

## APPROACHES TO PYTHAGORAS AND PLATO

The Centennial Anniversary of  
Holger Thesleff (4.12.1924–3.10.2023)

*Finnish Institute at Athens*  
4–5 December 2024

Lassi Jakola (FIA) and Pauliina Remes (Uppsala)

Holger Thesleff (1924–2023), a Finnish philologist and former professor of Greek philology at the University of Helsinki, died on 3 October 2023 at the age of 98. Thesleff was an internationally acknowledged scholar of ancient Greek philology and philosophy. His extraordinarily long scientific career spanned no less than 9 decades, from late 1940s to early 2020s. Thesleff's first book *Djupsjösegelare* (1951) documented the last commercial circumnavigation ever conducted on a motorless sailing vessel, the four-masted windjammer *Passat*. And while his early scientific work focused on Greek language and linguistics (e.g. *Studies in Intensification* [1954] and *Studies in the Greek Superlative* [1955]), internationally Thesleff is probably best known for his work on ancient Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Pythagoreanism.

In the 1960s, Thesleff published two important studies on the Pythagorean tradition. *An Introduction to the Pythagorean Writings of the Hellenistic Period* (1961) and *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period* (1965) have maintained their position as classics in the field of Pythagorean pseudepigrapha to present days. In Plato scholarship, Thesleff is known for three suggestive and methodologically ground-breaking monographs: *Studies in the Styles of Plato* (1967), *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (1982) and *Studies in Plato's Two-Level Model* (1999), now conveniently available in *Platonic Patterns* (2009).

Besides his scholarly work, predominantly written in English, Thesleff contributed to popularizing Plato and ancient intellectual history in Finland and in other Nordic countries. He authored two introductory books on Plato and his philosophy (*Platon* [1987] and *Platonin arvoitus* [‘The riddle of Plato’, 2011]), and, together with Juha Sihvola, wrote a particularly wide-ranging introduction to ancient philosophy and intellectual history (*Antiikin filosofia ja aatemaailma* [1994]). In 2006, Thesleff was awarded the prize of the Alfred Kordelin foundation for his great merits as a promoter of European humanism and classical heritage in Finland.

The symposium *Approaches to Pythagoras and Plato*, to be organized at the Finnish institute at Athens (FIA) by Lassi Jakola (FIA) and Pauliina Remes (Uppsala) on the occasion of Thesleff's centennial anniversary (4 December 2024), celebrates Thesleff's scientific work, focusing especially on his contributions to Plato scholarship and the study of Pythagoreanism.

We invite contributors to revisit select key ideas, methods and proposals of Thesleff's scholarly work. The contributors are free to evaluate these ideas' merits critically, to explore their broader repercussions, or to pick up some Thesleffian theme or approach for further developments. We also invite contributions that illuminate the significance of Thesleff's national work for international circles.