

## Origins Of Arab-Muslim Philosophy And Eastern Peripateticism

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the earliest stages in the formation of Arab-Muslim philosophy and the Eastern Peripatetic tradition. It analyses how the rise of Islam, early theological debates in kalām and the translation of Greek philosophical and scientific works created the intellectual conditions for a specifically Arab-Muslim form of rational inquiry. Special attention is given to the role of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī in adapting Aristotelian ideas to Islamic doctrines of divine unity, creation and human responsibility, thereby laying the foundations for later developments in Eastern Peripateticism.

В статье рассматриваются самые ранние этапы становления арабо-мусульманской философии и традиции восточного перипатетизма. Анализируется, каким образом возникновение ислама, ранние богословские споры в каламе и перевод греческих философских и научных сочинений создали интеллектуальные предпосылки для специфически арабо-мусульманской формы рационального изыскания. Особое внимание уделяется роли аль-Кинди и аль-Фараби в адаптации аристотелевских идей к исламским учениям о божественном единстве, творении мира и человеческой ответственности, что заложило основы последующего развития восточного перипатетизма

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### Introduction

The emergence of Arab-Muslim philosophy is closely connected with the rise of Islam in the seventh century and the rapid expansion of the Arab-Muslim Caliphate, which united diverse cultural regions from Iberia to Central Asia. Within this empire, the Qur'an, the Sunna and early Islamic theology (kalām) provided a new religious and intellectual framework in which questions about God, the world and the human being were reformulated. At the same time, contact with Hellenistic, Iranian and other traditions created the conditions for the reception and creative transformation of Greek philosophy and science<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Фролова, Е. А. История арабо-мусульманской философии. М.: Институт философии РАН, 2006.

Early theological debates in kalām raised fundamental issues concerning divine attributes, predestination, human freedom and the status of the Qurʾān, encouraging the use of rigorous conceptual distinctions and logical argumentation. Parallel to this, the Graeco–Arabic translation movement made available in Arabic large portions of Aristotle, the Neoplatonists and major scientific authors, thus providing Arab-Muslim scholars with a rich philosophical vocabulary. Against this background, the Eastern Peripatetic tradition emerged, with figures such as al-Kindī and al-Fārābī developing systematic philosophies that sought to harmonise Aristotelian metaphysics with Islamic doctrines of divine unity, creation and prophecy<sup>2</sup>.

The present article asks how the interaction between kalām, the translation movement and the work of early philosophers gave rise to Arab-Muslim philosophy and Eastern Peripateticism. The hypothesis is that this tradition represents an original synthesis, rather than a mere transmission of Greek thought or a simple rationalisation of Islamic dogma<sup>3</sup>.

### Methods

The study employs a qualitative, historical-philosophical approach. First, it uses contextual analysis to situate the rise of Arab-Muslim philosophy within the political and cultural history of the early Caliphate, drawing on standard surveys of Islamic intellectual history. This makes it possible to explain why certain philosophical questions became central and which institutions (courts, madrasas, translation bureaux) supported sustained scholarly activity<sup>4</sup>.

Second, it applies conceptual analysis to key terms and doctrines in early kalām and peripatetic texts, such as tawhīd (divine unity), qadar (predestination), ʿaql (intellect), nafs (soul) and nubuwwa (prophecy). Particular attention is given to how al-Kindī and al-Fārābī re-interpret Aristotelian notions of substance, causality, the hierarchy of the sciences and the intellect within an Islamic worldview. Third, a comparative textual method is used: selected passages from al-Kindī's *On First Philosophy* and al-Fārābī's *Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City* are read alongside relevant works of Aristotle and late antique commentators, as reconstructed in modern scholarship.

Finally, the study integrates results from contemporary research on the Graeco–Arabic translation movement and on medieval Arab-Muslim philosophy, while critically assessing older narratives that describe Muslim thinkers merely as intermediaries between Greece and Latin Europe.

### Results

The analysis confirms that early kalām debates played a crucial role in preparing the ground for philosophical reflection. Rationalist theologians such as the Muʿtazilites defended divine justice and human responsibility by appealing to reason, thereby normalising the use of logical argument in theological discourse<sup>5</sup>. Even though many of their specific doctrines were later rejected by Sunni orthodoxy, the habits of precise definition and systematic reasoning that kalām developed did not disappear and could be appropriated by philosophers.

The study also shows that the Graeco–Arabic translation movement fundamentally reshaped the intellectual landscape of the Islamic world. The translation of Aristotelian logical works established syllogistic reasoning and formal demonstration as standards of rigorous argument. Translations of texts in astronomy, mathematics and medicine contributed to an ideal of knowledge in which different disciplines are ordered within a coherent system, an ideal that would be taken up and refined by peripatetic philosophers<sup>6</sup>.

Within this context, al-Kindī appears as the first major architect of an explicitly philosophical project in Arabic. He presents philosophy as the pursuit of truth through rational demonstration and insists on its

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<sup>2</sup> История арабо-мусульманской философии: учебник и антология / под ред. А.В. Смирнова. — М.: Академический проект; ООО «Садра», 2020. — 623 с. С.С.401-407.

<sup>3</sup> Андреева, А. И. Средневековая мусульманская философия / А. И. Андреева. — Текст : непосредственный // Молодой ученый. — 2015. — № 14 (94). — С. 617-619. — URL: <https://moluch.ru/archive/94/20977>.

<sup>4</sup> Смирнов А.В. Статьи по арабской философии в «Новой философской энциклопедии». — М.: Мысль, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Gutas, D. Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsī Society. London–New York: Routledge, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Андреева, А. И. Средневековая мусульманская философия / А. И. Андреева. — Текст : непосредственный // Молодой ученый. — 2015. — № 14 (94). — С. 617-619. — URL: <https://moluch.ru/archive/94/20977>.

compatibility with Islamic revelation<sup>7</sup>. His hierarchy of the sciences places logic and mathematics at the foundation of investigations into nature and metaphysics, while he simultaneously defends creation in time and rejects the eternity of the world, thus revising Aristotle in light of Qur'anic teaching. At the same time, he distinguishes between discursive philosophical knowledge and the immediate, supra-rational knowledge granted to prophets, thereby acknowledging a domain of truth that surpasses philosophy.

Al-Fārābī builds on and systematises this peripatetic project. In his extensive logical and metaphysical writings and especially in his political work on the virtuous city, he offers a comprehensive classification of the sciences that includes grammar, logic, mathematical disciplines, natural science, metaphysics and “civil science”<sup>8</sup>. The latter embraces ethics, politics, jurisprudence and dogmatic theology, indicating that philosophical reflection should guide the organisation of society as well as speculative inquiry. In the virtuous city, political authority is ideally exercised by a philosopher-ruler who combines intellectual perfection with prophetic qualities, thereby uniting reason and revelation at the highest level of leadership. Taken together, these findings show that by the tenth century a recognisable Eastern Peripatetic tradition had emerged, characterised by systematic organisation of knowledge, commitment to rational demonstration, intensive engagement with Greek sources and a constant effort to align philosophy with Islamic doctrines of God, creation and prophecy.

### Discussion

The results support a more complex picture of the origins of Arab-Muslim philosophy than that offered by older “influence” models. On the one hand, the internal dynamics of Islamic theology—especially debates about divine justice, human responsibility and the nature of revelation—generated conceptual tensions that called for more sophisticated tools than those provided by traditionalist exegesis alone. On the other hand, the availability of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic texts through the translation movement supplied precisely such tools, enabling Muslim thinkers to formulate systematic accounts of being, knowledge and politics.

The work of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī illustrates how this interaction produced original philosophical positions rather than simple reproductions of Greek doctrines. Al-Kindī's defence of temporal creation and his sharp distinction between philosophical and prophetic knowledge show how Aristotelian metaphysics and Islamic monotheism were brought into a productive, if sometimes tense, dialogue<sup>9</sup>. Al-Fārābī's synthesis of metaphysics, psychology and political theory in the image of the virtuous city goes even further, embedding philosophical ideals of intellectual perfection within a concrete model of religious-political community.

These developments suggest that Eastern Peripateticism should be regarded as a distinctive mode of rationality in which philosophy operates not in opposition to revelation, but in constant conversation with it. This has important implications for the broader history of philosophy, since many medieval Jewish and Christian thinkers encountered Aristotle precisely through the works of Arab-Muslim philosophers and inherited from them the ideal of a reason that seeks harmony, rather than conflict, with faith.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that the origins of Arab-Muslim philosophy and Eastern Peripateticism lie in the convergence of three main factors: the doctrinal tensions of early Islamic theology, the institutional and cultural framework of the expanding Caliphate, and the massive appropriation of Greek philosophical and scientific texts. Within this setting, al-Kindī and al-Fārābī laid the foundations of a philosophical tradition that combined Aristotelian methods with Islamic teachings on divine unity, creation and prophecy. Far from being a mere conduit of Greek ideas to medieval Europe, Eastern Peripateticism represents an original and enduring contribution to global intellectual history.

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<sup>8</sup> Аль-Фараби. «Трактат о взглядах жителей добродетельного города» // Философские трактаты. Алма-Ата, 1970. С. 245–325.

<sup>9</sup> Adamson, P. Al-Kindī. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

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