

FOREWORD

The papers collected in the present volume were originally delivered at the conference “Divine Men and Women in the History and Society of Late Hellenism”, organised at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków on the 24th–25th June, 2010. The conference was a unique gathering of international scholars, who cherish the tradition of Hellenism in Late Antiquity and venerate its “divine” representatives (*theioi andres*), and who deeply identify with the moral values and philosophical concepts of those times and the Neoplatonic doctrine in general. The conference gathered many eminent scholars, who brought with them new perspectives on ancient sources, presenting divine men and women of Neoplatonic era, their multifaceted activities and the entire range of their scientific pursuits and virtues.

The starting point of the reflection course we embarked upon was Pythagoras — a philosopher of superhuman perfection and a model for the divine men in late Hellenism and, particularly, Apollonius of Tyana — his 1st c. AD “embodiment”. We investigated the means of the philosopher’s divine ascent and — contrary to the idealised model of *theios aner* — we also focused on his social and reformatory role. We did not, however, gloss over some of the philosopher’s personal imperfections, despite his holiness. Other conference papers discussed various figures of divine women, such as the high priestess Ispatale, Sosipatra, Hypatia and Empress Eudocia. We also learned about the Christian reception of the divine man, we probed into the aspects of divinisation in Sufi mysticism, and we examined the basic material framework of intellectual activities of the divine men on the basis of archaeological findings during excavations in late antique lecture halls at Kom El-Dikka in Alexandria. A most surprising and eye-opening *post scriptum* of the conference was a presentation of a divine man of late antique Cynicism — the mysterious Salutios of Emesa.

This was our “sacred” *negotium*, upon which we cherished our less elevated *otium*, consisting of walks around the royal city of Kraków as well as cheerful and witty conversations during old-Polish-style feasts redolent of exquisite food, wine and good vodka in Kawaleria restaurant. On the way we were accompanied by the

spirit of Apollonius of Tyana, who, according to the secret doctrine of esotericists, had placed his charm — a talisman (*chakram*) on Wawel Hill, where the Kraków royal castle and cathedral are located. The talisman is still radiating the creative energy, which we felt during our visit to the oldest part of the Wawel castle where the talisman is buried. Undoubtedly, the divine men had their part in our gathering, which was, thanks to gods and good *daimones*, a fruitful and inspiring time of scholarly and friendly **henosis**. Therefore, I want to express my deep thanks and appreciation to the Colleagues who took part in the conference in Kraków.

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