# VI

# The Divine Wanderer: Travel and Divinization in Late Antiquity

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It is early morning. Gazing through the dust and growing heat we see a lone figure rise over the crest of the nearby hill and move along the road toward the town. His step is steady and determined, as if he has been walking a long way and will walk further yet. As the figure draws closer to the town gate we can see that he wears a cloak woven of exotic reds and blues. The staff upon which he leans is carved with strange signs, and several amulets sway from his neck. He approaches in silence until he stands under the arch of the gate. There he stops, raises his eyes to take in the small crowd lining the main street, and calls out in a voice like a trumpet: "Today salvation has come to this town! I am the hand of God!"

This is the kind of wandering shaman that often comes to mind when we think of divinized human beings in late antiquity. It was Richard Reitzenstein (1978) who in 1910 first established this image of "wandering servants of

individual Oriental deities" who used "prediction and miracle" to gain a hearing (1978: 25). Ludwig Bieler (1935–36) placed much less emphasis on such itinerant proselytizing when he published his magisterial work on the *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ*, the "divine man." Yet Reitzenstein's image of the wandering divine missionary has remained influential, due in part to works on Christian origins such as Dieter Georgi's study of the "false prophets" in 2 Corinthians and T.J. Weeden's investigation of the background to Mark's Gospel.[1] Ironically, the association between travel and divinization has also been reinforced by recent attempts to move beyond the "divine man" (θέος ἄνηρ) paradigm toward a more generic category of "holy men" (e.g., Anderson 1994). Peter Brown (1982: 131) has complained of the way in which fourth-century Christian ascetics are treated together with earlier Greco-Roman philosophers, despite vast differences in behaviour and social function. Anderson, for example, groups the Jewish prophet Jeshua son of Ananias (Josephus, *War* 6.300–9) together with the anonymous figure in Dio Cassius (79[80].18.1ff.), who claims the identity of Alexander of Macedon and leads a Bacchic procession through Moesia and Thrace (Anderson 1994: 1–2). Not only is there a confusion of religious frameworks in this juxtaposition, but it also obscures the very different roles that travel played in the activity of the two figures. Jeshua was essentially static, active only at the centre of Jewish life in Jerusalem's temple. The Bacchic wanderer, on the other hand, was constantly moving on a sacred journey that helped define his identity.

In this chapter I try to bring some clarity to these issues by examining the ways in which travel functions in the lives of four divinized human beings as they are depicted in sources from the second to the early fourth century CE: Philostratus' biography of Apollonius of Tyana, the two lives of Pythagoras by Porphyry and Iamblichus, and Lucian's satirical attacks on Alexander of Abonuteichos and Peregrinus Proteus. All of these figures attracted circles of devotees who saw in them a divinity beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. What is more, the late antique authors who depict these "divine men" all connect their superhuman reputation with some pattern of geographic movement. As we survey these literary depictions, however, we find wide variation in the precise patterns of the divine men's travels. Indeed, what these figures seem to share is not a common itinerant mode of life, but rather a symbolic world in which geography can be deployed in several different ways to emphasize one's extraordinary status and nature.

## Apollonius in Philostratus' Work

In Philostratus' biography of Apollonius we can distinguish seven stages of the sage's activity, based on shifting patterns of travel.[2] (1) Apollonius travels as a child in order to gain a teacher suitable for his precocious intellect. (2) He reaches adulthood and begins an itinerant life in the regions surrounding Tyana. It is during this phase that the sage begins the pattern of public preaching for which he became known. (3) Still a young man, he breaks off this itinerant teaching in order to travel east, to study the wisdom of the Brahmins in India.

(4) On returning from his journey east, Apollonius resumes his life of itinerant teaching in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. Where Philostratus provides actual time references, these suggest that the sage often spent several months or more in one location (see, for example, 1.39; 3.50; 4.34; 5.18; 8.18, 24, 30), following a pattern of movement reminiscent of other Greco-Roman philosophers and sophists.[3] There is no suggestion that Apollonius founded communities of his followers, but he is accompanied on these journeys by an "association" (κοινόν) of between 5 and 35 followers (4.34, 37; 5.43). This stage culminates with his journey to Rome and confrontation with the antiphilosophical policies of Nero.

(5) After the crisis in Rome is resolved, Apollonius leaves the Greco-Roman heartland again for another phase of travel to distant lands. This time he moves west and south, visiting Spain, the islands west of Italy, and finally Egypt and Ethiopia. Philostratus tells us that after this tour of the south, the sage travelled less frequently and only to lands that he had already visited (6.35). No other journeys are narrated outside Greece, Ionia, and Italy.

(6) On returning from Egypt to Ionia and Greece, Apollonius begins agitating against the harsh policies of Emperor Domitian. Instead of waiting to be arrested, the sage travels again to Rome and confronts the imperial power for a second time, now facing the Emperor himself. (7) At the culmination of his trial in Rome, Apollonius is miraculously translated from the imperial court to Dicaearchia and resumes his itinerant life of teaching in Asia Minor and Greece until his mysterious death.

### *Travelling in Search of Wisdom*

Since Philostratus associates the divinity of Apollonius very closely with his wisdom, it is important to note how the sage's travels demonstrate his unique insight. In the beginning of the text the philosopher is forced to travel in order to find a teacher suited to his precocious abilities. As a

child he is brought to Tarsus to train with Euthydemus, "the teacher from Phoenicia" (*VA* 1.7), but he finds the city "little conducive to the philosophic life" (1.7).[4] Moving on, he finds Aegae "congenial to one who would be a philosopher" (1.7), but his teacher turns out to be a superficial Epicurean (1.7). Instead of leaving Aegae, however, the young Apollonius takes up residence in the local temple of Asclepius (1.8). Now that he has been "fledged and winged" in philosophy by "some higher power (τινος κρεíττονος)" (1.7), there is no one in the surrounding regions fit to teach Apollonius except a god.

The eastern journey of the mature Apollonius then forms, as Elsner has observed, an allegory of the philosopher's journey to the heights of esoteric wisdom. It takes him through Nineveh, Mesopotamia, and Babylon (1.21–2.1) to the edge of the known world: India (2:17–3:50; Elsner 1997: 23; Anderson 1986: 129). The remoteness and foreignness of these regions, highlighted by long excurses on exotic flora, fauna, peoples, and cultures,[5] represent the fact that Apollonius is moving further and further outside the realm of ordinary experience. At the same time, the people whom the sage encounters grow increasingly wise the closer he comes to the eastern boundary of the world.

In Nineveh, Apollonius is still encountering priests and prophets who lack even an understanding of their own cults (1.19). Philostratus tells us that it is further east, in Babylon, that the sage "learned some things" from the Magi "and taught them others" (1.26). These Babylonians are "wise men," even though they are not wise "in all respects" (1.26).

As Apollonius and his disciple Damis cross the Caucasus on their way to the Indus Valley, the sage compares their high mountain path to the difficult life that prepares one to ascend even higher into divine wisdom (2.5). Philostratus' text grows thick here with reports of the exotic wonders beyond Babylon, signalling that we have left entirely the world of the familiar and are approaching the absolute edge of the known. In this "region beyond," Apollonius meets the Indian king, the first person to be acknowledged unreservedly as a "philosopher" (2.25–26). Apollonius gives the king no instruction or correction, advising him only on the judgment of one difficult case (2.39). The royal banquet to which Apollonius is invited recalls Plato's *Symposium* (2.28–37).

It is beyond the Indian city, however, in the remote stronghold of the Brahmins, that Apollonius finds "men who are unfeignedly wise" (ἄνδρας σοφοὺς ἀτεχνῶς) (3.12; cf. 3.16). These Brahmins practise levitation (3.15, 17), prescience (3.16), and the self-knowledge that was the elusive

goal of Greek philosophy (τὸ ἑαυτὸν γνῶναι [3.18]). The sage had stubbornly resisted the protocols and entry requirements of Babylon; here, for the first time, he submits passively to the Brahmins' instructions. Likewise, in the Brahmin leader Iarchus we meet for the first time one who can correct Apollonius' own wisdom (3.25). The sage becomes a pupil. The remoteness and impregnable strength of the Brahmins' castle seems to represent the extreme difficulty involved in attaining this higher wisdom (cf. 3.12, 41).

Those who do gain access to this complete wisdom, however, are profoundly transformed. Here Apollonius remembers his previous lives (3.23) and performs his first wondrous healing (3.38–39). Recognizing his changed state, his hosts predict that Apollonius will "be esteemed a god by many (θεὸν τοῖς πολλοῖς εἶναι δόξειν), not merely after his death but when he was still alive" (3.50; Elsner 1997: 31).

On one level this journey east explains how Apollonius comes to possess a wisdom above all others; he has sat under teachers living far beyond the range of most Greek and Roman travel. So when an outraged Alexandrian priest later asks, "Who is so clever that he can make corrections to the rites of the Egyptians?" Apollonius replies, "anyone with a little wisdom (πᾶς σοφός), if only he come from India" (5.25; cf. 4.16; 5.30, 37; Elsner 1997: 31). The transformation that Apollonius undergoes at the limits of human geography and wisdom is so profound that afterwards, his insight and piety outstrip that of even the wisest inhabitants of the ordinary world (Elsner 1997: 29–30). At the same time, this same journey is symbolic of the ascent to wisdom itself, an ascent that takes Apollonius beyond the bounds of ordinary human nature and brings about his transformation into something divine.

### ***Travelling to Demonstrate Wisdom***

#### *Cultic Reform*

Even as the young Apollonius journeys east, however, his travels provide the opportunity for Philostratus to demonstrate how wise he is already. Each new location furnishes a fresh cast of fools to correct. Even though the sage maintains strict silence throughout his early travels around Pamphylia and Cilicia, he is able to quell discord and teach justice with a mere glance or gesture (1.14–15). Already at this early stage, Apollonius is concerned with the integrity of local cults. He prefers the lonely "solemn places" to the Syrian cities with their temples full of "men half-barbarous and uncultivated" (1.16). As time passes, however, the philosopher begins

a deliberate program of cultic reform, "correcting" the priests in Greek cities and making "suggestions" for the "improvement" of "barbarian" rites (1.16). Later, in Nineveh, we are told that Apollonius drew "wiser conclusions" about a cult image "than could the priests and prophets" who maintained it (1.19). In Babylonia the sage helps the Eritreans restore their tomb cults (1.24). In Babylon itself, Apollonius rejects the traditional horse sacrifice, instead simply offering frankincense to the sun (1.31). All of this serves to contrast his cultic expertise with the comparative foolishness of priests and worshippers alike.

With his return to Greco-Roman civilization, this cultic reformation becomes the primary focus of Apollonius' travels through Ionia, Greece, Crete, and Italy. At the outset of the biography, Philostratus says that he himself visited many temples and oracles (4.24) where the sage had restored "long-neglected and decayed rites" (1.2): at Pergamum (4.11), on Methymna (4.13), at Athens (4.19, 21), at Sparta (4.31), and at Olympia (4.28). Apollonius' journey to Egypt is again dominated by the sage's restoration of cults (e.g., 5.25–26), and he even presumes to correct the rites of the wisest "naked sages" (6.5, 11, 14, 18–19, 22).

In those locales where we do not see Apollonius correct the local cult we usually find him at least visiting the local shrines (4.11, 14, 23, 34, 40; 6.4), where he sometimes spends his nights (see, for example, 1.16; 4.31, 40; 5.20). As Elsner (1997: 25–26) has observed, these travels are not unlike the pilgrimages familiar to us from Pausanias, Lucian (*Syrian Goddess*), and Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 36), and from Roman emperors such as Hadrian (*Hist. Aug. V. Hadr.* 13–14.7) and Septimius Severus (*Hist. Aug. V. Sev.* 3.4–7; 17.4). Yet the usual trope of pilgrimage is transformed so that Apollonius comes to these shrines as master, not as suppliant (so Elsner 1997: 26–27).

Given the influence of Reitzenstein, it is important to note here that Apollonius is not depicted as introducing foreign, Eastern cults; rather, he is reforming and strengthening the existing patterns of worship in each locale. If anything he comes as a Greek to correct the mistaken rites of Syria, Nineveh, Babylon, and Egypt—the very sources from which Reitzenstein's itinerant missionaries were thought to draw their cultic inspiration. True, the Indian sages are recognized as possessing profound cultic wisdom, but Philostratus never depicts Apollonius as introducing Indian rites to the Mediterranean cities. Likewise, the sage is only initiated into the Epidaurian mystery later in life, and Philostratus makes no suggestion that his travels were motivated by the desire to initiate others into

such mysteries.[6] Apollonius' ritual wisdom is, instead, expressed primarily in purifying the mainstream, public cults of his native Greco-Roman world.

*Philosophical Teaching*

As Apollonius wanders through the Mediterranean world he also demonstrates his superior wisdom through his philosophical teaching.[7] Already in Babylon the sage advises the king concerning several problems having to do with "conduct," with "practice and duty" (1.32; see 1.36, 37). When he returns to Ionia and Greece, this kind of teaching becomes a mainstay of his activities, as when he gives public speeches in Ephesus and Smyrna on matters of morality and government (4.2–3, 5–9; cf. 4.22–27; 4.30–33). The author comments that as Apollonius departed for Egypt, he gave "much good counsel to the cities" (5.20; cf. 5.26). He also provided private advice on various issues, including civic duty (4.32), the morality of selling idols (5.20), the priority of education over money (5.22), and gluttony (5.23). Moreover, Apollonius is portrayed as a master of all fields of knowledge.

Once again, Apollonius' arrival in Egypt demonstrates his philosophical superiority, as in the tale of his interactions with the clearly inferior naked sages (6.5, 7–11, 20–22). The conversion of the youngest naked sage to Apollonius' side simply underlines the reality that his former masters are no match for the Indian philosophy of the man from Tyana (6.12, 15–16). In journeying to Egypt, Apollonius thus confronts his only true rivals within the Mediterranean sphere and utterly defeats them with his discursive and dialectical genius.

*Wonder Working*

Though Apollonius is often remembered, in the modern context, primarily as a miracle worker, it is interesting to note that Philostratus mentions far less about such wonders than about his cultic and philosophical activities. True, in Pergamum the sage is said to have healed many people (4.11), and in Rome he raises a dead bride to life (4.45), but he is not depicted primarily as a wandering healer. There are passing references to Apollonius' exorcisms (4.44), and there is an account of the exorcism of an Athenian youth (4.20). Yet these activities are rare in Philostratus' narrative, especially when compared with other late antique hagiography (see Anderson 1986: 138).

Moreover, Philostratus tends to explain these powers as more or less mechanical applications of Apollonius' superior knowledge of the world.

So he can subdue the ghost of a satyr in Ethiopia, not because of his own innate power, but because he knows how to manipulate such spirits (6.27; cf. 4.25). In fact, miraculous performances are not limited to Apollonius in the narrative. Besides the Brahmins, the leader of the Egyptian gymnosophists is able to command a tree to salute Apollonius. This miracle is only performed, however, in support of the more important claim to wisdom (6.10). These acts of applied wisdom do not define the profession of the naked sages any more than they are the focus of Apollonius' own travels (cf. 5.42). Much more emphasis is placed on the sage's foreknowledge, another product of his superior wisdom. Apollonius predicts a plague in Ephesus (4.4, 10), Nero's abortive attempt to cut through the Isthmus (5.7), the sinking of a ship (5.18), the escape of a condemned prisoner (5.24), and Vespasian's reconstruction of a temple in Rome (5.30). Yet while interpreting a portent at Rome, Apollonius denies being a prophet (μάντις), claiming instead that his foreknowledge comes through god-revealed wisdom (4.44). In several cases his foreknowledge is simply a matter of properly interpreting omens (see 4.34; 5.13; cf. 5.11).

If anything, the biographer seems to fight the idea that Apollonius was a magician, a γόης.[8] The working of wonders is certainly not the primary motive behind his itinerant lifestyle. Instead, Apollonius functions in his travels as a cultic expert and philosopher, as one who offers occasional proof of his exalted wisdom by performing a healing, exorcism, or prediction along the way (cf. Anderson 1986: 147–48).

### *Travel as Heroic Feat*

Apollonius' travels are the source of his supreme wisdom as well as his occasions for demonstrating it. Furthermore, those travels themselves represent a feat as courageous as the journeys of the mythic divine heroes. Even within the Roman Empire, travel remained dangerous. Outside of those imperial boundaries, travel was often regarded as a terrifying prospect. Hence Apollonius' journey east demonstrates his superior courage, as when the sage must overcome a Babylonian garrison by the sheer force of his wisdom or when he refuses to offer fitting reverence to the king (1.20–21, 27–28, 33, 35; cf. Elsner 1997: 30).

Elsner observes that in his account, Philostratus sets up an "insistent parallelism" between this quest and the heroic journeys of Heracles, Dionysus, and Alexander, all of whom were regarded as gods or demigods. What is more, Apollonius is shown to be greater than Alexander himself, for he succeeds where the conqueror failed and brings back

(intellectual) treasure from the depths of India (Elsner 1997: 30; see, for example, 2.9, 33, 43). Even Heracles and Dionysus failed to penetrate the castle of the Brahmins by force, yet Apollonius gains entry because of his great wisdom (2.33). Indeed, Apollonius himself says in 3.16 that this journey east is one "never till now accomplished by any of the inhabitants of my country." Apollonius' heroic courage does not disappear with his return from the East, as demonstrated in many instances when the dangers of travel fail to prevent his progress (4.13, 15; 5.43; 7.13). These travels therefore establish a connection between the sage and other figures who gained divine status.

***Travel as Political Conquest***

These themes—travel as a demonstration of the sage's wisdom, and travel as a courageous feat—come together when the journeys of Apollonius take on political significance. The sage's frequent admonitions on government or civic conduct often improve the life of the city (see, e.g., 1.23–24; 6.38, 41). In some cases, however, Apollonius must challenge or disobey the political powers in order to maintain his wise way of life.

This theme of philosophical confrontation with foolish political powers is played out primarily in the visits to Rome, which mark the culmination of two phases in the sage's itinerant travels. He first goes to the imperial city at the culmination of his journeys through Ionia, Greece, and Crete (4.35). Outside the city, he meets Philolaus, who warns him that the Emperor Nero is persecuting the philosophers (4.36). Apollonius nonetheless moves forward, determined to challenge this foolish and vice-ridden tyrant, going to war for wisdom (4.38). In this first confrontation, neither the consul (4.40) nor the Praetorian Prefect (4.43–44) is able to hold or prosecute him. Tigellinus, the prefect, is even converted to his philosophy (4.44). As Elsner observes, however, the sage does not confront Nero himself, for the emperor leaves for Greece before they can meet face to face (1997: 34).

Throughout Apollonius' journeys to the West and to Egypt this conflict between wisdom and Roman power simmers just beneath the surface. In Spain the sage seems to join with the governor of Baetica in conspiring to raise a war against Nero (5.10). In Alexandria, Vespasian seeks out Apollonius for his advice on government (5.27–37), and the sage wins from the Roman leader some concessions on behalf of the Egyptian people (5.28–29). Yet this all takes place before Vespasian has actually assumed the throne, and once in Rome the new emperor adopts oppressive policies

toward Greece (5.41). The sage's more successful contacts are with Vespasian's successor, Titus (6.29, 31–34); once again, though, these take place before Titus has assumed his role as emperor (see Elsner 1997: 34).

The direct confrontation between Apollonius and a ruling emperor must wait for the sage's second journey to the imperial capital at the climax of Philostratus' biography. Hearing of Domitian's cruelty and vice, Apollonius begins a campaign of sustained opposition to the emperor and his policies (7.5–9). Rather than wait to be arrested, the sage goes to Rome and confronts the foolish leader on his own territory (7.10). Apollonius is willing to die for "freedom" (ἐλευθερία) (7.14) and goes "to risk his life for men" (7.31; cf. 7.19; see Elsner 1997: 34). This time the confrontation ends with a clear victory for wisdom. Philostratus sums up the tone of the trial by observing that the sage "seems to regard the trial as a dialectical discussion, rather than as a race to be run for his life" (8.2). In the end, the emperor acquits Apollonius (8.5), who suddenly and miraculously disappears from the court (8.5, 8). Hence Domitian is made "a plaything (παίγνιον) of [Apollonius'] philosophy" (8.10). Soon after, in Ephesus, Apollonius is given a miraculous vision of the emperor's murder, even while the event is happening in Rome (8.25–26).

At the outset of the conflict with Domitian, Philostratus writes that "the conduct of philosophers under despotism is the truest touchstone of their character" and indicative of "courage" (7.1). According to this standard, Apollonius has accomplished a philosophical feat greater than any other (see 7.1–4). At this point Apollonius retires from his travels abroad, having accomplished wisdom's "sacred conquest over the empire as a whole" (Elsner 1997: 34).

### *Apollonius as Itinerant*

Returning to the guiding questions of this study, we can see first of all that Apollonius is depicted engaging in four different patterns of geographical movement: linear quests to the edges of the known world; itinerant wandering from city to city in the eastern Mediterranean; missions to Rome to confront imperial power; and periods of relative stability. If we ask about the motives driving these travel patterns, Apollonius' journey east is clearly a quest for wisdom, while his itinerant life in the Mediterranean world and in Egypt is motivated by his desire to spread that wisdom and so improve the lives of Greeks and barbarians alike. His relatively stationary periods are not as clearly motivated, but seem to arise in each case from a sense that one stage of his task is complete.

What role do these various patterns of movement play in Philostratus' characterization of his hero? His early travels in search of a teacher underscore his incomparable natural talents, and his journey to India explains both the source of his preternatural wisdom and his transformation into something more than a mere human being. Along the way, Apollonius' progress to Babylon and beyond provides opportunities to demonstrate his already superior wisdom through his cultic expertise, his philosophical teaching, and the sheer force of his wise presence. Once he has attained Indian wisdom, Apollonius' later itinerancy within the Mediterranean world serves as a stage on which to display the absolute supremacy of his philosophical and ritual knowledge. His journey to Egypt in particular emphasizes that the sage has nothing more to learn, for he has mastered all there is to know (see esp. 6.35; 7.7.3; Elsner 1997: 31).

Apollonius' journeys to Rome help depict him as a warrior for wisdom who finally conquers the greatest force of folly: imperial power misused. The sheer extent of Apollonius' travels, not only to the extreme East, but eventually to the other points of the compass as well, constitutes a feat greater even than those of Heracles, Asclepius, and Alexander. Hence by the end of his life this paragon of wisdom is worshipped openly at Olympia as a divine being (8.15). In the end the holy pilgrim and teacher ceases his movement and becomes himself a site of pilgrimage as people recognize the truth underscored by his conquest of Rome: that the wisdom of the divine Apollonius is itself the centre and fulcrum of the cosmos (cf. 1.8, 9, 10; 4.1, 25, 42; 8.15, 21).

## Pythagoras in Porphyry and Iamblichus

In discussing Apollonius' itinerant lifestyle of sacred pilgrimage, Elsner (1997: 26) suggests that Philostratus' audience "would surely have expected such activity from a holy man." By way of parallels, Elsner points to the lives of Pythagoras by Porphyry and Iamblichus. Here, Elsner repeats the long-standing tendency to view Apollonius and the late antique vision of Pythagoras as members of a single, common "type" of divine man whose activity involves a specific pattern of itinerancy (see M.J. Edwards 1993). To what extent are the patterns of movement adopted by Apollonius also present in these depictions of Pythagoras?

### *Travel and the Quest for Wisdom*

As with Apollonius, the childhood travels of Pythagoras are evidence of his precocious intelligence. In Porphyry, the pupil's "natural aptitude …

for all kinds of learning" prompts Mnesarch to take him as a student first to Tyre (Porph., *VP* 1) and later to Italy (Porph., *VP* 2).[9] The brilliant young man studies with Pherecydes in Syros, with Hermodamas in his hometown of Samos (Porph., *VP* 1), and with Anaximander in Miletus (Porph., *VP* 11; cf. Iamb., *VP* 2.11–12).

Having exhausted the wisest minds of the Greek world, Pythagoras is then said to have travelled in the East. Porphyry tells us that during Pythagoras' childhood trip to Tyre, Mnesarch introduced him to the Chaldeans, and so "caused him to benefit greatly from them" (Porph., *VP* 1). At the start of his adult career, however, he embarks on a quest for wisdom among the Egyptians, Hebrews, Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Arabs, and, finally, the Persian Magi (Porph., *VP* 6, 11). Porphyry emphasizes that each of these peoples enjoys a recognized expertise in some field of wisdom: Egyptians in geometry, Hebrews in dreams, Chaldeans in numbers and calculation, and Phoenicians in astronomy (Porph., *VP* 6, 11). From the Egyptian priests Pythagoras also learns three kinds of writing, which will serve as the root of his allegorical style of teaching; he also learns "something more" about the gods (Porph., *VP* 12). With the Chaldeans, Pythagoras is "cleansed from the impurities of his former life" (ἐκαθάρθη τὰ τοῦ προτέρου βίου λύματα); and Zoroaster teaches him "the theory of nature" (τόν τε περὶ φύσεως λόγον) along with "certain principles of the universe" (τίνες αἱ τῶν ὅλων ἀρχαί) (Porph., *VP* 12). Hence Pythagoras collects in his own person the various wisdoms of the world's wisest peoples (Porph., *VP* 12).

Though the itinerary of this journey is different in Iamblichus' account, the point is the same. In Sidon, Pythagoras spends time with "Phoenician hierophants" (Iamb., *VP* 3.14), and he also spends 22 years visiting holy sites in Egypt, where he studies astronomy and geometry (Iamb., *VP* 4.18–19). He then spends twelve years with the Magi, learning the "perfect worship of the gods" and reaching "the highest point in knowledge of numbers, music, and other mathematical sciences" (Iamb., *VP* 4.19; trans. by Dillon and Hershbell 1991).

Thus both Porphyry and Iamblichus find the source of Pythagoras' wisdom in his early tour of the East. The geography and chronology of this trip are not the same as those of Apollonius' eastern journey.[10] Yet in both accounts the general structure and function of this eastern journey is highly reminiscent of Apollonius' quest to India.

***Activities in Greece and Italy***

There are also similarities between the later life of Pythagoras in these two accounts and the later Mediterranean journeys of Apollonius. Pythagoras, too, has a fascination with shrines and sanctuaries, not only in the East (Porph., *VP* 7; Iamb., *VP* 4.18; 5.25), but also in Greece. In at least some cases he too contributes constructively to these cults (e.g., Porph., *VP* 16, 17; Iamb., *VP* 5.25). Both Porphyry and Iamblichus tell us that much of Pythagoras' time was spent teaching philosophy, often in public (e.g., Porph., *VP* 18–19; Iamb., *VP* 7.34; 8.35–11.57). Iamblichus even ascribes to Pythagoras the same kind of influence over the dangers of the sea that Apollonius seems to exercise (Iamb., *VP* 3.16), and he extols the philosopher's courage (ἀνδρείας) in travelling alone through uncivilized lands (Iamb. *VP* 32.214).

Also, Iamblichus and Porphyry both emphasize the potential conflict between philosophy and political powers. Both say that Pythagoras went into exile from Samos because the tyranny of Polycrates become "too extreme" for a "free man" to tolerate (Porph., *VP* 9, 16; cf. Iamb., *VP* 2.11). It is another political conflict, this time with Cylon of Croton, that marks the end of the philosopher's public career. Enraged that Pythagoras will not accept him for teaching, the tyrant burns down the house where the Pythagoreans are gathered (Porph., *VP* 54–56; Iamb., *VP* 35.248–53). There is no vindication for the philosopher, however, no victory like that of Apollonius over Domitian. Pythagoras is said to end his days facing the closed gates of hostile cities, as a refugee in the sanctuary of the Muses at Metapont, or in grief-stricken suicide (Porph., *VP* 56–57; Iamb., *VP* 35.249; though see 35.261–64). Still, this story, like the story of Apollonius, comes to its climax with a great confrontation between wisdom and the temporal ruler.

At the same time, there are striking *differences* between the Mediterranean wanderings of Apollonius and the later activities of Pythagoras. Though Pythagoras continues to travel, he is not depicted as itinerant in any proper sense. In both Porphyry and Iamblichus he returns home to Samos after his time in the East and attempts to teach his old neighbours (Porph., *VP* 9; Iamb., *VP* 5.20–24). His subsequent travels in Greece are not a deliberately chosen lifestyle, but a reaction to the Samians' hostility. Back in Samos after his tour of Greece, it is once again the discomfort of political conditions in Samos that prompts his departure for Italy, though the two biographers differ over the exact nature of the problem (Porph.,

*VP* 9, 16; Iamb., *VP* 6.28). Even in Italy the philosopher does not wander; instead, he settles in Croton, apparently making periodic trips to other Italian cities but always returning to his adopted home. There are no hints of further trips to distant lands similar to Apollonius' journeys to Spain and Ethiopia.

Nor is the comparatively sedentary life of Pythagoras the only difference between his pattern of travel and that of Apollonius. Apollonius sometimes brings peace or prosperity to cities such as Alexandria or Tarsus, whereas in the accounts of Pythagoras' years in Italy a great deal more emphasis is placed on deliberate political activities: freeing cities enslaved by tyrants or foreign powers (Porph., *VP* 21; Iamb., *VP* 7.33; 32.220–22), writing legal codes (Porph., *VP* 21; Iamb., *VP* 7.33–34; 9.45–50), and subduing internal conflict (Porph., *VP* 22). Though Pythagoras does spend much of his time in a cave when he is at home on Samos (Iamb., *VP* 5.27), there is no mention of his sleeping in temples. Also in sharp contrast to Apollonius is that Pythagoras founds communities, first a school on Samos (Iamb., *VP* 5.26) and then the group called *Magna Graeca* (Μεγάλην Ἑλλάδα) at Croton, whose members hold their property in common and follow his teachings "as if divine admonishments" (ὡσανεὶ θείας ὑποθήκας) (Porph., *VP* 20; Iamb., *VP* 6.30).

A more subtle if no less significant difference between the journeys of Apollonius and those of Pythagoras relates to the emphasis placed on each traveller's miraculous acts. Apollonius appears as a philosopher who occasionally happens to perform a miracle; Pythagoras appears much more consistently as a thaumaturge. Porphyry tells us that Pythagoras often predicted earthquakes, cleansed cities of plague, stopped violent winds or hailstorms, and even calmed the waves on rivers and seas in order for his disciples to cross easily (Porph., *VP* 29). It is said that once, when crossing the river Caucasus (or Nessus), he greeted the waters and heard a loud response: "Greetings, Pythagoras!" (Porph., *VP* 27; Iamb., *VP* 28.134). On another occasion he appears publicly in Metapont in Italy and in Tauromenium in Sicily on the same day (Porph., *VP* 27; Iamb., *VP* 28.134; cf. Iamb., *VP* 3.15–16). And of course, one must not forget the story of the golden arrow presented to Pythagoras by Abaris the Hyperborean, with which the philosopher was able to fly through the air (Iamb., *VP* 19.91–92).

Hence both Porphyry and Iamblichus group Pythagoras with the wonder workers Empedocles, Epimenides, and Abaris (Porph., *VP* 29; cf. Iamb., *VP* 28.135–36). Iamblichus even exclaims that "ten thousand other

incidents more divine and wonderful than these are related regularly and consistently about the man" (Iamb., *VP* 28.135). Admittedly, the difference here is one of degree. Yet the miraculous activities of Pythagoras seem to dominate his image, even in an elite biography, to an extent that Apollonius' wonders do not.[11]

Finally, both Porphyry and Iamblichus associate Pythagoras closely with the mysteries and with esotericism in a way that is foreign to Philostratus' account of Apollonius. Porphyry describes at length Pythagoras' elaborate initiations on Crete. These are supervised by the initiates of "Morgos," one of the "Dactyles of Ida," mythical wizards associated with the cult of Rhea Cybele (Porph., *VP* 17). Iamblichus, too, emphasizes Pythagoras' complete knowledge of mystic initiations learned from "Orphics," from "the mystic rites in Eleusis, Imbros, Samothrace, and Lemnos," and from other vague "mystic associations" (Iamb., *VP* 28.151). Both Porphyry and Iamblichus describe how Pythagoras encoded his teachings in symbols, explaining their hidden meanings only to his inner circle of followers (see, for example, Iamb., *VP* 23.103–5; 24.107–9; 35.254). True, in the eastern journey of Apollonius we find Damis excluded from teachings that are appropriate only to the few, but this access is never associated with ritual initiations. Moreover, when Apollonius returns to the Greco-Roman world any hint of such esotericism disappears.

***Pythagoras as Exiled Mystagogue***

The comparison of Apollonius' travels with the movements of Pythagoras thus yields a complex mix of similarities and differences. Both figures must travel in search of competent teachers early in life, and both gain (at least much of) their wisdom on an early journey to the legendary East. Both return to take up a life of philosophical teaching that includes activities in Greece, Crete, and Italy, and both maintain a lively interest in cultic sites. Both men's philosophical activities lead them into confrontation with the political powers, and both find themselves moving because of those conflicts. It is difficult to say precisely how we should understand these similarities, especially since Apollonius is depicted as having looked to Pythagoras as a philosophical master (see, for example, *VA* 1.2; 3.13, 19; 8.19). Are the second- and third-century CE lives of Pythagoras influenced by the image of Apollonius? Was Philostratus influenced by the earlier legends surrounding Pythagoras when he composed his account of Apollonius (so Miller 1907; Meyer 1917: 383; contra Speyer 1974)? After all, it is generally agreed that the material in Porphyry and Iamblichus goes

back to much older sources (see Burkert 1972: 104f, n.37). Or could Apollonius himself have been influenced by those stories about Pythagoras — tales he likely included in his own biography of the ancient philosopher — and that he attempted to live out the pattern laid down by his philosophical hero (see Anderson 1986: 136)? However we imagine these relationships, they suggest that the parallels between Pythagoras' journeys and the travels of Apollonius arise in part from direct influence.

Perhaps more important than the similarities between these two figures, however, are their differences. Where Apollonius is deliberately itinerant, Pythagoras favours a more sedentary existence. Where Apollonius gathers a small band of followers to travel with him, Pythagoras founds large and static communities. In response to political pressure, Apollonius moves to confront the emperor, while Pythagoras flees into exile. In his wandering, Apollonius focuses on public cultic renewal, while Pythagoras promulgates private mysteries. There is little evidence here of a common paradigm of itinerant activity. Notice, too, that it is the static figure in this pair who turns out to resemble most closely the wonder-working mystagogue of Reitzenstein's imagination. The more truly itinerant figure, on the other hand, pursues a very different agenda of public teaching and worship.

Was the "historical Apollonius" much closer to the legendary Pythagoras than Philostratus would have us think? Perhaps, though this is far from established (see Anderson 1986: 138–39, 146–48). More important, in any case, is that when elite Roman biographers depicted these two divine philosophers, they began with few preconceptions as to how and why such superhuman figures would travel.

## Divinized Charlatans in Lucian of Samosata

A glance at two other exemplars of divinized humanity will reinforce the finding that such figures adopted and were portrayed as having adopted widely varying patterns of travel. Both are consistently held up as "divine men" or "holy men," and both were lampooned by Lucian of Samosata.[12]

### *Alexander the "False Prophet"*

Alexander was the founder and priest of a popular oracle shrine in his hometown of Abonuteichos, on the southern shore of the Black Sea (*Alex.* 9–10). Lucian derides him as an obvious charlatan, but note that Lucian's own religious views were shaped by an Epicurean skepticism that was not shared by many of his contemporaries. He also ridicules Apollonius of

Tyana himself (5), as well as even revered oracle shrines such as Delphi and Delos (8). So we must take the satirist's description of Alexander's early life with a significant grain of salt. The report that Alexander was the student of a quack magician (5) is often taken straightforwardly as evidence that the future oracular priest began as a practitioner of popular magic. We must remember, however, that accusations of magic were a stock method by which rhetors like Lucian would pillory their opponents.

Still, it is worth noting that Lucian does not say the magician was itinerant. If the account is accurate, he may well have been a healer with a strictly local trade. Lucian tells us, however, that after the death of his mentor, Alexander partnered with a Byzantine songwriter to practise this same "quackery and sorcery" for himself. They travelled around Asia Minor, he says, "'trimming the fatheads'—for so they style the public in the traditional patter of magicians" (*Alex.* 6). At this stage, if Lucian's account is to be taken at face value, the pair have adopted a recognized profession as itinerant peddlers of charms and spells. Yet it is often overlooked that none of this activity gains them a reputation as divine.

The suggestion that Alexander might possess some superhuman status arises only later, as an outgrowth of his role in the oracle shrine that he and his friend founded in Abonuteichos. Yet in this role, Alexander does not travel at all. He remains at his shrine while people flood in, first from Bithynia, Galatia, and Thrace (*Alex.* 18), and later from Ionia, Cilicia, Paphlagonia, and Italy (30). When Alexander wants (on Lucian's cynical evaluation) to stir up business, he does not travel about himself, but sends out prophets around the empire, warning cities of coming disasters and that they should come to the oracle for aid (36). Nor is it clear that these prophets are itinerant, rather than being sent as messengers to specific cities. Likewise, while Alexander does establish mysteries in Abonuteichos for pilgrims to his shrine, he does not travel about flogging his new rites. Instead, he offers them to those who come to the oracle (38–39). Thus, far from reinforcing some common pattern of travel among divine men, Alexander testifies to the fact that such superhuman status could just as easily be awarded to someone who did not travel at all.

### *Peregrinus Proteus*

Peregrinus, another target of Lucian's bile, does travel extensively, but here again we fail to find a close correspondence with the travel patterns of Apollonius or Pythagoras. Despite Lucian's vague reference to some early, scurrilous activities in Armenia and Asia (*Peregr.* 9), Peregrinus

seems to have lived a basically static life. After strangling his father, the philosopher seems reluctant to accept voluntary exile unless he cannot escape punishment in another way (10). Peregrinus then moves to Palestine, but takes up another fixed home, becoming a local leader among the Christians (11). Yet he remains attached to his hometown. After a brief imprisonment for his Christian activities he returns to see how he is faring in public opinion. Only when his former neighbours want him punished does Peregrinus adopt the guise of a Cynic philosopher, relinquish his possessions, and depart again (14–15). Even at this point Peregrinus lives on the support of a Christian community until some unspecified "offence" forces him to leave (16). He then returns home for a third and final time and makes a futile bid to recover his possessions (16). Hence, while Peregrinus is depicted as travelling regularly, these movements hardly reflect a deliberately itinerant lifestyle.

At this point Lucian depicts Peregrinus going to Egypt to study with the Cynic Agathobulus (*Peregr.* 17), and now he seems to adopt a more transient Cynic lifestyle. Peregrinus sails from Egypt to Italy (18) and from there on to Greece (19), delivering harsh philosophical speeches wherever he goes. Even as a Cynic, however, he seems to look for a reasonably stable base of operations. In Lucian's portrait, the philosopher leaves Italy only when he is sent away *by the prefect of Rome* (*Peregr.* 18). This would seem to suggest that Peregrinus had been based in the imperial city throughout his time in that region.

Likewise, his subsequent activities in Greece seem to revolve around a new home in Elea (*Peregr.* 19). When he wants to establish a far-reaching reputation, the philosopher (now taking the name Proteus) does not make a tour of the Greek cities. Rather, he comes to the Olympic games, where all Greece has gathered, and criticizes the crowds there for their "effeminate" ways (19). However we view Lucian's claim that Peregrinus humiliated himself on that occasion, it is nevertheless telling that the philosopher waits to redeem himself with a spectacle at the next Olympiad (19–20). Moreover, instead of informing the Greek cities of his plans in person, he relies on word of mouth to spread the report of his plan (20–21). All of this reinforces the impression that Peregrinus prefers to stay close to home, making strategic use of a few trips within the Greek peninsula.

The activities of Peregrinus do bear some significant resemblance to those of Apollonius and Pythagoras. While Peregrinus does not journey as far as Babylon or India, he does begin his philosophical life by moving

east to Egypt. On his return, he too spends much of his time delivering philosophical speeches in Greece and Italy. Like Apollonius, Peregrinus comes into conflict with political authorities in Rome, and though the philosopher is banished from the city, Lucian's attack on Peregrinus' sincerity here implies that some of the philosopher's audience saw the confrontation as a display of philosophical courage (*Peregr.* 4; cf. 18). There is even some suggestion that the philosopher associated his self-immolation with the virtuous asceticism of the Brahmins (25), the very sages who taught Apollonius.

Yet unlike Apollonius, Pythagoras, and Alexander, this philosopher shows no interest at all in visiting cultic sites. Nor do we have any evidence that he was ever regarded as a miracle worker. His pattern of geographic stability, punctuated by forced relocations, is reminiscent of Pythagoras' later life, but it departs significantly both from the itinerancy of Apollonius and from the fixed settledness of Alexander.

## Conclusion: The Disappearing Shaman

Where have we arrived after our own journey through these five late antique texts? First, there seem to have been no common expectations in late antiquity about the travel patterns of human beings who gained divine status. Though we have focused on the literary depictions of these figures, their movements differ so widely that this diversity likely reflects a diversity in their historical actions. One of our examples is itinerant, two make periodic moves from one city to the next, and one remains stable and allows others to seek him out. Apollonius and Pythagoras both make long journeys east, but this feature of their lives may be a product of their common philosophical and biographical tradition. Only Apollonius travels widely in Mediterranean lands outside Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy.

Where there is commonality between the movements of these divine men, it simply underscores the errors in the old image of the wandering divine shaman. For the most part, the primary occupation of the three figures who travel is public philosophical teaching. Only Pythagoras even approaches the role of professional thaumaturge, while Peregrinus performs no miracles at all. Likewise, though Apollonius and Pythagoras make frequent pilgrimages to cultic sites, Peregrinus shows no particular interest in such ritual matters. Only Pythagoras could be said to focus on mysteries and their initiations, and it is only he who restricts his core teaching to an inner circle of followers or who attempts to found a community. In fact, if any of these four men resembles Reitzenstein's image of

the mystagogue, it is Alexander, the one figure in our survey who does not travel at all!

Some of these commonalities help us see how travel and geography could be used in various ways to support claims of divinity. If a figure had travelled as a child to study with distant teachers, this apparently reinforced the sense that he was endowed from birth with special abilities (see Bieler 1935–36: 1.38). Journeys to the East or to Egypt were clearly associated with the attainment of wisdom and could lend a philosopher or cultic expert added authority. Travel to distant lands in general seems to have been regarded as a great feat, one that was sometimes compared to the mythical voyages of Heracles, Dionysus, and other demigods. It also raised the profile of any philosopher if his travels had brought him into conflict with the established authorities of Rome, whether his movements displayed the courage to move toward the hostile centres of power or the integrity of one who had accepted exile for the sake of truth.

So, there may not have been a single profession or sociological type whose travel was part and parcel of a divine identity, but this did not prevent people in late antiquity from capitalizing on the symbolic value of travel as they campaigned for the divinity of various heroes. In fact, this insight may point the way forward in our study of how human beings were divinized in the ancient Mediterranean world. Instead of thinking primarily in terms of social types such as the "divine man" or even the "holy man," perhaps we ought to think of a set of rhetorical tools that could be deployed in various configurations to support a claim of divinity. Reitzenstein's faded portrait of the divine man may need to be discarded, but the individual colours with which that image was painted may still reflect parts of the palette with which divine identities were rendered by the late antique mind.

## Notes

1 Georgi 1986; cf. Kolenkow 1994; Weeden 1968.

2 There is no doubt that Apollonius was the object of a cult after his death. Eunapius calls him οὐκέτι φιλόσοφος· ἀλλ' ἦν τι θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπου μέσον (*Vit. Phil.* 454). In Philostratus' biography we are told that Damis "worshipped him" (προσηύξατο αὐτόν) and "regarded him as a demon" (ὥσπερ δαίμονα ἔβλεπε) at their first meeting (1.19). See also 5.24; 7.21; 7.38; 8.7, 8, 15, 31.

3 Even in Philostratus' work, note how Demetrius and Musonius are both depicted as moving between Rome and various Greek cities (5.19).

4 All citations of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* are from Conybeare 1912.

5 The *VA* is filled with descriptions of animals (2.2, 6, 11–12, 14–15; 3.1, 2, 6–8, 48, 49, 50; 6.24), strange lands (3.53, 54, 55, 56), natural wonders (3.3, 4, 14,

15; 5.3, 16–17), and odd or marvellous peoples and customs (1.24, 31; 2.4, 20; 3.47, 57; 6.25)

6 Esoteric rites are, however, mentioned in 8.19.

7 Notice that Philostratus deliberately distances Apollonius from the role of sophist in favour of the type of the philosopher (see 5.27).

8 See 6.34; Anderson 1986: 138–39. Cf. Lucian, *Alex.* 5; Origen, *C. Cels.* 6.41; Dio 78.18.4.

9 Translations of Porphyry's *Vita Pythagorica* are my own, following Édouard des Places's (1982) Greek text.

10 There does seem to be a thematic similarity, however, between Pythagoras' Egyptian experience in Porphyry's version and Apollonius' separate Egyptian tour. Porphyry depicts the Egyptian priests as resistant to Pythagoras, drumming up pretenses on which to pass him on from one temple to the next (*VP* 7). Moreover, as with Apollonius, Pythagoras' visit to Egypt is used by Porphyry to display the sage's superior wisdom and "endurance" (καρτερίαν). For when the priests of Diospolis try to scare the philosopher away with "the intensity of the suffering" that they demand, Pythagoras is simply convinced that the Diospolitan cult and priesthood were better than any other (*VP* 8).

11 This is especially telling since at least Porphyry betrays some distaste for the more lurid of the miracle tales surrounding Pythagoras. See Porph., *VP* 28.

12 For allusions to the supposed divinity of Alexander, see Lucian, *Alex.* 3, 4, 9, 10-11, 15, 58. For more explicit references to Peregrinus' divinity, see *Peregr.* 1, 4, 6, 21, 24, 27–30, 33, 36, 41.