

FROM THE EDITOR

Russian culture has always aspired to be universal and all-inclusive, keen to show that “we love everything, we appreciate everything and we remember everything”.¹ Attention given by it to Islamic culture can be regarded as a particular aspect of its aspiration to universality. It took, however, quite a long time until this attention assumed a philosophical shape: systematic research on Islamic philosophy began in Russia (then USSR) only in the middle of the twentieth century². By 1990 we were able to produce a modern textbook of the history of classical Islamic philosophy³. After the collapse of the USSR, we had to go through a period of disarray and confusion, but, it seems, by the beginning of the new millennium we had more or less recovered: several important works on Islamic thought appeared in the early 2000s⁴ and by 2007 we (Russian philosophers-Islamicists) had prepared a large two-volume anthology of translated Islamic philosophical texts⁵. A number of other translation projects⁶ have also been carried out.

¹ This is the summary of the famous lines from Alexander Blok’s (1880—1921) poem «The Scythians»:

We love everything — the heat of cold numbers,
And the gift of divine visions;
We appreciate everything — the witty Gallic sense
And the obscure German genius.

We remember everything — the inferno of the streets of Paris,
And the cool of Venice,
The distant scent of lemon groves
And the dim piles of Cologne.

² The most remarkable achievements of the early stage of research were the anthology of translations «Избранные произведения мыслителей стран Ближнего и Среднего Востока» (The Selected Writings of the Thinkers of the Countries of the Near and Middle East) published in 1961, compiled by S. Grigoryan and A. Sagadeev, and A. Sagadeev’s monographs on Ibn Rushd (1973) and Ibn Sina (1980).

³ Ibrahim T., Sagadeev A. Classical Islamic Philosophy. Moscow: Progress, 1990.

⁴ Among which A. Smirnov’s pioneering book «Логика смысла: теория и ее приложение к анализу классической арабской философии и культуры» (The Logic of Sense: Theory and Its Application to the Analysis of Classical Arabic Philosophy and Culture. Moscow, 2001) must be particularly mentioned.

⁵ Sadly, for a number of reasons its publication has been delayed.

⁶ Including the translations of the works of such significant authors as Ibn Sīnā, Ghazālī, Suhrawardī, Ibn ‘Arabī, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, Mīr Dāmād, Mullā Ṣadrā and Ibn Khaldūn.

In the early 2008 the department of the philosophy of Islamic civilization was established at the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. It is hoped that this recent development will give the researchers of Islamic philosophy in Russia a chance to more directly address the arising academic and wider social challenges.

The idea to establish a yearbook of Islamic philosophy, published jointly by the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Iranian Institute of Philosophy, did not appear yesterday. On the contrary, it has a rather long history, being discussed at a number of meetings between Russian and Iranian scholars. A formal agreement between both sides was reached as early as in October 2004 during the visit of the delegation of the Institute of Philosophy (RAS) to Iran. However, the idea needed five more years to ripen fully. During this period, the former and current heads of the cultural representation at the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia Mr Mahdi Imanipour and Mr Abudhar Ibrahim never ceased to show their interest in the issue. In the middle of 2007 the Islamic Culture Research Foundation was established in Moscow and its president Mr Hamid Hadavi soon pledged all necessary financial and technical support for the publication of the periodical on a yearly basis. Encountering with such invariable interest and unswerving support, we eventually became ashamed of our hesitation and constant referring to the tiny but seemingly insurmountable obstacles. “Let’s do it!” we finally said to ourselves at the end of 2008.

When this principal decision was taken, the next two steps were to decide about the title and the general format of the yearbook. After some discussions, it was decided to entitle the publication *Ishrāq*. The word, which translates into English as ‘illumination’, has been employed as a technical term in Islamic philosophy for nearly a thousand years (since the time of Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1153—1191) and perhaps even since the age of Ibn Sina (980—1037)), referring to the Illuminative, namely, intuitive, wisdom, which is based upon presential knowledge (*‘ilm ḥuḍūrī*), i.e., direct knowledge of the known thing through an illuminative relation (*iḍāfa ishrāqiyya*), without a formal intermediary. In its wider sense the term *Ishrāq* alludes to intellectual intuition in general and, consequently, to any kind of knowledge which surpasses the purely formal or representational (*sūrī*) one. In its narrower sense it refers to a specific philosophical trend, established by Suhrawardī and developed by his followers, — the trend which for many centuries has been (and, in a sense, still is) the dominant one in Iran.

As for the format, we decided to make the first issue simply a volume of articles, contributed by a number of invited distinguished scholars (similar to *Festschrift*), without proposing any common topic for discussion. Without an undue modesty, we can proudly say that a good number of first-rate scholars (some of them — unrivalled experts in their particular fields) have honoured us with their intellectual presence at this gathering of the friends of the *Ishrāq*. We sincerely hope that they all will become our regular contributors and that other eminent scholars will join their company in the future issues.

Beginning with the second issue, the format of the yearbook will be partially changed. The editorial board has decided to propose some particular topic as the central theme for each issue. A group of academics known as experts in the relevant field will then be invited to write articles on the proposed topic or to translate certain texts dealing with the problem. It is expected that the commissioned articles and translations will constitute roughly half of the volume. Another half of the volume will consist of the articles of our regular and would-be regular contributors, arranged in traditional sections (such as ontology, epistemology and logics, moral philosophy, philosophy of religion, philosophy of art etc.).

The main topic of the following issue will normally be announced in the preceding one. Thus, the central topic of the second issue will be the philosophy of Illumination.

The objective of the periodical is threefold: first, to encourage interest in Islamic philosophy and the philosophical aspects of Islamic culture not only in Russia but among the Russian and English-speaking audience worldwide. Second, to provoke discussions among scholars and researchers on important issues of Islamic philosophy, in hope that such discussions will result in an insightful reassessment of certain well-established but inaccurate philosophical beliefs. Third, to bring attention to the major research projects on Islamic thought that have recently been or are currently being carried out in Russia, Iran and other countries.

All researchers on Islamic philosophy (including Kalām and theoretical Sufism) and the related fields (Islamic science, art, literature and music) are kindly invited to contribute their articles and/or annotated translations of important Islamic texts.

In conclusion, I would like to wholeheartedly thank all the eminent scholars who have kindly contributed their articles to the first volume of the yearbook and our Iranian friends who provided the necessary spiritual and material support for its publication and to express a hope that the circle of the friends, contributors and supporters of the *Ishrāq* will only widen in the future.