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AL-KINDī'S TREATISE ON DEFINITIONS AND ITS PLACE IN HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

1. Introduction

Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Kindī (*c.* AH 185-256/CE 801-873)[1], also known as the "Philosopher of the Arabs" (*faylasūf al-ʿarab*), was an ethnic Arab and a Muslim, representing therefore both an Arabic philosophy and an Islamic philosophy[2]. He is not usually considered to be the most prominent representative of the classical Islamic philosophy, and not always mentioned as one of the greatest philosophers of Muslim World like al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) or Ibn Rušd (Averroes). Also the number of monographs and articles discussing his philosophical achievements is low compared to the aforementioned. Nevertheless, al-Kindī deserves to be remembered, studied and researched, and his philosophical and scientific legacy deserves careful examination. And this is not only due to the fact that he was the first Arab and Muslim philosopher, it is because he introduced philosophy to the Arab and Muslim Worlds. He took an active part in the great translation movement, which ultimately saved in the Arabic language and then helped to transfer to the West

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[1] For al-Kindī's biography cf., for instance, G. Endress, *Kindi, Al-, Philosopher*, in: J. W. Meri(ed.), *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, New York 2005, p. 440-441.

[2] This does not necessarily mean that such a philosophy should be regarded as an extension of Islamic theology, but only that it was grown in certain, clearly defined social and cultural conditions in which religious factors were dominant.

many books and treatises of antiquity, including many philosophical works[3]. The translation of Greek philosophical and scientific works into Arabic, or the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, should be considered as a greatest achievement[4].

Al-Kindī was also the author of the first dictionary of philosophical terms written in Arabic – at least among those that have survived to our times[5]. This article is devoted to the analysis of certain passages in that work, *i.e.* in his *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha* (*Treatise on the Definitions of Things and Their Description*, hereinafter referred to as *Treatise on Definitions*)[6]. It is not that this treatise is completely unknown to Western scholars[7]; however, in this article I would like not so much to examine the work as a whole but to draw attention to a very specific issue, and at the same time to answer some questions related to this issue. And I refer here to the presence of the term *falsafa* (philosophy) in al-Kindī's *Treatise on Definitions*. It is worth noting that he was not only the first Arab and the first Muslim philosopher, but also someone who was trying to get his co-religionists – previously unfamiliar with philosophy – interested in it. Was he quite sure himself how to explain what philosophy is? Did such definitions helped, or rather hindered the introduction of philosophy into Arab-Muslim culture?

2. Basic information on al-Kindī's *Treatise on Definitions*

Al-Kindī was a prolific author, and not only in the field of philosophy. Being interested in many fields of knowledge – including medicine, pharmacology, mathematics, geometry, cryptology, optics, logic, musicology, climatology, zo-

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[3] Cf. D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/5th-10th c.)*, London 1998, p. 1-27.

[4] Cf., for instance, J. McGinnis, D. Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, Indianapolis 2007, p. XVII-XVIII.

[5] As P. Adamson and P.E. Pormann write, "this text presents itself neither as an epistle nor as a discursive treatise, but rather as a kind of glossary of al-Kindī's specialized vocabulary"; cf. P. Adamson, P. E. Pormann, *The Philosophical Works of Al-Kindī*, Karachi 2012, p. 43.

[6] Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, in: M. Abū Riḍā (ed.), *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-falsafīia*, Cairo 1950, vol. I, p. 163-179.

[7] Cf. S. M. Stern, *Notes on Al-Kindī's Treatise on Definitions*, "The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland:, 1/2 (1959), p. 32-43.

ology, geography and mechanics – he made a significant contribution to many of them[8]. He left more than two hundred works of which only a portion have survived to this day. Information about his legacy comes from Ibn al-Nadīm, the author *Kitāb al-fihrist* (*The Catalogue*)[9]. It was he who named al-Kindī "Philosopher of the Arabs", describing him also – in connection with the latter's wide knowledge, including knowledge of the teachings of the ancients – as an outstanding figure of the era. Ibn al-Nadīm also listed al-Kindī's 22 philosophical writings[10]. The works of Al-Qiftī, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, Ibn Ǧulǧul and Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī give some information about al-Kindī's achievements as well[11].

As for philosophy, al-Kindī was particularly interested in metaphysics, epistemology, theory of intellect, philosophical anthropology and ethics. His *Treatise on Definitions* – which was twice translated into English, and also twice into French[12] – is not usually counted as the most important work of the "Philosopher of the Arabs"; inequitably, for one cannot help but conclude that it is an important element of his philosophical effort. For instance Abū Riḍā – who in 1950 issued a collection of al-Kindī's philosophical writings – decided to put *Treatise on Definitions* almost at the beginning of the compilation, stressing that it should be regarded as the key to a proper understanding of other works of the "Philosopher of the Arabs"[13]. Despite the prevailing opinion that this treatise was not very influential[14], it was al-Kindī who undertook the necessary task of developing the Arabic philosophical and scientific (in the understanding of the time) terminology. Thereafter, the others – *e.g.* al-Hwārizmī, al-Ǧurgānī, Avicenna, not to mention Jewish thinker Isaac Israeli[15] – followed in his footsteps

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[8] Cf. H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, Paris 1986, p. 217-221; W. M. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology. An Extended Survey*, Edinburgh 1985, p. 39-40; I. Al-Kadit, *Origins of Cryptology: The Arab Contributions*, "Cryptologia", 16/2 (1992), p. 101-113.

[9] Cf. B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of Al-Nadim. A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, New York 1970, vol. II. For the original text cf. M. Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitab al-fihrist,* in: G. Flügel (ed.), *Kitab al-Fihrist mit Anmerkungen herausgegeben*, Leipzig 1872.

[10] And also all other works of al-Kindi, known to him; cf. Dodge, p. 615-616.

[11] Cf. A. Ivry, *Al-Kindi's Metaphisics*, Albany 1974, p. 35.

[12] Cf. K. Kennedy-Day, *Limits of the Words*, London 2003, p. 20.

[13] Cf. Abū Riḍā (ed.), *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-falsafīa*, p. 128.

[14] According to Adamson, this work displays Al-Kindī's project of producing new Arabic terminology, however that does not seem to have been influential. Cf. P. Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, Oxford 2007, p. 39.

[15] Ibid, p. 13.

as authors of books on definitions of philosophical and scientific terms[16]. Living and writing earlier, however, al-Kindī had therefore to address certain issues that were not known to his successors in the field of Islamic philosophy.

It is worth noting that al-Kindī did not develop the definitions of the term "philosophy" collected in the treaties, but rather drew them from Greek sources[17]. There are also a lot of uncertainty as for that work. For instance, according to Abū Riḍā, it is safe to assume that the treatise was written by one of al-Kindī's students who chose different definitions from the works of his master and put them together, but this is only a weak assumption. Perhaps the title has been assigned to the treatise by one of the later scholars; however, doubts or ambiguities should be restricted – according to Abū Riḍā – only to that point[18].

It is also worth mentioning that the text appears in different versions, *i.e.* in the form of three manuscripts[19]. For this reason, one cannot for instance precisely specify the number of definitions collected in the treatise. Depending on which of the three versions we are referring to, it is either 99 definitions (the Istanbul version) or 112 definitions (the London British Museum version), or 109 definitions (the Lisbon version, which is slightly different in terms of the arrangement of the text). Most definitions that were collected in this treatise are – or at least were in al-Kindī's time – technical terms of philosophy. Undoubtedly, philosophical terms form the largest group of all terms defined in *Treatise on Definitions*, but one may also find many terms (*e.g.* "medicine", "hot", "cold"[20]) poorly related or even unrelated to philosophy. This may be explained by taking into account the fact that the scope of philosophical reflection was changing in history. While, therefore, in the time of ancient Greek philosophers or even in al-Kindī's time cosmology, psychology, political science or musicology were located in the area of philosophical research, in the present day they, undoubtedly, constitute separate fields of knowledge.

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[16] Cf. Abū Riḍā (ed.), *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-falsafīa*, p. 164.

[17] Cf., for instance, David's and Elias' commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge*; cf. G. Muradyan (ed.), *Davidthe Invincible. Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge*, Leiden 2014.

[18] Cf. Abū Riḍā (ed.), *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-falsafīa*, *ibid*.

[19] Cf. Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, p. 40; Stern, p. 32-33.

[20] Arabic: *al-ṭib, al-ḥarrāra, al-barūda*; cf. Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 171.

3. The impact of Greek philosophy on *Treatise on Definitions*

Despite the strong influence of Islamic religious source texts – *i.e.* the Qur'an and the hadiths – the discussed treatise was also strongly influenced by ancient philosophy. This influence was, inter alia, due to the fact that this work contains, as already mentioned, a significant number of definitions of philosophical terms. It is worth mentioning, however, that some of the defined terms can be linked with both philosophy and other fields of knowledge, for instance with astronomy, medicine, musicology or theology. Most of these definitions are related to medicine[21], which is not surprising, given the fact that al-Kindī, like Aristotle, was both a philosopher and a physician. Of all the terms that al-Kindī defined in his work, only a few – *e.g. al-īqā* (rhythm) or *al-ǧiḏr* (root, in mathematics)[22] – cannot be linked with philosophy at all.

The strong influence of Greek philosophy on the treatise is also evidenced by the presence of the definitions of some Arabic neologisms coined by the transformation of Greek terms. These include: *al-falsafa* (philosophy), *al-hayūlā* (matter, in the philosophical, Aristotelian meaning, a term coined by the transformation of the Greek *hyle*) or *al-isṭaqas* (element, formed from the Greek *stoicheion*). These and other terms have been introduced into the Arabic language through the use of transcription of the translated Greek text, thanks to the foresight and commitment of al-Kindī and translators. It was one of the methods used to create new Arabic terms in the era of translations, apart from creating semantic neologisms, the use of loanwords from different languages or the creation of new terms from the original sources – this was diligently researched by S.M. Afnan[23].

As already mentioned, al-Kindī was especially influenced by peripatetic thought. This remark also applies to *Treatise on Definitions*, however, it should also be noted that we are not considering only Aristotle himself, but also his followers and commentators[24]. The strong influence of Aristotelianism on al-Kindī

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[21] These are: *al-ǧirm* (body), *al-ḥarrāra* (heat, high temperature), *al-barūda* (cold, coldness), *al-yabas* (dryness), *al-raṭūba* (humidity, moistness), *al-inṯināʾ* (flexibility, elasticity), *al-kasr* (fracture), *al-ḍaġad* (being squeezed, being pressed), *al-rāʾiḥa* (smell, odour); cf. *ibid*. p. 165, 171.

[22] *Ibid*, p. 168-169.

[23] Cf. S. M. Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian*, Leiden 1964.

[24] Already at the time of the first scholarchs (heads of Peripatetic school) there were attempts to interpret Aristotelian philosophy, however, the first author of influential commentaries

is evidenced by the task which was undertaken by the "Philosopher of the Arabs", that is by an attempt to create a dictionary containing the correct definitions of the terms used in philosophy and science.

The strong influence of peripatetic philosophy is, above all, demonstrated by the content of many of the definitions collected in his treatise. For example, the first definition – *i.e.* definition of the term *al-ʿilla al-ūlā* (the first cause) – contains in essence a summary of the views of Aristotle laid out in the eighth book of his *Physics*. In al-Kindī's work the first cause is defined as something that creates or makes everything (*mubdiʿa, faʿila mutamimma al-kull*), and also something which itself is not moving or changing (*ġayr mutaḥarrika*)[25]. A similar influence is evidenced also by the definitions of the terms *al-ǧawhar* (substance), *al-hayūlā* (matter) or *al-ṣūra* (form). Substance is described as something existing by itself (*qāʾim bi-nafsihu*), and it is also "the carrier" for accidents or attributes (*ḥāmil li-l- aʿrāḍ*); matter is defined as "a force" (*quwwa*) created to bear form, and as something which is being affected; and form is described as something by which a thing is what it is[26]. It is not difficult to recognize that all of these definitions are clearly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy. A similar remark can also be made in relation to other terms that have been defined in the treatise, such as the following: *al-ṭabīʿa* (nature), *al-ʿilm* (knowledge), *al-ṣidq* (true), *al-kaḏb* (false), *al-faḍāʾil* (virtues), al-*fiʿl* (act, action), *al-kammiīa* (quantity), *al-kayfiīa* (quality), *al-zamān* (time), *al-makān* (place), *al-ʿilall al-ṭabīʿia arbaʿ* (four natural causes[27]), *al-ḥikma* (wisdom), *al-ʿiqqa* (chastity, moderation)[28].

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was only the tenth scholarch, Andronicus of Rhodes. After Adronicus, the effort was continued, among others, by Boethus of Sidon, Ariston of Alexandria, Xenarchus of Seleucia, Nicolaus of Damascus, Ptoleaemus Chennus of Alexandria, Aspasius, Andrastus of Aphrodisias, Herminus and his disciple – and at the same time the most prominent commentator on Aristotelian philosophy of that era – Alexander of Aphrodisias.

[25] Cf. Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 165; for the Stagirite's views cf. also: Aristotle, *Physics* VIII, 5.

[26] Cf. Al-Kindī, *ibid.*, p. 164-165.

[27] In Aristotle's philosophy the idea of four natural causes corresponds to four types of explanation: material, formal, efficient and final. As T. Irwin writes, "for Aristotle cause and explanation are indissolubly linked"; cf. T. Irwin, *Classical Philosophy: Aristotle: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Natural Philosophy*, in: T. Irwin (ed.), *Classical Philosophy: Collected Papers*, New York 1995, vol. VIII, p. 320; cf. also: C. N. Johnson, *Philosophy and Politics in Aristotle's Politics*, New York 2015, p. 42.

[28] Cf. Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 164, 166-167, 169, 179.

It is worth noting that apart from Aristotle, al-Kindī was also influenced – albeit to a lesser extent – by other philosophers, especially by Plato and the Stoics. The influence of Plato is found in the passage of *Treatise on Definitions* in which the author mentions that we are dealing with three forms of virtue: wisdom (*al-ḥikma*), courage (*al-naǧda*) and moderation (*al-ʿiqqa*)[29] – which obviously brings to mind the views expressed by Plato in his *Republic*[30]. The influence of Stoicism is evidenced in the definition of the term *al-riḍḍā* (satisfaction) – which is described as accepting the status quo, *i.e.* being happy not only in a situation that is perceived by us as positive, but also in such circumstances which seem to be bad and unpleasant[31].

4. Different definitions of the term *falsafa* – an analysis

In Abū Riḍā's edition of *Treatise on Definitions* the definitions of the term *al-falsafa* are presented on almost three pages of a relatively short work, and that probably illustrates al-Kindī's great interest in philosophy. All of these definitions are worthy of closer examination.

Giving the first definition al-Kindī writes that philosophy is defined by its name, that is etymologically (*min ištiqāq*). He notes that "this is the love of wisdom (*hubb al-ḥikma*), so that 'philosopher' (*faylasūf*) is a word composed of *filā*, which means 'someone who loves' (*muḥibb*), and the *sūfā*, which means 'wisdom' (*al-ḥikma*)"[32].

This definition does not pose any difficulties of interpretation; the term was simply taken from the Greek language, along with its basic meaning. It should be noted, however, that al-Kindī does not give the terms in the exact Greek form. Instead of the original *philósophos* he gives *faylasūf*, thus creating (or at least disseminating) neologism. Instead of *philos* and *sophía* he gives *filā* and *sūfā*, which of course is not accurate. On the other hand, it is also worth noting that the introduction of new terms into the Arabic language was some-

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[29] Ibid, p. 179.

[30] According to Plato, there are four cardinal virtues: wisdom, bravery, moderation and (consolidating them all together) justice; cf. Plato, *Republic*, 427e, also 435 b. Cf. also, G. Santas, *Understanding Plato's Republic*, Malden 2010, p. 63.

[31] For instance, cf. C. Gill (ed.), *Marcus Aurelius: Meditations*, Oxford 2013, p. 160, 162, 187.

[32] Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 172.

thing valuable. Without them the further development of philosophical thought in new areas – with Arabs not having a philosophical tradition – would have been highly questionable. Of course it would be difficult to prove that it was al-Kindī who first used the Arabic term *falsafa*. It is likely that this term was also used by others, especially by the translators of Baghdad's House of Wisdom, and it is probably impossible to determine which one of them used the term for the very first time.

As for the errors in the transliteration (from Greek into Arabic), it was probably the language barrier that was a problem. Firstly, it is not possible to give an entirely correct transcription of a phrase from Greek into Arabic. This is because the Arabic language does not have all the phonemes of the Greek language. For instance, in classical Arabic language there is no phoneme /o/, nor the corresponding letter. Thus, for example the Greek expression *philósophos* could not be correctly written with the letters of the Arabic alphabet, nor correctly pronounced. In relation to the Arabic language the most common substitute for the phoneme /o/ is /u/ or /u:/ (and Arabic letter *wāw*). Secondly, although we may be sure that al-Kindi knew the Syrian language, it is not certain whether he knew Greek well enough to make the translations by himself. According to A. F. El-Ehwany, al-Kindī studied Greek, but probably did not know it well enough[33]. H. Corbin believes that the Arabic philosopher can be considered as a translator, however, he was also a wealthy aristocrat who hired numerous translators, often Christians, and he also enhanced or corrected their work, especially with regards to the Arabic terms which might be difficult for them[34].

In a second definition al-Kindī combines philosophy with a certain type of action. He writes that philosophy can also be described in accordance to what it does (*ayḍan wa-min ǧihha faʿaluhā*)[35]. As al-Kindī argues, philosophy should imitate the acts of God, in so far as it is in the power of man[36]. According to him, anyone who follows the call of philosophy wants to be completely morally perfect (*arāḍū an yakūn an al-insān kāmil al-faḍīl*)[37].

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[33] Cf. A. F. El-Ehwany, *Al-Kindi*, in: M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy – With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, Wiesbaden 1963, p. 422.

[34] Cf. H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London 2006, p. 154.

[35] Cf. Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 162

[36] Arabic: *Inna falsafa hiya al-tašabbuhu bi-afʿallu Allah taʿala*; *ibid*.

[37] Ibid.

The analysis of this definition shows that al-Kindī wanted to highlight the fact that philosophy leads, or at least should lead, to certain actions. Clearly, for him philosophy is not just an area of activity of pure (theoretical) reason. He considers it to be "imitating" the acts of God, and not, for example, the mind of God or the words of God; clearly, the matter of the action is most important here, at least according to the "Philosopher of the Arabs".

It should be stressed that this belief has much more in common with the philosophical tradition than with Islam, at least in its traditional, "classical" form (*i.e.* the contents of the Qur'an and the hadiths). In classical Islam the Creator is clearly separated from the creation – many Quranic verses, as well as many hadith passages relate to this. For instance, in Quranic sura *al-Ihlāṣ* we may find the following: "Say: He is Allah: The One and only; Allah, the Eternal, the Absolute; He beggetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him"[38]. Also other Quranic passages, as well as hadiths, mention God as the One with whom no one can be compared[39]. Islam, therefore, preaches oneness and the absolute uniqueness of the Creator, highlighting the importance of the statement that there is "nothing like unto Him" (Kor 42, 11). This phrase implies that God is fundamentally different from anything that exists, and also from anything that man could conceive or define[40]. Taking this into account, from the religious (Islamic) point of view it is simply pointless to compare the actions of a man with the acts of God, if this assertion is taken literally. Al-Kindī presented, therefore, a belief which his more orthodox co-religionists could perceive as controversial, at least to some extent. For them the position of orthodox Islamic theology, clearly separating creation from the Creator, was probably more reasonable and perfectly fit into a certain system of thinking.

On the other hand, we should also pay attention to the fact that al-Kindī was not sufficiently critical with regard to the intellectual heritage of the ancients. It is difficult not to conclude that the Greeks, including philosophers, used terms like "god" or "divine" in a completely different sense than the followers of monotheistic religions. Al-Kindī's co-religionists used the Book considered to be revealed by the One God, who alone is the Creator and the Lord of all that exists. Such a perspective would have seemed very strange to the an-

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[38] Kor 112, 1-4. Qur'an, translated by Yusuf Ali; cf. http://sacred-texts.com/isl/yaq/yaq112.htm.

[39] For instance, cf. Kor 6, 100; 42, 11.

[40] For instance, cf. Kor 6, 100.

cient Greeks. For al-Kindī however, it seems that the theological differences were probably not significant compared to the great love of philosophy and knowledge in general.

The idea – and also the ethical postulate – to imitate the actions of God, was derived precisely from the philosophical tradition, and especially from those authors who, clearly, were most strongly valued by al-Kindī. One of them was undoubtedly Aristotle, in whose works we find the idea of *homoiosis theo* (Lat. *imitatio Dei*)[41]. It is worth noting that in al-Kindi's time the first translation of *Metaphysics* was released[42]. Also other Aristotelian works were translated in that circle, most of them in the field of natural sciences[43].

Interestingly, Aristotle presented essentially monotheistic metaphysics, however in some areas it differed from the religious monotheism of Islam. According to the Stagirite, there is the unmoved mover (ancient Greek: *ho ou kinoúmenos kinei*), or prime mover, *i.e.* God, whose essence is the act and only the act, and there is nothing in Him of the potentiality. In other words, it is necessary that God existed, or He exists as necessary. Aristotle comes to this conclusion by analyzing the movement (or change), and its causes. As being the most perfect, Aristotle's God is immaterial and completely separated from the material world (transcendent). As A. Kosman notes, in Aristotle's metaphysics "beings […] imitate divinity in being, acting out what they are; *imitatio dei* consists of striving […] to be one's self, to emulate that being who is totally active, *i.e.* who totally is what he is"[44]. Besides, Aristotle writes about the intellectual part of the human soul (*nous*). It comes directly from God, as such, guaranteeing the complete uniqueness of man[45] and allowing different forms of typically human – individual and social – activity. According to the Stagirite, what we are experiencing as human beings using the intellect, fully applies to the prime

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[41] For instance cf. D. H. Frank, O. Leaman, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Cambridge 2003, p. 153.

[42] It was prepared for Al-Kindī.

[43] Cf., for instance, J. W. Meri (ed.), *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, New York 2006, vol. II, p. 610 *et pass.* Besides, the circle of Al-Kindī produced some pseudo-Aristotelian works, namely so called *Theology of Aristotle*, which was essentially a paraphrase of some parts of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, and *The Book on the Pure Good*, which was a paraphrase of *Elements of Theology* of Proclus (the latter was wildly known in Latin world under the title *Liber de causis*).

[44] Cf. A. Kosman, *Aristotle's Definition of Motion*, in: L. P. Gerson (ed.), *Aristotle. Logic and Metaphysics*, New York 1999, p. 51.

[45] For instance cf. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, I 4, 408 b 18-19; *ibid*, I 4, 408 b 29.

mover – which is considered to be the pure form, as well as the intellect[46] which is always contemplating, and nothing is able to disrupt the happiness associated with contemplation. So the man who enters this path, is also entering the path that leads to a constant, unchanging and great happiness. In other words, this means that in intellectual activities Aristotle finds the most perfect form of intellectual life[47] – considering, like some other philosophers before him and after him[48], intellect on the part of humans as a mode of *imitatio Dei*[49].

Al-Kindī's assertion that through the moral improvement of man, philosophy should lead to the imitation of acts of God, in so far as it is in the power of man, is also reminiscent in some ways of another Athenian philosopher, Plato. According to some researchers, such as P. Adamson and Th.-A. Druart, al-Kindī refers here to Plato's *Theaetetus*[50]. It is worth mentioning that in the times of al-Kindī also an early translation of the *Timaeus* was released; besides, the "Philospher of the Arabs" and other scholars and translators of those days were acquainted with at least parts of Plato's *Republic*, *Symposium* and *Phaedo*.

In Plato's writings striving to follow a deity's acts served as the basis of ethics, and that idea was clearly expressed in some of his works. For instance, as M. Buryeat rightly notes, in *Theatetus* two patterns of life are presented – one right and the other wrong. The latter is the path of life of the worldly man, whose life is in reality his curse and punishment. On the other hand, there is a philosopher who knows true happiness, *i.e.* justice – because, as Plato states, to be just is to model oneself on the pattern of divine perfection[51]. Plato is trying to convince readers of his *Theatetus* that man ought to fly away from earth to heaven; and to fly away is to become like god, as far as this is possible for man[52]. God is never in any way unrighteous, he is perfect righteousness; and who is the most righteous is most like him. In other words, to become like god, is – according to the Athenian philosopher – to become holy, just and wise[53]. In *Theatetus* philosophy is linked with moral improvement and, secondly, with the imitation of divinity,

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[46] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177 a 12.

[47] Ibid, 1170 a 18.

[48] For instance Moses Maimonides.

[49] Cf. also K. Seeskin, *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, Cambridge 2005, p. 184.

[50] Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 171 b-c; P. Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, p. 157.

[51] Cf. M. F. Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, Indianapolis 1990, p. 34.

[52] Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176 b.

[53] Ibid.

which is expressed directly. As Burnyeat further notes, "the idea of virtue as be-
coming like God so far as one can […] was taken up as a common theme
among philosophers of quite different persuasions"[54]. In Plato's works the idea
of imitating divinity appears repeatedly[55]. In addition to the already mentioned
Theatetus it is also mentioned in other dialogues, such as *Republic*[56], *Laws*[57],
Timaeus[58] and *Phaedrus*[59]. What links the concept of Plato to the views of his
greatest disciple, Aristotle, is the conviction – expressed in Plato's *Republic* –
that the moral excellence found in the life of a philosopher is a consequence of
contemplating God, both in theoretical and moral terms. In other words, […]
homoiosis theoi – *i.e.* man's assimilation to god, or becoming a god – is "the re-
turn of the rational part of the soul to its own 'original' nature"[60].

The notion that a man, or at least a philosopher, should become like god,
was expressed – as J. Annas reminds us – also by the later Platonists, for exam-
ple, by Alcinous, who represented the Middle Platonist period. One of the Sto-
ics, Arius Didymus of Alexandria, who was a teacher of the Roman Emperor
Augustus, claimed that the same idea was expressed by Socrates[61]. As noted by
L.T. Zagzebski, "this Platonic idea recurs in the philosophy of the Stoics, who
made virtue as likeness to God central to their ethics"[62]. This view was ex-
pressed, for instance, in Seneca's *Letters to Lucilus*[63] (although, of course, it
would be difficult to reconcile the pantheism of Seneca, according to whom the
whole world is god, with strict Islamic monotheism). The very idea has become
quite common in various philosophical circles. For example, G. N. Sandy notes
that "the Stoic doctrine of the perfect sage […] was only adumbrated by Plato
but later it was presented in the form of *imitatio Dei* ("likeness to god") to be-

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[54] Cf. Burnyeat, p. 35.

[55] Cf. also: M. Erler, *Epicurus as Deus Mortalis. Homoiosis Theoi and Epicurean Self-
Cultivation*, in: D. Frede, A. Laks (eds.), *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, Its
Background and Aftermath*, Leiden 2002, p. 163-165. Cf. also: J. M. Armstrong, *After the Ascent:
Plato on Becoming Like God*, in: "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy", 27 (2004), p. 171–183.

[56] Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 360 c; 500 c; 611 d-e.

[57] Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 716 a–d.

[58] Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 90 d.

[59] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246b–e.

[60] D. Dombrowski, *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion*, New York 2012, p. 103.

[61] Cf. J. Annas, *Platonic Ethics. Old and New*, London 1999, p. 52.

[62] L. Zagzebski, *The Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford 2007, p. 20.

[63] Ibid.

come a fundamental religious and ethical principle of Stoicism, Middle Platonism and other schools of philosophy during the Roman Imperial period"[64]. As for al-Kindī, we cannot be sure which authors or works specifically influenced his thought in these matters – because the discussed second definition does not contain neither titles of the works of ancient authors, nor the names of philosophers of that period. Therefore it should be assumed that the author of these words was familiar with both the philosophy of Aristotle, as well as with Platonism and Stoicism, which is not surprising given that it was these philosophical traditions which most strongly influenced al-Kindī's philosophy. To put it in general terms, he was most strongly influenced by the Aristotelian philosophy and Platonism, nevertheless in his works we may also easily find elements drawn from the Stoics, particularly with regards to ethics. It seems, however, that the "Philosopher of the Arabs" was referring here, in this definition, to Plato and the Stoics, rather than to Aristotle. This assumption is justified by the content of the definition, which mentions the moral improvement of man and not the intellection as the most noble activity of the human soul.

Also, the content of the next, third definition is clearly associated with the activity of man. In al-Kindī's words the definition of philosophy is expressed "on the basis of what it makes; and they say, concern of the death (*al-ʿ ināya bi-l-mawt*)"[65]. As he writes further: "And there are two types of death for them[66]: the natural one (*ṭābiʿ ī*), and this is the departure of the soul who uses the body; and secondly, bringing death to the desires (*imāta al-šahawāt*), and it is this death to which they guide themselves; therefore killing the desires is [to them – T.S.] a path leading to happiness. And therefore many of the ancients say that pleasures are evil (*allaḏa šarr*)"[67]. Additional comments made by al-Kindī on account of this definition reveal something else. He writes that the soul of man "may be used in two ways", or that it may be involved in two different areas of activity: sensual (*ḥassī*) and intellectual (*ʿ aqlī*)[68]. As al-Kindī notes, indulgence in sensual pleasures, or even indulging the senses, is something strange to the use of reason when we are dealing with the correct use of the intellect – or, to put it differently, when we talk about the life of a rationalist or a philosopher.

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[64] G. Sandy, *The Greek World of Apuleius: Apuleius and the Second Sophistic*, Leiden 1997, p. 222.

[65] Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 162.

[66] That is for those philosophers who claim so.

[67] Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 162-163.

[68] *Ibid*.

This means that there are two basic paths of conduct in human life: the rationalist path, and also the path of someone who is not a rationalist and who is heavily influenced by the senses. It is easy to note that this view is taken from the philosophy of Plato, as well as from the Stoics.

In this definition, therefore, al-Kindī presents such an understanding of philosophy in which it is strongly associated with asceticism. Philosophical asceticism was not of course preached by only one school or group of philosophers of antiquity. On the contrary, its elements may be found, among others, in the teachings of Pythagoreans, Socrates, Plato, the Cynics and the Neoplatonists. The content of the definition given by al-Kindī does not allow for the clear determination of which thinkers or which works he specifically relates to, because he does not mention any names of the philosophers, nor any titles of the works. However, it must be assumed that primarily Platonic and stoic thought was used here as a source of inspiration. This supposition is strong, for the analysis of his philosophical output shows that al-Kindī was well acquainted with the Platonic philosophy and ethical teachings of the Stoics[69]. The "Philosopher of the Arabs" was also strongly influenced by Socrates – probably more as a character than as the author of specific philosophical concepts. In any case, the analysis of al-Kindī's philosophical works leads to the conclusion that he was significantly fascinated by the figure of Socrates as a kind of ideal ancient sage, and that is evidenced by numerous works in which the former refers to the latter[70].

The next, fourth definition is very short. In al-Kindī's words, philosophy is also "defined in relation to its cause; and as they say, it is the craft of the crafts (ṣināʿat l-ṣināʿāt)[71] and the wisdom of the wisdoms (ḥikmat l-ḥikam)"[72].

It seems that this definition is the least significant one. This is probably just a kind of wordplay ("the wisdom of the wisdoms", "the craft of the crafts"). Of course, the Arabic word ḥikma relates directly to the Greek counterpart (where sophia means wisdom), but this is probably the only remark that can be

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[69] Cf., for instance, Adamson, *Al-Kindi*, p. 144 *et pass.*

[70] Such as, for instance, *Risāla fī ḫabar faḍīla Suqrāt* (*Treaties Containing Information about the Virtue of Socrates*) or *Risāla fī fad Suqrāt* (*Treaties about the Words of Socrates*); cf., for instance, Adamson, *Al-Kindi*, p. 144 *et pass.*

[71] Being the equivalent of the Greek term *techne*, Arabic *sīnāʾa* means, *i.a.*, skill, ability to do something.

[72] Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 163.

made here. In other words, this definition – or "definition" – is extremely puzzling and unclear, and in fact does not explain anything to the reader.

The fifth definition of the term *falsafa*, presented in *Treatise on Definitions*, is more extensive and richer in content. According to its author, "philosophy is the knowledge of man himself (*al-falsafa maʿrifat al-insāni nafsahu*)"[73]. Continuing these considerations, in the following passage al-Kindī discerns – also with regard to the existence of man – the body (*al-ǧism*), the soul (or the self, *al-nafs*), the substance (*al-ǧawhar*) and accidents (*al-ʿarḍ*, plural: *al-aʿarāḍ*), that is, attributes which may or may not belong to a subject, without affecting the subject's essence[74]. He states that "man (*al-insān*) is the body and the soul, and the accidents", noting also that "the soul is an incorporeal substance (*wa kānat al-nafs ǧawharan lā gisman*)"[75]. In the following passage he argues that man is a man only when he recognizes himself, that is, when he recognizes his body through his accidents, and when he recognizes a substance that is not material, and in the latter case it is, of course, the soul[76]. In addition al-Kindī argues that philosophers define man as a microcosm (*al-ʿālam al-aṣġar*). According to him, this is due to the recognition of the complex nature of man or, in other words, due to deep, philosophical self-knowledge[77].

This definition focuses on the philosophical knowledge of man. Analysis of that definition shows something interesting about the philosophy of al-Kindī, and that is the evident syncretism – the feature found throughout all his work[78]. The fifth definition includes elements of the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and Neoplatonists. Regarding the influence of Platonism, a clear division between the soul and the body is mentioned here. On the other hand, when it comes to peripatetic philosophy al-Kindī explicitly distinguishes between substance and accidents.

Such an uncritical combination of elements taken from Platonism and Aristotelianism, which is to be found in al-Kindī's philosophy, was possible only

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid. As the authors of *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy* rightly point, "the soul for Al-Kindī is an immaterial substance"; cf. Oliver Leaman (ed.), *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, London 2015, p. 282.

[76] Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 163.

[77] Ibid.

[78] For philosophical syncretism of Al-Kindī cf., for instance, L. Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis. 1. Classical Roots and Medieval Discussions*, Leiden 1994, p. 81.

under certain historical conditions. Unsound and incomplete knowledge of fundamental differences between the views of both the famous Athenian philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, should be mentioned here. Undoubtedly, in al-Kindī's time the Arab world was only just starting to become familiar with these authors. It is hard to expect that the first Arab philosopher – who did not have access to all of the writings of both of the Greeks, and who did not distinguish between the original works and the paraphrases or the works only attributed to Aristotle – would have been able to present a fully critical approach to philosophy and its history. This remark refers not only to al-Kindī, but also to the later Islamic philosophers, such as al-Fārābī and others.

As already mentioned, there are also elements of Neoplatonism in the discussed definition, namely in the passage in which the "Philosopher of the Arabs" refers to man as a microcosm. Of course, this does not mean that only the Neoplatonists presented such an idea. As M.P. Banchetti-Robino rightly notes, the microcosm/macrocosm analogy was very important in Medieval philosophy, wether Christian, Jewish or Islamic. As she writes, "this analogy, at least as it is presented in Western tradition, […] permeated not only speculative philosophy, but also natural philosophy, alchemy and the hermetic tradition"[79]. The mere use of the terms ("microcosm", "macrocosm") should be considered as an admission to a certain idea or view, namely to recognizing man ("small world") as a reflection of the "big world" of the Cosmos[80]. It is interesting to note that at the time this concept was considered to be relevant not only to philosophical value, but also to astrology and magic – as long as we deem *De radiis stellarum* to be an authentic work, which is attributed to al-Kindī[81]. Due to the above considerations it is sufficient to note that an analysis of his philosophical works shows him to be well acquainted with Platonism and Neoplatonism[82] – although, here too, we cannot explain exactly which philosophers or works inspired him the most.

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[79] Cf. M. P. Banchetti-Robino, *The Microcoms/Macrocosm Analogy in Ibn Sīnā and Husserl*, in: A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology on the Perrenial Issue of Microcosm and Macrocosm*, Dordrecht 2006, p. 25.

[80] For the idea of man as a microcosm in history of philosophy cf., for instance, K. Haney, *Improvisation in the Dance of Life: the Microcosm and the Macrosoms*, in: Tymieniecka (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology on the Perrenial Issue of Microcosm and Macrocosm*, p. 97.

[81] Cf. M.-Th. D'Alverny, F. Hudry, *Al-Kindi. De Radiis*, in; *"Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge"*, 61 (1974), p. 139–260.

[82] As J. McGinnis and D. C. Reisman note, "one also finds strains of Neoplatonism in his discussion of the 'One' and the 'many' in *On the First Philosophy*, his most important philosophical

In the content of the last, sixth definition we find the following: "And if it comes to the very essence of philosophy, it is this, that philosophy is the knowledge of all eternal things (*ʿilm al-ašyāiʾ al-abdīya al-kullīya*), of their factuality, their essence and their causes (*inniātuhā, māʾiatuhā wa-ʿilaluhā*), in so far as it is in the power of man"[83].

Of course, it should be noted that this view is most strongly associated with the philosophy of Aristotle who was convinced that the most valuable knowledge is that which concerns causes. Moreover, it should also be stressed that al-Kindī – while writing about "all eternal things"[84] and pointing to all that transcends our natural world with its changeability, contingency, particularities etc. – probably does not make a clear distinction between the truth coming from philosophy and the one that comes from theology. It is also fairly easy to guess what were, or are at least could be, the consequences of adopting such a position in a society that was extremely supportive of the religious (Islamic) principles. Philosophy is presented here as an area of activity of human reason which is not opposed to religion, and which is not understood as a kind of "supplementary discipline ", but as a fully-fledged engagement of the abilities of the human mind. We can guess – and considering the contents of other books and treatises of al-Kindī, we can even be well assured – that according to him philosophy aims at making our understanding of the world complete, of course, insofar as this is possible for man. According to al-Kindī, if we do not find a good enough explanation in the source texts of religion, or elsewhere, we should trust the reasoning found in philosophical reflection and scientific research[85]. In the medieval Islamic state such a position should be considered as bold and uncompromising. However, such a view was well established in his philosophy, in which –

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work, and his subsequent positing of the 'One True Being'"; cf. McGinnis, Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, p. 1.

[83] Al-Kindī, *Risala fī l-ḥudūd ašyāʾi wa-rusūmiha*, p. 163-164.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Al-Kindī refers to the relationship between religion and philosophy in several of his works. In one of them, *Risāla fī kammiīa kutūb Arisṭūṭālīs wa mā yuḥtāǧ ilayhi fī taḥṣīl al-falsafa* (*Treatise on the Number of Aristotle's Books and What is Needed for Studying Philosophy*), he expresses view according to which the knowledge of philosophers and scholars is different than teachings of prophets. We can therefore speak of two kinds of knowledge, or more precisely, about the two paths leading to gain confidence by human mind: the path of revelation (God through His prophets gives people a part of His knowledge) and by reliable scientific research (knowledge of philosophers and scholars). Cf. Al-Jubouri, p. 201.

as I. M. N. Al-Jubouri notes – "the divine world is the cause behind the existence of all things below"[86].

5. Conclusion

Some of the definitions of the term *falsafa* presented in *Treatise on Definitions* are unclear and do not allow the reader to understand what philosophy really is. Moreover, two of these definitions should be considered as – at least – unimportant or even unnecessary. These are the first one and the fourth; the former being simply an explanation of the Greek original term, and the latter being probably only a kind of wordplay (philosophy as "the craft of the crafts" and "the wisdom of the wisdoms"). The most important definitions are, therefore, the second, the third, the fifth and the sixth one. And it is their content which we should focus on while asking some important questions regarding al-Kindī's understanding of philosophy. Should, therefore, the presentation of more than one definition of the term *falsafa* be regarded as an attempt to reveal his philosophical preferences; and if so, in which definition, or definitions, does al-Kindī do this? Also, should we assume that he was fully aware of the diversity of the views proclaimed by *al-qudamāʾ* (*i.e.* ancient philosophers); and if so, where does he clearly refer to this issue?

In my opinion, both questions posed above should be answered in the negative. The contents of the definitions of the term *falsafa* presented in the treatise do not suggest that al-Kindī tried to express his preferences in relation to the different conceptions of philosophy, nor that he tried to explain the differences in the views of particular ancient authors. On the contrary, it should be assumed that he was not conscious of the historical context of philosophy. If otherwise, he would have written – at least in some of his definitions – that this is philosophy according to Plato, and philosophy according Aristotle, and so on; and there are no such phrases or expressions in this treatise. We can only note, at best, that in some definitions al-Kindī uses a kind of "impersonal" wording like "and they say", or "it is said that" (*wa qālū*). This is of course not enough to

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[86] Cf. I. M. N. Al-Jubouri, *History of Islamic Philosophy: With View of Greek Philosophy and Early History of Islam*, Hertford 2004, p. 205. Considering the differences between the study of the nature and the study of the eternal, in Al-Kindī's philosophy the divine world requires different sort of knowledge; *ibid.*

guess the views of what authors, or what works exactly, are mentioned there. And since al-Kindī was not aware of the historical context of philosophy, for him all the ideas of the past seemed to be true – although at the same time he believed that the effort of fully uncovering the truth had not yet been completed. It should also be recalled that he did not distinguish between the actual views of the most prominent ancient philosophers (such as Plato and, especially, Aristotle) and the views of the interpreters of their works. That led – not only al-Kindī, but also other Islamic philosophers, such as al-Fārābī – to the attempts to harmonize the views of different philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, instead of conducting some critical studies and examining them in historical terms. On the other hand, it can be noted in his defense that al-Kindī became acquainted not only with the original writings of Aristotle, but also with works assigned to the Stagirite, which in fact contained the paraphrases of some Neoplatonic works, as already mentioned.

Al-Kindī probably wanted to give to his readers – at a time when Arabs were only beginning to explore "foreign teachings" – a feasibly broad explanation that would help them to understand what philosophy is. Considering the contents of the four definitions which contain some important information and, therefore, can bring us closer to explaining what in fact al-Kindī meant – *i.e.* the second, the third, the fifth and the sixth definition – it is easy to note that he did associate philosophy with man's activity and striving for moral perfection. One of these definitions raises issues related to the struggle with lust and other tendencies considered to be wrong, what was called by al-Kindī as "killing own soul". In other definitions he, similarly, focuses on man, albeit somewhat differently. In relation to human beings he writes about the substance and the accidents, as well as about the body and the soul. The "Philosopher of the Arabs" here presents man as a microcosm as well. Of all the four above-mentioned definitions, only one is not connected with the activity of man and his (at least potential) moral improvement, and that definition presents philosophy as knowledge, but at the same time a kind of knowledge concerning the most important, "eternal" matters.

Analysis of his philosophical accomplishments, including the discussed treatise, should always take into account a specific historical context. It is worth remembering that al-Kindī – of course not alone, but together with other scholars and translators of his time – introduced philosophy to the Islamic world. However, it was not encountering "the foreign teachings" that made Arabs (and

Muslims) of that time successful, at least according to their own beliefs. Un-doubtedly, they identified themselves primarily in relation to Islam, its teach-ings, its tradition etc. As a great admirer of philosophy, as well as a scholar who attempted to introduce it to such a culture, al-Kindī had to present it as some-thing at least not contrary to Islam. According to him, philosophy provides knowledge about fundamental, even eternal issues; moreover, it makes man morally better. Actually, having met such definitions of philosophy, no one should have any reason to protest.

Al-Kindī never compared philosophy with religion directly, and that was probably due to a kind of precaution. It is very characteristic that in his defini-tions he never enters the area of religious teachings, nor even uses words like "religion" or "Islam" in his *Treatise on Definitions*[87]. It is also extremely im-portant at the same time, because he aims to present philosophy as a fully inde-pendent and autonomous area of activity of the human mind. According to him, merely entering this area should not be regarded as sufficient cause to arouse suspicion of transgressing the Devine Law.

It is true that an analysis of *Treatise on Definitions* does not explain the whole of al-Kindī's philosophy, but that is not to say that it does not inform us about anything. Firstly, definitions that were collected in this work should be considered as "a product" of certain historical conditions. Secondly, they should be taken as part of the work of a great scholar and a great adherent of philoso-phy, striving (successfully, at least for some time) to introduce it to the world of Islam. He contributed significantly, also through this work, to the later flower-ing of philosophy and to the subsequent appearance of the most famous Islamic philosophers, such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna, Ibn Rušd, Ibn Haldūn and others.

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[87] Because of this, among other things, one can compare his approach with that which was represented several centuries later by Descartes. They both believed that philosophy and science provide adequate measures to uncover the truth; but on the other hand, they also did not consider accusing religion – or limiting its influence and authority – as fully appropriate. The approach of Descartes is evident in some passages of his most influential work, that is *Discourse on the Method*. The French philosopher recommends that it is good to follow the principles of religion which is dominant where we live; cf. R. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method and the Meditations*, New York 2008, p. 24. This can be, of course, considered as a sort of conformism, but probably also as ta-king care of own safety, as well as providing a suitable environment for a philosopher or a scien-tist. The above comments do not mean that al-Kindī was not discussing some religious issues et all; cf. J. Janssens, *Al-Kindī: The Founder of Philosophical Exegesis of the Qur'an*, in: "Journal of Qur'anic Studies", 9.2 (2007), p. 1-21.

And although they usually did not openly admit to the influence of the founder of Islamic philosophy, however, without his commitment the later history of Islamic philosophy would probably look quite different. And regarding the beginnings of Islamic philosophy, it is certain that they cannot be clearly comprehended without taking into consideration the nature of the times of the first Arab and, at the same time, the first Muslim who became a genuine *philósophos*.

Summary

Title: *Al-Kindī's Treatise on Definitions and Its Place in History of Philosophy*.

The paper focuses on al-Kindī's *Treatise on definitions* - the oldest surviving Arabic glossary of philosophical and scientific terms. Its author presents more than one definition of the term *falsafa* (philosophy). Does this mean that he was not sure how to explain to his coreligionists what philosophy really is? In this article I aim to focus on the content of all six definitions of philosophy presented in the treatise. I also compare some of al-Kindī's definitions of philosophy with the way in which some Greek philosophers, known to him, understood it, as well as with certain ideas derived from the source texts of Islam. The results of the study led to the belief that al-Kindī sought to induce his readers to agree that philosophy was not a threat to the Muslim faith, but rather a science which aims to improve man in the moral sense, and also to significantly increase the human knowledge of the world created by God.

Keywords Philosophy; history of philosophy; Islam; al-Kindi; *falsafa*; translation movement.

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