

**Al-Kindi's Proof of Essence and Generation:
(It is impossible for a thing to be the cause of the generation of its essence)**

Al-Kindi already proved that the idea of the eternity of the world is self-canceling, and it is a contradiction on both mathematical and logical levels. Thus al-Kindi proved that the world is not eternal, in some other words it came into existence, or its existence is generated.

In the third chapter of his book *On First Philosophy*, al-Kindi went beyond that to prove that the world, as an originated phenomenon, cannot be the cause of its existence (its essence), and thus must be brought into existence by something else other than itself: God.

Al-Kindi's argument:

It is not possible for a thing to be the cause of the generation of its essence, its becoming a being is either from something or from nothing. Thus, we have four possibilities:¹

- First: a non-existent thing and its essence is non-existent.
- Second: a non-existent thing and its essence is existent.
- Third: an existent thing and its essence is non-existent.
- Fourth: an existent thing and its essence is existent.

The first is impossible, because it is nothing and its essence is nothing. "Nothing" is neither a cause nor an effect, (cause and effect are predicated only of something). Therefore, it is not the cause of the generation of its essence.

The second, of course, with a similar proof, is impossible.

The second is also impossible by another proof based on the law of identity. Al-Kindi said:²

1. If it is non-existent and its essence is existent, then its essence is different from the thing.
2. Thus, its essence would not be it (it = the thing).
3. However, the essence of everything is that thing itself.
4. Therefore, a thing would not be itself and it would be itself, but this is an impossible contradiction (according to the law of identity).
5. Therefore, a thing cannot be the cause of the generation of its essence.

The third is impossible (an existent thing and its essence is non-existent) for the same reason above based on the law of identity.

The fourth (an existent thing and its essence is existent) is also impossible, al-Kindi said:³

To read more on this issue please see:

The Essence of Islamic Philosophy, By Mashhad Al-Allaf.

¹ Al-Kindi (1974): p.76.

² Al-Kindi (1974): p.77.

³ Al-Kindi (1974): p.77.