

Address of the President of the “Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie » (FISP), Professor William McBride

It is a distinct pleasure for me, as President of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies, FISP, to join from afar in celebrating the opening of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Aristotle Studies in Thessaloniki. One of the principal purposes of this Centre, as I understand it, is to endorse and further the idea that Aristotle still has much of value to offer us today, in many ways. I heartily agree. His influence over virtually all the greatest Western thinkers has, as we all know, been enormous, and he has substantially, essentially shaped even our everyday ways of thinking and speaking.

Aristotle belongs to the entire land of Greece, past and present. He is associated with Stagira, his birthplace; with Chalcis, where he died; with Athens, of course; and with Pella and Macedonia proper. My own closest personal encounter with him, so to speak, occurred in none of those places, but rather in another town where he lived for three years, Assos, which I visited prior to attending the World Congress of Philosophy in 2003. I climbed up the hill that had been the Akropolis of Assos, overlooking Lesvos and the sea, with no one else near me, and somehow the more than twenty-three centuries seemed to melt away; it was almost as if he were present.

Aristotle belongs not just to Greece, however, but to the entire world. We shall all be strongly reminded of this when the next World Congress of Philosophy takes place in Athens in a little more than a year and a half, coming to Greece for the first time in the modern history of such Congresses, which dates back to the year 1900. I very much look forward to that occasion, with which we of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies are so deeply involved, especially because it will constitute a sort of coming full circle for the world philosophical community. In a very real sense,

the coming of this event to Greece will be a coming home, and at the same time a reminder of the world's debt to Greece.

Meanwhile, I congratulate Professor Demetra Sfendoni-Mentzou and all those involved in the establishment of this Centre, which is a singular achievement. As its patron said in the Nicomachean Ethics (II, 9): “οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀργισθῆναι παντὸς καὶ ῥάδιον, καὶ τὸ δοῦναι ἀργύριον καὶ δαπανῆσαι· τὸ δ' ᾧ καὶ ὅσον καὶ ὅτε καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ ὥς, οὐκέτι παντὸς οὐδὲ ῥάδιον· διόπερ τὸ εὖ καὶ σπάνιον καὶ ἐπαινετὸν καὶ καλόν”. I take this to be as applicable to events in today's world as it was to those in his world. And what is being launched today is indeed καὶ σπάνιον καὶ ἐπαινετὸν καὶ καλόν.