

## Introduction

Ancient Greece makes one of the foundations and pillars of European cultural and historical identity, irrespective of the place of our abode on the Continent or the language which we use. This permanent and visible influence manifests itself in many areas and provides a continuing source of inspiration. We keep using the name of the Continent – Europe, which derives from the Greek Εὐρώπη, since it is by this name that the ancient Hellenic people, as the first ones, made reference to the part of the world that we inhabit. Young people, mostly at schools, get acquainted with the pantheon of Greek gods, goddesses and heroes, whose actions and deeds are exemplary or serve as models of behaviour (or a possible warning at the same time) even in contemporary times. Undeniably, the dominant position of the Christian faith in Europe crystalized under the strong influence of ancient and medieval Greek philosophers and Church Fathers. However, it is not only the mythology and the religion, but other aspects of life as well which abound in references to the Greek legacy. The science of today is saturated with terms of Greek origin such as the ones of our primary interest at the moment – history (Greek: ιστορία) and philosophy (Greek: φιλοσοφία), or museum (Greek: μουσεῖον), the last of which was linked by the Hellenic people to a place of cult or a temple of Muses – women-goddesses who were patronesses of arts. The facilities, in turn, developed further into the first world centres of science – forerunners of universities. The mysterious and rich world of gifts granted by the Muses has fascinated people for centuries. The daughters of the principal god Zeus and Titaness Mnemosyne bestowed inspiration on many generations of actors, poets, writers and lastly – scientists themselves. From the viewpoint of the present volume, the most important were the following: Clio – Muse of History and her elder sister, Calliope – Muse of Philosophy. And it is they who provided inspiration for the authors of the contributions included in this volume and it is within these domains of science supported by both patronesses that we are moving in this work, often presenting to the reader things that are very distant from the times of ancient Greeks.

Thus, we present the reader with a volume containing scientific works written in English by academics of the Institute of History of the University of Opole, historians and philosophers. Many of them are the effect of our additional research interests that run parallel to or even depart from the main themes we deal with on everyday basis. Consequently, we have included here works connected with both earlier epochs and modern history. There are also philosophical texts and interdisciplinary contributions to be found here. The volume was arranged according to the alphabetical order of the names of the individual authors, not according to the themes investigated or the classical chronology. Such an order has allowed us to better present the broad spectrum of the contributors' interests as well as corresponds to the interdisciplinary character of this work much more accurately. After all, we are linked by Clio and Calliope.

The opening work by Marek Białokur is devoted to the educational and popularizing potential of the parliamentary acts establishing patrons of individual years in Poland in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The author undertook here to synthetically present the essence of the very idea of the bills passed by the *Sejm* and the Senate of the Republic of Poland as well as depicted the personages, events and ideas which have been recognized in this way.

The second article, contributed jointly by Magdalena Przysiężna-Pizarska and myself, treats about the rules and the origins of the historical board game *Nine men's morris*, the board for which was carved in stone and revealed by a research team of the University of Opole in Santa Maria di Compogrosso in Italy and also in the Cathedral of Opole. This article is followed by my own text (the third one in the Contents) which focuses on the Promethean myth used by Sir Terry Pratchett and his illustrator Paul Kidby in the fantasy novel *Last Hero* which contains a great number of references to the history and mythology of ancient Greeks, Persians – followers of Zoroastrianism, as well as Normans and Scandinavians.

The fourth contribution in the volume was submitted by Tomasz Ciesielski. The author transfers us into the tragic and fascinating, at the same time, epoch of the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,

concentrating on bulletins – handwritten texts in the form of letters circulating as classical correspondence, which were created in response to a social need or were commissioned by individuals. An example of the latter were the bulletins prepared by Jędrzej Kitowicz between 1772-1776 for one of the dignitaries of the Commonwealth – Michał Lipski. The article offers an extensive insight into Kitowicz's bulletins, presenting his social background and career as well as the information content of his output.

The successive two works are authored by Adrianna Dawid. The first (number five in the Contents) deals with the folk uprising that broke out in the German Democratic Republic in 1953 and its repercussions among the German minority in Opole Voivodeship. The community of autochthons of German origin counted on an escalation of the rebellion going on in the land of the eastern neighbour and its spilling out onto the territory of Poland and also on transforming it into another global conflict which could lead to restoration of the pre-war borderlines. In the other of her articles, the author focused on the last days of Adolf Hitler in light of the film *Der Untergang* [Downfall]. The scenario for the film was based on the latest scientific establishments of historians and memoirs of witnesses of the events featured in the film. As a result we come to deal with one of the most faithful film presentations of the last days of Hitler's life and the circumstances of the fall of The Third Reich.

The next author, Grzegorz Francuz, seeks an answer to the question of the moral status of animals within the framework proposed by John Rawls in his theory of justice. In the article, he also presents difficulties which arise on the ground of this conception, where the question of the moral position of non-human beings is asked.

The article of Bartłomiej Janicki, in turn, is devoted to the narration of contemporary Polish historical comics which aim to educate the reader through presenting key historical figures, moments and events. The author undertook to discuss the fact that comics narratives make reference to forms known in literature or fine arts, beside being an interesting alternative in the didactic process.

Antoni Maziarz, in his work in the next part of this volume, presents the process of rebirth of the Order of Saint Benedict (Black Monks) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author proves that monks of the revived monasteries concentrated on developing such domains as liturgy, Gregorian chant, science, missionary activity and also engaged in educational and publishing activity, despite obstacles put up by lay authorities.

The following article written by Marcin Pietrzak treats about the community of Anonymous Alcoholics and the First Christian Church on the margin of John Dominic Crossan's concept of a commonwealth. Thus, it takes us to the New World and presents problems which have become universal. Here, the analysis made by the author allows comprehending in what way a group of social outcasts can build a community based on mutual understanding, freedom from shame and acceptance of the idea of a superior force whose power may be granted to individuals solely through the commonwealth.

The last part of the volume contains the article by Magdalena Ujma, which includes comments to the genealogy of Cracow's Mayor Erazm Czeczotka Tłokiński (died in 1578) in light of the available primary source, that is the Crown Register (*Metrica Regni Poloniae*). The author proves the usefulness of the Register in reconstructing the Mayor's origins and his career, the crowning of which was his obtaining nobility and assuming a noblemen's surname.

May I express my humble hope that this first collection of articles which were inspired by the two Muses – Clio and Calliope – the patronesses of historians and philosophers, will find a welcome reception and appreciation of the reader.

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*Translated from Polish by Jacek Jędrzejowski*