered fields and the pretty thickets of trees producing a variety of marvellous fruits; they listen to the pleasing sounds of the birds³¹ and turn their eye to the soil of that land, glancing at the various colourful stones with their bright shade, so beautiful to behold, and at the pleasant and exotically shaped sea-shells of amazing beauty, yet without going farther than they need to; they return to their place on the ship and are early enough to take the nicest broad places and the most comfortable seats. (4) Some set about to collect the sea-shells and stones, and the fruits and flowers close to them, without going farther than they need to. They return burdened by

their load, servants to the stones, sea-shells and flowers of the land, which will perish and change shortly from the state which has seduced them [i.e. they will wilt], and the fruits which will shortly return to a state of putrefaction, so that it is disgusting to be next to them or near them. Others will already have occupied the broad places on the vessel, so that they have to sit in a narrow, rough and depressing spot. Their load of stones, sea-shells, flowers and fruits weighs heavy on them, especially with their spot being narrow, depressing and disheartening, preventing them from the rest which other people get who came earlier to a broader seat, and who do not have next to them the stones which make the place even tighter, and do not have to work to protect and watch over them in order to keep them from harm. They allot most of their [time of] rest to [preventing] these things from being out of their proximity, and to preoccupying themselves and being greatly fearful about them. Their soul is anxious for their proximity and how to pass them on in inheritance. They undergo grief, sorrow and distress, every time they lose all or part of them. (5) Others penetrate³² into these fields and thickets, forgetting their ship and the place which was the destination of their homeland, and being distracted by collecting these stones, sea-shells, and flowers while penetrating into those thickets, being distracted by the fruits which they taste from remembering their homeland and the narrowness on their ship to which they were to return. And at the same time, they are not free from continual fright, incessant catastrophes, the worry of pains caused by swift beasts of prey, poisonous snakes, horrific sounds, branches hanging down so as to inflict painful scratches on their faces and the rest of their bodies, or thorns which enter their feet and are difficult to treat, or mud which blocks their way, and soils and destroys their clothes covering their private parts, or branches which tear and rip away their garments or the tangled mass of branches hanging down which prevent them from passing.³³ After the ship's captain has called them [to come] in order to set sail, some of them return, burdened by what they have gathered and collected, so that the affliction described above befalls them: they come to the ship and only find a narrow, distressing, tiresome place, which makes rest impossible and induces lethal diseases. (6) Others are not reached by the voice of the ship's captain, because they have penetrated deeply into the thicket, got lost on the fields and were slow [to return]. The ship departs, while they are [still] in whatever

place they are, cut off from their homeland, on a plain where desolation, destruction, death and abominable perils [await them]. Some are torn by beasts of prey; some drop into deep ravines;³⁴ some get caught in quagmires; others are bitten by snakes and become horrible and abominable corpses whose limbs are torn apart and repulsive: they inspire pity in people who did not know them, and are a warning to those who did, and are [now] cut off from their homeland which was their destination. (7) As for those who come to the ship burdened with the things they collected, and which dupe the intellect, enslave their freedom, take away their rest, make their place narrower and burden their seat, it will not be long before those flowers wilt; the colours of those stones become turbid, because they have lost the moisture which made them shine and gave them their colours; and those sea-shells change through becoming putrid³⁵ and developing an offensive smell. They become a burden, painful to have in one's vicinity, and they will have no other choice but to throw them into the sea. Thus the things which hindered them on their way spoiled their life, made their spot depressing, and deprived them of their freedom [first], and then weighed heavily on them; yet [in the end], they find themselves empty-handed. Consequently, they did not arrive at their place until they had many diseases, since the stench of their smell penetrated them, and their strength was dissipated through the toil caused by the narrowness and harshness of their seat, and the strenuous service they had to give to what was to be their perdition and harm. Some perished before reaching the place [i.e. their homeland], other reach it as sick and weak men. (8) Those who stayed [behind] to look around and breathe [the air on the island] (and were distracted [only] to this extent) lacked only space and comfort. Yet those who returned to the ship without being distracted by anything which their senses perceived—having only looked around as long as they were disembarked to satisfy their needs—came back before the others to the most spacious and comfortable place and reached their homeland in a rested state.

(9) This simile represents our passage from this world to the real world, and illustrates the states of those who go astray in this world. Oh, how disgraceful for us to belong to those who are duped by the pebbles of the land, the sea-shells of the water, the flowers of the trees, and the frail plants, all of which is anything but a small burden for us! We will see no salvation from their loathsomeness

but to put them away from us somewhere into the ground, the depth of the sea, or the flame of fire, in order to block their stench, and we avert our gaze from them, because they are repulsive. We seek to put them far away, because we are disgusted when they are near and are adverse to seeing them. The things that make us sad are those that occupy our places. (10) If we are sad, then we should be sad, because we are cut off from our true home, and because we travel through a land which does not bring us to the ship [sailing] to our true homeland, in which there are no misfortunes, since there is no loss and no grief, because there is nothing we cannot obtain there, for there is nothing there that is not true. There, one wants nothing one ought not to want. There, what one should want is with him who wants it, and is not separated from him, and not subject to harm. We would only have to be sad about not being able not to be sad, for this is a quality proper to the intellect. To be sad not to be sad is proper to ignorance.

XII (1) We ought to bear in mind that we should not hate that which is not bad; we should only hate bad things. If this is firmly fixed in our mind, then our efforts to dispel sensible things which cause sorrow will be greatly enhanced. We do not think that there is anything worse than death; yet death is not bad [at all], only the fear of death is bad. (2) Death itself is only the fulfilment (*tamām*)³⁶ of our nature. Without death, man (*'insān*) would not exist at all, for the definition of human being (*'insān*) is 'a living (*ḥayy*), rational (*nāṭiq*), mortal (*mā'it*) being.' This definition is based on nature, that is to say: the nature of man is to be alive, rational and mortal. Without death, man does not exist, for if something is not mortal, then it is not a human being. Therefore it is not bad if we are what we are; it is only bad not to be what we are. Thus, it would be bad if death did not exist, because without it, man would not exist. Hence death is not bad. (3) Furthermore, if the thing that everyone thinks is the worst thing [in the world] is not bad, then the lesser occurrences of privation and loss of sensibles are not bad [either]. Therefore the reason for thinking that death is bad—since it has been shown that it is not bad—lies in [people's] ignorance about life and death.

(4) Let me give the following example.³⁷ If foodstuff had an intellect, and were in the liver without ever having seen anything else [sc. other than the liver], then being destined to be transported

away from it—even if it were moved to build a form, and were brought closer to perfection (*kawn al-kamāl*)—would sadden it. When it arrived at the testicles and was transformed into semen, then being destined to be transported to the womb, which is more spacious than its present abode in the testicles, would sadden it extremely. Yet once it were moved to the womb, being put back into the testicles would sadden it many times more than previously, because it would remember the narrowness of the testicles and how far away it was from the perfection of the human form, if its state in the testicles is compared to its state in the womb. (5) Likewise, being destined to be expelled out of the womb into the fabric (*nasīḡ*) and spaciousness of this world would deeply sadden it. But once it came out into this fabric and [attained] perfection, and then someone were to say to it: 'Go back into the womb,' and if it had the whole earth and everything in it in its possession, it would give up and surrender all this in order not to return to the womb. (6) Likewise, in the abode which is the world below (*dunyā*), it [sc. the foodstuff turned man] is extremely afraid of leaving it. Yet, when it comes to the abode of the intellect where there is no sensible pain and no sensible possessions which are connected to all sensible and psychic pains and possessions, <and where it can enjoy the intellectual goods,³⁸> the possession of which is not reached by any hand or illness, whose owner is never driven away from his property. If someone were to say to him: 'Go back into the world in which you used to be!,' he would be many times more afraid of this than when someone said to him: 'Go back from the fabric of this world into the place of the womb.'

(7) It is therefore apparent how the souls with feeble discernment, and inclined to sensation, were wrong about death and assumed that it is despicable, although this is not. Therefore, losing all the sensible things we possess in the life of this world is not bad. Rather, it is being sad about them that is bad, for we ourselves bring upon ourselves suffering which is unnecessary. If we are thus, we have a bad nature and way of life. If someone is satisfied by this, he makes bad choices and lacks intellect, for the intellect puts the things in their places, while lack of intellect puts things in the wrong places, and believes that they are the opposite of what they [really] are.

XIII (1) We ought to pay attention to the fact that, in every case of not obtaining something, or losing something, we keep something

of both the sensible and intellectual possessions; for by remembering them, we distract ourselves from what is past [i.e. what we have lost]; and remembering what remains is a consolation against misfortunes. Also, in each case of something which we cannot obtain, or of grieving about sensibles,³⁹ we should bear in mind that the anticipation of misfortunes which happen to our sensible possessions will remain with us and lessen our sadness, even though we have lost them [sc. because we will not be surprised by future losses].⁴⁰ (2) If this is firmly fixed in our mind, it turns things which make us sad from naturally being misfortunes to naturally being benefits, so that a misfortune engulfing us becomes a blessing for us, for if misfortunes diminish our misfortunes, then they are a blessing, because if we assumed that they are saddening, [we got it wrong], for anything which diminishes sorrow is a blessing, and anything which diminishes the acquisition of sensibles, which, whenever we are deprived of them, cause a misfortune for us, is a blessing.

(3) Therefore we say: he who does not acquire things external to himself is master of the things which turn kings into slaves, i.e. anger and desire which are the source of vices and pain. The greatest malady is the soul's being sick, greater than the body's being sick, as we have stated above. For he who is not affected by reprehensible effects of anger and desire, is not ruled by them, while they control and master him who is affected by them, and lead him wherever they want.

(4) It is therefore true that he who does not acquire things external to himself is a king above kings, who defeats the mightiest enemies who reside with him inside his [own] fortifications, and against whose arms of deception one cannot guard oneself by defending oneself with the sword. When they [anger and desire]⁴¹ live at close quarters, one is not safe against the vilest offences and the greatest shame.

Praiseworthy brother, firmly imitate these recommendations in your soul, so that you may be safe through them from the afflictions of sorrow and reach the best homeland which is the house of rest and the abode of the righteous. May God grant you complete happiness in your two houses; give you the most splendid well-being in them; make you one of those who emulate and enjoy by harvesting the fruits of the intellect; and may He keep you from the baseness of ignorance.

This is sufficient for what you asked me, even if there are many [other] possible points one could make on the subject. If the proposed aim has been achieved, we have arrived at the end of what was wanted, even if there are many [other] ways to reach the goal, ways which are nearly endless. May God bestow upon you what is important for your life in this world and the next in a way that affords you the most complete rest, and the sweetest life.

This is the end of the epistle. Praise be to God, ruler of the universe!

The Sayings of Socrates

This treatise consists of 39 brief anecdotes with dialogue, and pithy sayings, all attributed to Socrates. Many of the shorter items, such as 'Scant resources protect the wise man from vices, but lead the ignorant man to them' (§28), seem somewhat banal, and cannot be traced to any specific source. The more elaborate anecdotes are occasionally linked to the historical Socrates (insofar as he can be reconstructed from the extant Greek sources).⁴² For instance, at the beginning of Plato's *Phaedo* (60a-b), Socrates orders his wife Xanthippe, who is crying and beating herself, to depart. In later sources, the crying Xanthippe says to Socrates that he is put to death unjustly, to which he retorts: 'Would you rather that I be put to death justly?'⁴³ This anecdote appears here in §8. The longest report (§6) confuses Socrates with Diogenes of Sinope, the founder of Cynicism. When Alexander the Great reportedly met Diogenes, he offered him a free wish, but Diogenes merely asked Alexander not to cast a shadow over him, so that he might keep enjoying the sun.⁴⁴ In the *Sayings of Socrates*, this anecdote is transferred to Socrates. Likewise, it was Diogenes who famously lived in a barrel like a dog (hence the term 'cynic' from Greek 'kuón [dog]'); in §4, we see Socrates living in a barrel.

This text belongs to the genre of gnomological writings, or 'wisdom literature'.⁴⁵ Works of this sort often collected reports about numerous Greek figures, and represent one of the most important means by which ideas about Greek philosophy were disseminated. The present text tells us little about the historical Socrates, since al-Kindī is presumably just transmitting and perhaps gathering together reports from various late antique sources.⁴⁶ But in fact the text provides invaluable evidence for how Socrates was seen in the early Arabic tradition. Moreover, the *Sayings of Socrates* give us an additional insight into al-Kindī's ethical thought, as he presumably approved of the great Athenian philosopher's teachings. In *On Dispelling Sorrows*, al-Kindī also refers to Socrates (at §§IX.5 and 9), and there is a clear parallel with the episode of the barrel mentioned above (§4). Moreover the ascetic intellectualism espoused by the Socrates in these anecdotes and apothegms chimes well with the general practical philosophy which al-Kindī advocates in *On Dispelling Sorrows*.

Like much of the gnomological literature, it is extremely difficult to disentangle the different strands of transmission. In the footnotes, we have occasionally pointed out parallels with other collections of wisdom literature, notably the so-called *Philosophical Quartet* (cited as PQ).⁴⁷ The present translation is a substantially revised version of that contained in Adamson 2006a, 172–6.

Ed.: Fakhry 1963, 28–31; tr.: Mestiri and Dye 2004, 85–95; Adamson 2006a. Studies: Alon 1991, 1995; Adamson 2006a.

The Sayings of Socrates

28 Some of Socrates' sayings (*alfāz*) which al-Kindī transmitted:

(1) It is reported that Timaeus said to Socrates: 'Why do you not record your wisdom for us in books?' Socrates replied, 'Timaeus, oh how much you trust in the skins of dead animals, and how severely you condemn living and immortal substances! How can you hope to obtain knowledge from the source (*ma'din*) of ignorance, when you despair of grasping it from the intellect itself (*min 'unṣur al-'aql*)?'⁴⁸ Timaeus also said to him: 'Master, if you were to dictate to me a book about oneness (*tawḥīd*),⁴⁹ it would live on (*ḥalada*) after you.' Socrates replied, 'it has already been immortal (*ḥalada*) before Socrates existed, with no need at all for animal skins.'⁵⁰

(2) An opulent man said to him: 'Socrates, how exceedingly poor you are!' Socrates replied: 'If you knew what poverty was, you would be too busy pitying yourself rather than lamenting for Socrates.'⁵¹

(3) A noblewoman passed him and said: 'Old man, how ugly you are!' He replied: 'If you were not such a rusted mirror,⁵² then the beauty of my image would be reflected in you.'

(4) One of his disciples said to him: 'Teacher, why do we see no signs of grief in you?' He replied: 'I own nothing which, were I to lose it, would make me sad.' And a sophist who was in attendance said: 'And if [your] barrel should break?' He replied: 'Even if the barrel were to break, the place [where it is] would not.'⁵³

(5) A man passed by him when he [sc. Socrates] was clad in a garment so worn out as not to cover him. [The man] said: 'This is Socrates, the lawgiver of Athens?', and he was greatly astonished. Socrates said to him [that] a new garment did not teach him [sc. Socrates] the law.⁵⁴

(6) It is reported that one day Socrates was sunbathing on the barrel in which he lived. The king stopped by and said to him: 'Socrates, what prevents you from coming to us?' Socrates replied: 'I am busy with what sustains life.' The king retorted: 'if you left this to us, we would provide it for you,' for he thought that Socrates meant livelihood, whereas in fact Socrates referred to eternal life. Socrates replied: 'If I had found this with you, I would have stayed with you as long as my need for this abided in me.' The king asked: 'What is it that you need?' Socrates answered: 'I need you to stop casting your shadow on me, for you are blocking the sun.' Then the king called for fine clothes, gold, and gems, as a gift for Socrates. But Socrates said to him, 'o king, you promise that which sustains life, but you offer that which sustains death. Socrates has no need for the stones of the earth, the straw of plants, or the spittle of worms [i.e. silk]. What Socrates needs is with him, wherever he turns.' A joker who accompanied the king said: 'Socrates, you deny yourself the pleasures and comforts of this world (*dunyā*).' Socrates asked: 'What then are the comforts of this world, sir?' He answered: 'to eat good meat, to drink undiluted wine, sex and clothes.' Socrates retorted: 'These things are not abominable to those who content themselves with being like apes and with making their belly a graveyard for animals, and who prefer to have transient things rather than everlasting ones.'

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(7) He said: 'Life is better than death, if being delivered from death to life is sound; but if the deliverance to life is bad, then death is better than life.'

(8) It is reported that Socrates said to his wife, when he was led away to be put to death, and he saw her weeping: 'What makes you weep?' She replied: 'How can I not weep, when you are to be put to death unjustly (*maẓlūman*)?' He said to her: 'Would you prefer that I be put to death because I committed injustice (*ẓāliman*)?'⁵⁵

(9) It is reported that Socrates was brought before the king who had ordered him to be put to death. The king said to him: 'Socrates, you find fault with us and say that making idols is not good for some people.' The king then asked: 'For whom are they good, and for whom not?' Socrates answered: 'they are not good for Socrates, but they are good for the king.' 'How so?' asked the king. Socrates answered: 'Because they are not good for the philosopher, but they are good for someone who is not a philosopher.' 'How so?' inquired the king. Socrates replied: 'Because someone who has true

knowledge of God, and knows what will make Him content, has no need to be deterred or frightened away from evil things, for he adheres to what is obligatory (*wājib*). But someone who is not like this needs something to deter him from evils, namely the fear of fabricated idols.'

(10) It is reported that Socrates' disciples said to him, when he was in prison: 'Teacher, what would you have us do with your body, when you are dead?' Socrates said to them: 'It is the concern of the person who needs the space, for he will have to take the corpse out of the building [anyway].'

(11) Socrates looked at one of his more eminent disciples gazing at the face of the female philosopher Hipparchia, who was exceedingly beautiful. Socrates said to him: 'What is the trifle you are so busy looking at?' The disciple said: 'I am marveling at the traces of nature's wisdom in Hipparchia's form.' Socrates said: 'Do not let her become a vehicle for your desire, lest she snatch you away to introduce you to things that are base. Be mindful that if you gaze at Hipparchia's outward form, your sight will be destroyed, but if you gaze at her inner form, your sight will be sharpened.'

(12) He used to say to his disciples: 'Disdain death, for its sting lies in being afraid of it.'

(13) He used to say: 'Those who do not race on the track of mathematics⁵⁶ will not arrive⁵⁷ at the goals of good things, for he
30 will not reach the end of philosophy.'

(14) He used to say: 'The polish of the soul is [...]'⁵⁸ and its rust is acceptance of animal pleasures.'

(15) He used to say to his disciples: 'There are two kinds of death: natural death and voluntary death. For those who kill themselves voluntarily, the natural death is life.'⁵⁹

(16) He used to say to his disciples: 'Let your possessions be few, that your misfortunes may be few.'

(17) He used to say: 'Possessions are a source of sorrows; do not acquire sorrows!'

(18) He used to say to his disciples: 'Do not covet possessions, such that your thoughts become violent.'⁶⁰ Disdain death, lest you die. Put yourselves to death, so that you become immortal. Adhere to justice, so that deliverance adheres to you.'

(19) He used to say: 'Justice protects the soul from harm.'

(20) He used to say: 'Wisdom is the ladder leading up high; he who lacks it lacks closeness to his Creator (*min bārīhi*).'

(21) He used to say: 'Prisoners of death, break your chains with wisdom!'

(22) One of his disciples said to him: 'Draw up for us a regimen by which we may stay healthy.' He replied: 'When you are healthy, eat anything, but when you are sick, deny yourself everything.'

(23) One of his disciples said to him: 'We see that you listen much, but speak little.' He retorted: 'God created for man two ears, but only one tongue, so that he might listen more than he speaks.'⁶¹

(24) One of his disciples asked him: 'what makes people content with us?' He answered: 'You can make everyone content, except those who envy prosperity, for only its destruction pleases them.'

(25) He saw a woman all dressed up to go into the city. He said to her: 'In my opinion, you do not go to see the city, but in order that the city may see you.'⁶²

(26) He used to say: 'Sadness for those who suffer from trials and tribulations until they are freed from them is better than joy for those who are free [from trials and tribulations].'

(27) He used to say: 'Nature is the handmaiden for the soul, soul is the handmaiden for the intellect, and the intellect that of the Creator (*mubdi'*), because the first thing created by the Creator was the form of the intellect.'

(28) He used to say: 'Scant resources protect the wise man from vices, but lead the ignorant man to them.'

(29) He used to say: 'Shame upon him who is given wisdom, but is unhappy over losing gold and silver, [and upon him] who is given health and leisure, but is unhappy over losing suffering and toil. For the fruits of wisdom are peace and calm, but the fruits of gold and silver are suffering and toil.'

(30) He used to say: 'Cure desires with anger, for if someone is angry with himself because he has obtained foul things, he is diverted away from them. Cure anger with silence.'

(31) He used to say: 'The comfort of wise men is to find the truth, but the comfort of fools is to find falsehood.'

(32) He used to say: 'The ignorant man longs to obtain a goal which does not exist, whereas the wealth of the sage is with him wherever he goes.'

(33) He said: 'The self-admirer sees in himself something much more noble than he [really] is, while his strength is weak; moreover, he shows his joy about it [sc. lacking strength].'

(34) A man belonging to the well-to-do said to him: 'Socrates, of what use to you is your wisdom, when you [...] out of poverty?'⁶³ He replied: 'It is of use to me in keeping me from the suffering you feel on my behalf.'

(35) A foolish man met Socrates and pestered him.⁶⁴ His disciples said to him: 'Allow us to [take care]⁶⁵ of him.' Socrates said: 'A wise man does not allow abuse.'

(36) He used to say: 'The source for man's joy is a heart which has a moderate (*mu'tadil*) mixture, whereas the wellspring of the joy of the world is the just (*'ādil*) king. The source for man's sadness is a heart which has an imbalanced mixture, whereas the source of sadness for the world is the tyrannical king.'

(37) He used to say: 'The stability of things lies in justice, and in injustice is their destruction, for the just man is the one who commits no injustice.'

(38) He used to say: 'Justice is the scale (*mīzān*) of God, so therefore it is the scale of all error and deviation.'

(39) He used to say: 'What is beautiful in its substance is justice, because it [sc. justice] is the cause of all beauty. Therefore beauty is wholly just, and all that departs from justice is vile.'

Through God we succeed.⁶⁶

Notes

1. See Inwood 1985, 197–201; Forschner 1981, 165–71; see also Gourinat 2005.
2. For studies see Branham and Goulet-Cazé 1996.
3. See Overwien 2005.
4. For more on the comparison between *On Dispelling Sorrows* and Hellenistic ethics see Adamson 2007a, 150–56.
5. Pohlenz 1938; Groff 2004.
6. See the apparatus in the new Teubner edition by Boter 2007, 8–9, for further parallels where the theme of the sea voyage is invoked. Some late antique authors also had an interest in Epictetus' *Encheiridion*: Simplicius, for instance, wrote a detailed commentary on it (Brittain and Brennan 2002).
7. See Pohlenz 1938, 414–5.
8. E.g., Pohlenz 1938.
9. Gildemeister and Bücheler 1872.
10. van Riet 1974.
11. For the idea that *On Dispelling Sorrows* is itself a work of popular or 'pre-philosophical' ethics, see Druart 1993. While this seems largely right, Adamson 2007a, 155 has pointed out that the practical ethical advice offered by al-Kindī is grounded in a more theoretical account of the soul and the importance of pursuing intelligibles (see especially §1). Thus he may be presupposing that the

reader has some acquaintance and agreement with the Platonist theories found in Kindian works like *Discourse on the Soul*.

12. Meusel 1871, 790; for Alexander the Great in the Arabic tradition, see now Doufikar-Aerts 2010.
13. Text slightly difficult; translation is based on Levi della Vida's reading *manālun li-kulli yadin*.
14. Compare *Incorp. Subst.* §§3–4.
15. Walzer's division in the Italian translation; in his Arabic text, the '3' should be one line higher.
16. lit.: 'ceasing it is to us (*'ilaynā*)' rendering the famous Stoic concept of *tò eph' hēmîn*.
17. The argument is as follows: we make ourselves sad, although we are able not to do this; doing something when one has choice implies wanting to do it; yet we do not want to be sad; therefore in making ourselves sad (when being able not to), we want something which we do not want.
18. The Arabic is ambiguous as to whether it means 'self' or 'soul'.
19. Retaining the reading of the manuscript *la yanbağī*.
20. The text here is probably corrupt, and the interpretation is not helped by the fact that al-Kindī may have used the verb *qaṣṣara* in its two different meanings 'to shorten' and 'to neglect.' Badawī 1980: *fi muhimma*; Jayyusi-Lehm: *fi ġayrihī* (with the MS): 'If we are unable to do this, we are unable to do anything else'; Ritter: *fi ġayrinā* [supposing a lacuna].
21. This reflects the Greek opposition of *théseī* (by position) vs. *phúsei* (by nature), which we also encounter, for instance, in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, iii. 65–66; see Ritter, Walzer 1938, p. 19, n. 2. 'By position' in this context means because of how we 'position' ourselves towards events; in other words, we could take up a different position and not be sad.
22. Ritter thought that something must have dropped out of the text here, and the following phrase is indeed somewhat strange and cannot be linked easily to what came before.
23. The same anecdote appears at *Sayings Socrates* §4; the second half of that anecdote appears below at *Dispelling Sorrows* §IX.9. For similar sentiments against acquiring possessions see *Sayings Socrates* §§16–18.
24. In one manuscript, the philosopher is named as Aristānis (?) here and Aristūn (presumably Aristo) in the next line; we know of a number of Aristos who were philosophers (cf. *Brill's New Pauly* under 'Ariston').
25. Jayyusi-Lehn 2002 takes the phrase beginning with 'What I have to say (*haḍa l-qawl wa-mā*)' to be a comment by al-Kindī which follows the quotation. It could, however, also conclude the philosopher's admonition to Nero.
26. Here and in the next line, we have to read *qattātīn* and *qattāt* (the *ism al-mubālağa* of *qatta*).
27. As noted above, this anecdote appears also in *Sayings Socrates* §4.
28. Interestingly the whale and elephant are also mentioned in *Prostration* §X.1, making the same point in a somewhat different way: there, al-Kindī says that the divine providential order as a whole is much more worthy of admiration than even such magnificent creatures.
29. *Tazyīn* (with Ritter) against Jayyusi-Lehn and Badawī.
30. Lit. 'a rising place'; the following makes clear that this place must be quite large, hence our translation.

31. Lit. 'from the inside of the birds,' the body of the whole bird being perceived as the sound-box. But Walzer renders it as *nascosti* (hidden).
32. Adopting Ritter's emendation *qad* instead of the MS reading *mā*.
33. The transmitted text seems to be somewhat corrupt, given that the list of threats contains some items twice.
34. Reading *al-hūwāt*.
35. Adopting the reading *ta'assun*.
36. This term corresponds to Greek *entelécheia* or *télos*, more likely the latter in this context. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.10, for the ambiguity of reaching our 'end', which may be understood as either our purpose or our death.
37. We cannot resist pointing out the striking resonance between this example, where foodstuff turned sperm is endowed with reason, and the episode 'What Happens During Ejaculation' in Woody Allen's 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask.' Allen plays Sperm #1, ridden by existential angst, and al-Kindī seems to agree that if sperm could think, it would confront its fate with a good deal of anxiety.
38. Walzer's suggestion to fill the gap which Ritter discovered (*e ivi godendo dei beni intellettuali*).
39. Correcting Walzer's reading *ta'alluf* into *ta'allum*, on which his translation (*di dolore di cose sensibili*) is based.
40. Adopting Walzer's emendation *wa-'in* for *wa-'innahū*.
41. Adopting the reading *ma'a musākanatihimā* instead of *ma'a musākanatihā*.
42. See C.C.W. Taylor 2000; for Socrates in Arabic, see Strohmaier 1974; Alon 1991, 1995.
43. See Gutas 1975, 300–301; this later source conflates the Xanthippe tradition with another dialogue, originally attributed to Apollodorus, a friend of Socrates (Xenophon, *Apology*, 28).
44. See Overwien 2005, 364–8.
45. Gutas 1975, 1981.
46. A convenient introduction to the 'Socratic question' is C. C. W. Taylor 2000.
47. Gutas 1975; D'Ancona 2005.
48. This part of the anecdote is reproduced in PQ §22.
49. Presumably this means the oneness of God; this is how Alon 1995, 87 takes it as well.
50. We have here a quid pro quo: Timaeus suggests that the dictated work would live on forever, whereas Socrates says that affirming the oneness [of God, (*tawḥīd*)] is immortal; in other words, the antecedent is changed.
51. This saying (which stands behind PQ §3a) allows Gutas 1975, 277–81 to show that al-Kindī's version is dependent on a different source than that of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq.
52. For the image of the soul as a rusted mirror, see also *Discourse Soul* §IV.2, and saying §14 below.
53. Cf. PQ §6a.
54. Reading *laysa 'allamahu n-nāmūsa kisā'un ḡadidun* (with the manuscript), rather than following the emendation 'illa proposed by Alon 1995, i. 46. In this anecdote Socrates is apparently confused with Solon, the famous lawgiver of Athens.
55. Compare, for instance, Plato, *Gorgias* 469c: 'εἰ δ' ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι ἀδικεῖν ἢ ἀδικεῖσθαι, ἐλοίμην ἂν μᾶλλον ἀδικεῖσθαι ἢ ἀδικεῖν (if it were necessary either to do injustice, or to suffer injustice, I would rather choose to suffer injustice than to do it).'

56. *Ar-riyādīyāt*, which may be translated either as 'mathematics' or 'propadeutics.' In *On the Quantity of Aristotle's Books* al-Kindī uses the term for the propadeutic sciences, which are identified with the four branches of mathematics (see e.g. §IV.2). Alon 1995, p. 89/§767 renders this saying as follows: 'Whoever does not train himself in the hippodrome of the propadeutic sciences will not arrive at the finish line of the good, since he does not attain the goal of philosophy.'
57. Reading *lam yasbiq*; see Alon 1995, 113 on §767 n. 3.
58. Compare PQ §46, which suggests that a lacuna here should be filled with '*al-ğumatriyā* (geometry).' This would make particular sense given the placement of the saying after the previous one, which also extols mathematics (though it is not juxtaposed with that saying in PQ). Alon 1995, p. 62/§302 retains Fakhry's text and translates: 'the soul's brightness or tarnish [depends upon] the way it treats animal pleasures.'
59. Cf. *Definitions* §70C.
60. This translates the text in Fakhry's edition; but see the discussion in Gutas 1975, 282–3, which suggests that the original text for this saying probably reads '...such that your thoughts dissipate.'
61. This is based on a story ascribed to Zeno in Diogenes Laertius II.34. Other Greek sources ascribe it to other philosophers but it is given to Socrates only in the Arabic tradition: see Gutas 1975, 287.
62. Similar to the idea expressed in Ovid, *Art of Love*, i.99: '*Spectatum ueniunt, ueniunt spectentur ut ipsae* (They come to see, to be seen themselves they come).'
63. The text in Fakhry's edition seems to be corrupt. If we follow the reading of the Arabic in Alon 1995, 111 of the Arabic text, which is attested in other reports of the same anecdote, we have 'of what use to you is your wisdom, when you go to bed poor every night?'
64. Literally, 'had Socrates listen to him.' Other versions have the fool cursing Socrates; see Alon 1995, 88.
65. Something of this sort is required for sense; see Gutas 1975, 326 on the various versions of the story.
66. Alon 1995, 77 treats this last phrase as belonging to the previous saying. We take it as marking the end of the report instead.

