

**DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC of the project
“The Reception of Ancient Philosophy in Mulla Sadra’s Writings”**

In the last decades, we have witnessed efforts of many researchers to change the traditional image of Muslim philosophy. It is true that even previously we did hear quite often about the civilisational development that was generated by the new religion of Islam and the golden age of science and philosophy in which religious traditions and philosophy, adopted in the Middle Ages from the Greeks, coexisted. But still far too little attention has been paid to the fact that the traditional Islamic philosophy and rational theology did not end in the Middle Ages and even today they have their interesting and original representatives.

The present project aims to look at one of the most influential and original philosophical traditions of later Islamic philosophy. This objective is consistent with the growing interest of academic centres in Islamic (classical and modern) philosophy as well as in the phenomenon of Shi‘i philosophy. It is evidenced by new academic programmes in Middle Eastern studies, Islamic studies and philosophy and an increasing number of publications in the field of Islamic philosophy.

The project “The Reception of Ancient Philosophy in Mulla Sadra’s writings” takes as its subject one of the most interesting but still insufficiently researched aspects of the philosopher’s thought whose most widely acclaimed achievement was making a kind of revolution in the concept of essence and existence—namely, Sadra argued that existence, not essences, is what always and in a primary manner lasts. The project will analyse the ideas of Mulla Sadra in which one can see how creatively inspired he was by the achievements of Greece’s great philosophical traditions. Mulla Sadra was not only the author of innovative concepts, but also a careful reader of the works of his predecessors. In other words, the thinker saw himself not only as a philosopher, but also as a historian of philosophy and such a historico-philosophical analysis was his special method. The project is therefore guided by the assumption that even the most innovative ideas of Mulla Sadra cannot be fully understood without proper reference to earlier traditions.

The project outlines three traditions that are the most important sources of inspiration in Mulla Sadra’s philosophy. Listing them in the order of importance, we should point to: the Neoplatonic tradition, Peripateticism, and the Pre-Socratic and Hellenistic philosophies. As for the first, Neoplatonic tradition, it was known from several translations of Greek works, of which the most important was the translation of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, falsely attributed to Aristotle and known as *Aristotle’s Theology*. The project will, above all, examine the principle known as the possibility of the nobler that describes the necessity of all beings to have a cause more supreme and perfect than themselves. As far as the Aristotelian tradition is concerned, a feature that distinguishes Mulla Sadra from other philosophers in the Islamic world is that despite the attribution of many Neo-Platonic works to Aristotle and the systematic inter-penetration of Neo-Platonic and Peripatetic thought, he was able to bring out the original concepts of the Stagirite. This was, for example, the concept of soul. Aristotle proclaimed hylomorphism, that is, a theory arguing for the composition of living organisms from body and soul. Mulla Sadra returned to a version of hylomorphism and developed it in his own philosophy. The third and last tradition analysed in the project is Pre-Socratic and Hellenistic philosophy. Here, particular attention should be paid to the Islamisation and even the Shi‘itisation of Pre-Socratic and Hellenistic thinkers who are perceived on the one hand as precursors of Islamic philosophers, and on the other hand, often appear side by side with figures known from Islamic folklore and poetry, and are at the same level of gnostic knowledge and sanctity as Islamic sages and saints. The project puts forward the thesis that one of the specific features of Shi‘i philosophy is precisely this openness to the entire philosophical tradition of ancient Greece.