Alexandria endures in our imagination as the first model of cultural interaction – of cosmopolitanism, to use both classical and contemporary terminology – and as the cultural and intellectual capital of the ancient world. The intermingling of races and beliefs, and the exchange of ideas, undoubtedly produced the knowledge that modern scholarship still celebrates.

This book is a testimony that the values embodied by Alexandria and its Library continue to inspire noble-minded scholars whose pursuit for knowledge transcends boundaries and time. The breadth and scope of the papers presented do credit to the spirit of Alexandria – its multiculturalism, and its passion for science and scholarship. The book in our hands confirms that the multiculturalism of the Ancient World, rippling out from Alexandria to extend throughout the Hellenistic period and beyond, is as valid now as it was then – perhaps more so today, when globalization has given a new meaning to the internationalism envisioned by Alexander the Great centuries ago. Now, with the “clash of civilizations” dominating our discourse, it is pertinent to remember the lesson Alexandria ad Aegyptum taught us: that the interaction between cultures can only lead to the betterment of the human condition and carry us to heights unimagined.

Ismail Serageldin
Librarian of Alexandria

The excellent contributions gathered in this book dedicated to the city of books, Alexandria, are undoubtedly traced along the lines of Amr and John’s dialogue. Intolerance, which is borne almost always out of ignorance, threatens continuously the peaceful meeting and coexistence of peoples and cultures nowadays. Alexandria, its people and books remind us that the search for dialogue, the reflection on the forms of unity in diversity are at the same time our greatest heritage and the most dramatically pressing agenda.

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Abstract: As we reflect on the Hellenistic Alexandria of education and culture, of
sophistic rhetoric and philosophy, we need to focus our attention on the work of one of its
most famous and distinct sons in the first decades of our Christian era. Though being few
the explicit references in Philo’s treatises to the city, the models of education and culture
that emerge and take form in them are significantly numerous, if not even decisive to clar-
ify the sophistic movement and its vitality in his time. We will center our attention in two
topics: Alexandrian sophists under Philo’s critical eyes, and the Alexandrian rhetoric in
his philosophical education.

Philo lived in Alexandria when this capital of Hellenistic paideia was recognized in the
Roman world as one of its main centers of higher education as well as of critical and literary
production. The specific references he makes to the city are not many, but its implicit pres-
ence is almost a constant, not only in culture, art and the values that distinguish it, but also
in their impact in the society of his time. We then ask ourselves: how did the Alexandrian
philosopher see the city and its people? Which images he pictures of the models of educa-
tion and culture it inspires? The origins of the Second Sophistic are still questioned today
as well as the knowhow this movement represents in the training of the most cultured and
learned representatives of this celebrated center of paideia by the beginnings of the 1st cen-
tury B.C. A keener attention to thinkers like Philo on these matters would surely provide us