

In Memoriam: Thomas More Robinson (1936-2023)

Address given at the solemn Opening Session of the International Plato Society XVI Symposium Platonium, held at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, May 5, 2025, to honour the memory of Professor Thomas More Robinson.

More than two years have passed since his death, and it still feels wrong not to have Tom with us today. And deeply despairing. He was always here, from the very beginning of the Society, in 1986, at the first Symposium Platonium, held at the UNAM in Mexico City, along with Livio Rossetti and Christopher Rowe here.

Not only was he a founding father, but Tom has been also president of the IPS twice: the first time was in 1995-98, when he held the Fifth Symposium Platonium at the University of Toronto, in August 1998. The second was with me and Francisco Bravo, when we organised the Eleventh Symposium Platonium in Brasília, in July 2016.

His dedication to animating the community of scholars of ancient philosophy, his truly transcultural understanding of teaching and research in Ancient Philosophy has clearly been one of the hallmarks of his life and career.

Tom also served as president of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities (1988–1990) and the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy (1993–1995). He held a honorary doctorate in Humane Letters from the University of Athens in 1998, and the Greek government bestowed on him the Aristotle Award, an honour reserved for non-Greek nationals in recognition of significant contributions to the understanding of Greek thought and culture.

Many among us retain deeply fond, heartfelt memories of him. His enduring joy and

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warmth, his smile with which he used to greet us all, remain indelible. Moreover, his unwavering dedication to advancing Platonic scholarship across the globe deserves particular recognition, as does the exceptional attentiveness he demonstrated in mentoring and supporting new generations of Plato scholars. On a more personal note, he served as the foremost inspiration and driving force behind the founding of our Brazilian Plato Society—a society that remains active to this day and continues to honour his inspiration with profound gratitude.

We all know Tom was a tireless and quite enthusiastic traveller, a real globetrotter. I must confess: more than once I found myself dreaming of his Frequent Flyer benefits. We used to laugh about this silly dream of mine. Naturally, he took great pleasure in recounting his early experiences as a tour guide in his youth.

No matter where in the world he was, he would always make a point of meeting up early in the morning with his binoculars to watch his beloved warblers. But one could also find him with the same energy enjoying himself dancing after dinner at night, with that style of him, unmistakably free and unapologetic.

A true mirror of the impact and relevance of his long and fortunate career is certainly the *Festschrift* in Tom's honor edited now more than 20 years ago by Luc Brisson, Livio Rossetti, Rafael Ferber and Christopher Rowe: *Greek Philosophy in the New Millennium* (2004). The volume includes a unique collection of essays by a number of distinguished scholars, from a quite impressive number of countries, on current changes in the field of ancient philosophy. If you just look at the volume's table of contents, you are immediately faced with Tom's broad and international academic career. Both in terms of the topics

covered and the geographical dimension of the impact of his work.

Tom spoke nine languages, so I was told. I never got round to counting them. He was a man of our globalised times: respectful, sympathetic and always attentive to new interpretative challenges and recent hermeneutical schools, which emerged from the frank globalization of current Platonic studies.

His lifetime dedication to Plato's psychology started with his celebrated doctoral dissertation, supervised at Oxford by David Rees and entitled "Individual and Cosmic Soul in Plato", later published as *Plato's Psychology* in 1970. The volume is still a central landmark for Platonic scholarship.

Somewhat in keeping with the maturity of an intellectual who has studied Plato for several decades, Tom has devoted himself to writing plays since 2006, inspired by classical culture and – more directly – by the model of Plato's own dialogues. The plays were staged in the four corners of the world by disciples and colleagues who were always very enthusiastic about the results.

One day, asked in an interview about why he had spent so much of his life studying Plato in particular, he replied: "Probably because I like the dialogical nature of his mind. In saying this, I take into consideration all those who claim to find a 'doctrine' in Plato, with which one can agree or disagree, in part or in its totality. My own vision is that he was a 'philosophical researcher' for his entire life, and that he felt that the best technique for doing philosophy was to use the form of dialogue."

In one of these plays, entitled "Remembering Socrates", Tom stages Plato, Antisthenes, Crito and others together at the 396th BC Olympic Games, shortly after the death of Socrates. This is the opening of his play:

Antisthenes starts saying: When I was a child, I often heard older people talking about the pain of loss. I didn't understand what they were saying - until now'.

To what Crito replies: 'Me neither. It's been three years, but it feels like three hundred years'

Indeed, Tom: it does seem like three hundred years have passed. *Te extrañamos*.

