

Inaugural Presidential Address

Delivered at Socratica V in Houston

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It is a special honor to have been proposed for this position by Donald Morrison, our current president. Don was, I think, the first person to champion the study of Xenophon's Socrates in its current form. I am referring to the publication of "On Professor Vlastos' Xenophon," published in 1988. His many later publications on Socrates have set high standards in being original, rigorous, incisive, decisive, and persuasive; and they have had enormous influence. He is also one of the fairest-minded, conscientious, and generous people I have ever met. As president of the Society Don set equally challenging standards. He greatly increased the society's visibility, both by his prestige in North American circles and by his hard work. The series of online seminars he initiated brought the society to the attention of almost everyone working in this area in the entire world. And we all are grateful to him for organizing this fantastic conference!

I also want to mention some of the previous leaders of this group, Fulvia de Louise, Alessandro Stavru, and of course the founder of the entire concept, and honorary president for life, Livio Rossetti. Without them we would not be here today.

My job is to build on these foundations by encouraging projects that further the study of Socratic literature. I take a very broad view of what is included in Socratic Studies. To my mind it includes the so-called *non-Socratic works* of Plato and Xenophon. As members of the Socratic circle everything they wrote is fair game. To a lesser degree the same can be said of figures like Isocrates and Aristotle: if they were not members of the Socratic circle they were certainly in the Socratic orbit. What Socratic studies does is to provide a framework in which to investigate these writers, both as objects of study in themselves and as members of the Socratic movement.

My chief responsibility as president is to organize the next major Socrates conference. My plan is to hold a conference in Jerusalem in the spring of 2025. That is less than three years from now. This early date has two advantages. First, it means that no one needs to set aside their Socratic

research. You can start working on your next project later this afternoon. Second, it means that the conference will be held before the next Plato society conference, which is, I think, a healthy arrangement.

I would like us all to think about fruitful new directions for Socratic studies. I hope our conferences will serve as catalysts for developing new directions of research in Socratic Studies. One area that calls out for investigation is the intersection between Socratic literature and emotion-theory. Recent volumes on Plato and the Emotions have been produced in English by Laura Candiottio and Olivier Renaut and in Italian by Francesco Benoni and Alessandro Stavru. Together with Tazuko van Berkel I organized a recent project on Xenophon and the Emotions which should see light in the next few years. I think it is time for a project on Socrates and the Emotions. Understanding how Plato and Xenophon, as well as the other Socratic writers, differ in their treatment of emotions will add a new wrinkle to the comparative study of these authors, and may provide new evidence for addressing long-standing problems.

For me this is a new subject of investigation. Only recently have I begun to appreciate how pervasive are the emotions in the Socratic corpus. The characters are constantly expressing emotions; emotions are part of what interests Socrates philosophically; and the authors of these dialogues had tremendous skill in engaging and arousing the emotions of readers. For this reason, and also because I may have access to funding for such a project, I would like to propose the emotions as a *sub-theme* for the next conference. This sub-theme is not meant to exclude any other subject. I expect that most papers will be on topics that already interest their authors, and that is as it should be. This sub-theme will simply add an extra dimension to the next conference and perhaps contribute in new ways to helping us understand Socrates and his influence.

I realize that I have only touched the surface of the imponderable questions that face us as a research society. The conversation should continue both online and in person, hopefully for many years to come. Thanks to all of you for your attention. I now hand the floor back to Don for the next part of the meeting.