

# Socrates in Spartan Camouflage

ROMAN SVETLOV.

Professor, Dean, Faculty of Philosophy, Theology, Religious Studies,  
Russian Christian Academy for Humanities.

Address: 15 Fontanka River Emb., 191023 Saint-Petersburg, Russia.

E-mail: spatha@mail.ru.

*Keywords:* ancient philosophy; Socrates; Sparta; nonverbal aspect of philosophy.

*Abstract:* The article judges biographical evidence of Socrates, describing some particularities of his visage and behavioral manner. On the basis of evidence by Aristophanes, Xenophontes, Plato and others the author comes to the conclusion that Socrates' behavior and image are stylized to the Spartans character. "Le Mirage Spartiate" and Socrates' biographical testimony are compared. The parallels drawn allow to discuss nonverbal determination of the philosophic temper as a subject of the History of Philosophy.

1. **F**OR ALL the variety of assessments of Socrates's philosophical oeuvre in contemporary science, the following three attributes prevail among them: "dialectics," "irony," and "moralism" [Vlastos 1991; Surikov 2011]. They outweigh all other traits of the antique thinker: both among apologists of the Athenian "barefoot sage" and his opponents. They also dominate in the overwhelming majority of reconstructions of Socrates' image. This article, however, will attempt to take a look at Socrates not through the prism of his dialectics, but from the point of view of the practical, behavioural side of the lifestyle chosen by him.

The thesis that Socrates's philosophy came down to us mainly as a set of his very fragmented biographies can hardly be disputed. Consequently, Socrates's followers' renditions of their teacher's life show us the vector of the development of his ideas that they chose. Any biographical record in this case acquires a hermeneutic character (and meaning) as not only a message, but largely an interpretation. Ethical and political, as well as epistemological ideas of his biographers manifest themselves through the image of Socrates. It is enough to remember Socrates's famous moral excursion from *Theaetetus* that forms not only the "vertical" constituent of Platonic ethics ("flight to the true motherland"), but also the demarcation of the types of knowledge: philosophical and conventional.

The most detailed versions of Socrates's "persona" are presented in accounts by Plato and Xenophon. For all the differences in their descriptions of their teacher's lifestyle, a number of common, clearly expressed dominant behavioural characteristics can be found in them. This article will focus specifically on one behavioural characteristic: the stylisation of behaviour (and, to a certain degree, appearance) modelled after the Lacedaemonian, known to us from antique historiography. This stylisation, expressed in Laconian mannerisms in a way that was obvious to his contemporaries, became one of the motives

for the trial of 399 BC<sup>1</sup> and appears to be broader than Socrates's political agenda.

2. It is precisely in the texts by Socrates's disciples and their successors that the most important records about the Laconian ethos emerge (besides Plato's dialogues, such as *Hippias Major*, *Protagoras*, *Laws*, Xenophon's treatises, Plutarch of Chaeronea is especially significant). This fact once inspired a number of researchers to formulate the hypothesis of "the Laconian mirage"—the assumption that the peculiarities of the Lacedaemonian social order and legislation, well known to us, reflect not the reality of Sparta, but rather utopian ideas of Greek historians and political theorists (first of all, Plato's followers) [Oliver 1933–1943; Oliva 1971]. In our opinion, adherents of this hypothesis are too sceptical of the authenticity of antique information about the political and behavioural realities of Lacedaemon. However, some traces of Plato are nevertheless evident in the image of Lacedaemon and one of their sources is Socrates, or rather, a collection of records about his appearance, behaviour and motives for some of his deeds.

Sometimes, irony with regard to Spartans is found in Plato's texts. An example of this can be drawn from the dialogue *Hippias Major*, where Socrates laughs at the egotistic sophist Hippias who equates his sophistication in wisdom to the amount of money earned. While at the same time it becomes apparent that in Sparta, which Hippias visited more often than any other place, he did not earn a single Mina. Spartans were not at all interested in mathematics, astronomy or natural philosophy—subjects in which Hippias was very informed (Hippias is probably the first real historian of philosophy who gave account of the opinions of the ancient sages in his *Collection* [Patzer 1986]). Instead they interrogated him about the past: about the foundation of cities, about glorious deeds of ancestors and about all the things that were the subject of interest to poets and logographers of Antiquity, Callinus and Mimnermus, Xenophanes and Hecataeus [Plato *Hip. Maj.* 285cd].

One question arises: is the Laconian disregard for the scholastic attainments of mathematics and natural philosophy, that is of the heritage of early Greek thought, linked to their "military simplicity" induced by Lycurgus' famous requirement not to do anything but military business, or to the fact that they possessed wisdom anyway? Socrates says in *Protagoras*, "philosophy is of more ancient and abundant growth in

1. The dissatisfaction with Socrates' Laconian mannerisms is hidden behind the well known charges put against him, but the reason here is obvious: in 399 BC Athenians did not dare yet to conduct anti-Spartan lawsuits.

Crete and Lacedaemon than in any other part of Greece” [*Prot.* 342ab], Aleksei Losev called the next speculation in this dialogue “a myth about Spartans’ deeply hidden intellect” (here he addresses the belief that Laconians converse with their sages secretly from the outsiders). However, there are some grounds for such a myth: teachers of wisdom (Hippias for example) came to Sparta and were asked to address the youth in their speeches; the ancient king, Agasicles (at the turn of the 7–6 century BC), loved to welcome sages into his company, as we can gather from [Plutarch *Mor.* 208b]. Some ancient sages-cosmogonists (for example, Alcman and Epimenides) bore a relation to the Crete and Lacedaemon. It is in Sparta that the Milesian philosopher Anaximander erected his gnomon. Polyaeus, in his *Stratagems*, recounts how king Leonidas saw gathering storm clouds before battle and announced to his officers that the storm was caused by natural objective laws, namely, the movement of the stars [Polyaeus *Strat.* i 32.2].

It follows from this that there is only superficial “irony” in Plato’s Socrates. As early as in *Protagoras* we see the form in which Spartan wisdom was expressed, namely, in the laconic oration.

If you choose to consort with the meanest of Spartans, at first you will find him making a poor show in the conversation; but soon, at some point or other in the discussion, he gets home with a notable remark, short and compressed—a deadly shot that makes his interlocutor seem like a helpless child [Plato *Prot.* 342e].

Laconism was also supposedly learnt from Spartans by the famous “seven sages.” This is precisely the “ancient mode of philosophising—the Laconian brevity.”

These assertions lay the foundation for the future “trend”: the transformation of collections of Spartan expressions into “florilegiums” of practical wisdom. The prime example of this process would become Plutarch, who left behind the most complete corpus of moral maxims ascribed to Spartans. The “ethical rationalism” of Spartans as presented in Plutarch’s collections directly resonates with the ethical programme of Plato’s Socrates: Spartan kings encouraged others to learn to rule and obey,<sup>2</sup> much like the just person in *The Republic*, practicing in subordination to the mind and having control over his passions.

Nevertheless, the identification of Socrates’s style of philosophising with Spartans’ laconic manner seems to be impossible: the Atheni-

2. When the Spartan king Agesilaus was asked why Spartans are happier than other nations, he replied: “They, more than anybody else, exercise in the skill to rule and obey” (Plutarch).

an philosopher is the very embodiment of the nature of oration. He is, too, a master of brief, trenchant phrases (“death is the liberation of the soul from the body,” “it is better to be subject to injustice than to commit it,” etc.), but his partiality for conversation, this passionate philosophical garrulity, by no means resembles the reticence of the citizens of Lacedaemon.

And yet, Socrates’s speech is, at times, paradoxically similar to the laconism of Spartans. And not only in that it claims verity (in those cases when it claims it), but also in that Socrates, like Spartans, under certain conditions, acts as a parrhesiast.

In the lecture courses of 1982–1983, Michel Foucault repeatedly addresses the topic of parrhesia (*παρρησία*), a specific notion from antique oratory, meaning speech in which any conscious conventions and rhetorical figures are absent and which expresses the truth freely—fearlessly and disconcertingly [Foucault 2008: 159–262]. Foucault strongly differentiates parrhesia from Socrates’s dialectic irony, observing in the latter the art of maieutics [Foucault 2011: 68], but it is impossible to deny that *The Apology* of Socrates (both in the variants of Plato and Xenophon) is also the talking of truth, the talking that happens in the situation of mortal danger.

Foucault agrees with the fact that Socrates acts as a true parrhesiast in *The Apology*. From his point of view, Socrates’s defence at the trial is a philosophical free speech, not putting the narrator above his audience, but trying both the defendant and Athenians [Foucault 2011: 334–335]. It is precisely in this that he sees the nature of “ruling over himself and others”—this truly regal ability, that, according to the opinion of Socrates’s apologists, this thinker possessed in full. Socrates’s free speech is the dignity that philosophy nurtured in him and it is exactly that what makes him, at the moment of his trial, not a respondent playing according to the rules of the Athenian judicial rhetoric, but rather a truly independent man capable of trying his judges.

Spartan speeches, removed from their context of didactic, preaching collections and understood in light of their historical conditions (it is not of any relevance whether they are fictional or not), also cease to be a rhetorical convention. It is enough to provide the story told by Herodotus about a conversation between the Spartan dissenter Demaratus and the Persian king Xerxes before the battle of Thermopylae. Astonished by the behaviour of Spartans standing at outposts, their heads adorned with wreaths of flowers, Xerxes does not believe that they will engage in battle with his army. Demaratus reminds him that he already cautioned the king about these people before the beginning of the march on Hellas. At that time Xerxes ridiculed him, but now he

has to admit that Demaratus' words about the strange demeanour of his compatriots were correct. Despite Xerxes' mistrust and bewilderment, the dissenter replies that he considers it his great duty to speak the truth in his presence, no matter what the truth may be [Herodotus *Hist.* vii 209]. Entirely dependent on the volition of the Persian king, Demaratus praises his compatriots as the most glorious Hellenic tribe. Despite his "court" position, he dares to tell the truth when facing the barbarian ruler.

It is fairly simple to semantically link Demaratus and Socrates. Even one of the main antique denouncers of Socrates, Aristoxenus, does not deny his frankness. According to Plutarch, he portrays Socrates as a rude and ignorant man but nevertheless an honest man [Plutarch *Mal. Her.* 856cd]. Straightforwardness, simplicity and plainness constitute quite sufficient behavioural grounds for parrhesia. Indeed, a philosopher can appear before the court only as an artless simpleton, destroying the eristic judicial discourse. It is not without reason that Socrates calls defence, at the beginning of *The Apology*, a "difficult task," while considering the virtue of an orator the speaking of truth [Plato *Apol.* 18a, 19a]. In spite of the audience set against him by prosecutors, he is prepared to speak the truth. Moreover, he does so not through rhetoric, but rather with the most ordinary language which was so characteristic of his conversations with Athenians. Differences in style and delivery between Socrates's and Spartan speeches in situations of danger dwindle: what we begin to see are speeches of parrhesiasts, who are perfectly aware of what they are doing.

3. The similarities between Socrates's image and the image of Spartans become especially apparent when one reads about the last hours of the Athenian philosopher's life. Socrates, preparing for death, appears in *Phaedo* as focused, vivacious and even cheerful. He expresses to his saddened and amazed friends a thesis that will ultimately become famous: philosophy is a preparation for death.

Other people are likely not to be aware that those who pursue philosophy aught study nothing but dying and being dead" [*Phaedo* 64a].

Socrates proclaims that he expects from death "the greatest boons." In particular he hopes to meet the best people and is sure that he will be judged by wise and virtuous gods [68b].

The description of Socrates's "philosophical" death has a dazzling impact on the readers of *Phaedo*. Meanwhile, Plato's predecessors encouraged a courageous acceptance of one's death, The Spartan poet

Tyrtaeus is especially notable in this context. According to a widespread legend, he arrived in Lacedaemon from Athens [*Laws* i 629a] and had been a representative of a wonderful pleiad of musicians and poets (Terpander, Thaletas, Tyrtaeus and Alcman), which, by celebrated tradition, fashioned the main civil festivities of Lacedaemon, inspired courage in warriors and helped to formulate of the famous Spartan military ethos. In one of Tyrtaeus' elegies there is a motif which stands out in pronounced harmony with *Phaedo*. The poet calls [Tyrtaeus *Eleg.* 6–8]:

Fear ye not a multitude of men, nor flinch,  
But let every man hold his shield straight towards the van,  
Making life his enemy and the black spirits of Death—  
Dear as the rays of the sun! <...>  
Yes, 'tis a fair thing for a valiant man to fall and die  
Fighting in the van for his native land.

It should be noted here that the anticipation of a glorious death as a dignified ending of a glorious life is the theme that is constantly discussed by antique historians when they describe the courage of Spartans, especially in the classical period of Lacedaemon's history.

Socrates's death echoes the most famous Spartan death, namely the fall of the Three Hundred in the battle of Thermopylae. Herodotus reports that before the beginning of the war, a Delphian Pythia foretold that the destruction of Sparta could be avoided only if one of the kings was sacrificed. In the morning of the decisive day of the battle for Thermopylae the prediction of the fall was confirmed by the diviner Megisthi who read the fortune on purtenance [Herodotus *Hist.* vii 219–220].

But here we see a reflection of the story about Socrates's death. According to Xenophon's *The Apology*, Socrates believed that the gods led him to death before the beginning of the trial.<sup>3</sup> While in *Crito* Plato describes Socrates's dream in which a beautiful majestic woman prophesies his death on the third day [Plato *Crito* 44ab]. In the poem from *Iliad* quoted by her ("The third day hence to fertile Phthia shalt thou go" [Homer *Iliad* ix 363]), the threat of Achilles, having been insulted by Agamemnon, to leave the camp of Achaeans and return to the motherland, is contained. The assonance of the Greek words "Phthia" (Φθία) and "to die" (φθίω) forces Socrates, sensitive to such things, to

3. See [Xenophon *Apol.* 5]. Socrates's disciples explain the sage's knowledge of his future by citing the influence of his demon. Diogenes Laertius, however, refers to Aristotle's words about some magician who predicted Socrates's fate [Diogenes Laertius *Lives* II, 5.45].

see in these words a prediction of his impending death, which will become for the philosopher the return to his true heavenly motherland.

Before his disciples came to visit him in prison on the day of the execution, Socrates tried to write poetry following Apollo's instruction, who urged him to "serve the muses" in recurrent dreams. If before what he meant by this was philosophy, then on the last day of his life, he turned to poetry [Plato *Phaedo* 60c]. According to [Plutarch *Mor.* 16], Spartans also made a sacrifice to the muses before battle in order to obtain fame that later would be praised by descendants. This fame, is one of the basic notions of moral wisdom, contained in "Spartan aphorisms." It is this fame that was celebrated by Spartans during feasts. And again, it is Plutarch who informs us of Spartans' love for singing. Devotion to the muses, both on the military field and on the field of philosophical battles, proved itself to be accordant—in both cases it was linked to death.

On a large number of occasions, Plato and Xenophon portray Socrates as a warrior who was not afraid of, but craved, a glorious death. In *The Apology*, Socrates refuses to take death into account, preferring first and foremost to care not about himself but about the justness of the deed. In *Crito*, Laws address him with admonition: "You must not give way or draw back or leave your post" [Plato *Crito* 51b]. Socrates's composure in the battle of Delium (424 BC), when the Athenian formation was destroyed ("everybody has already straggled off"), and enemy cavalry dominated the battlefield, was eloquently described in *Symposium* by Alcibiades.<sup>4</sup> These and other accounts remind us, sometimes literally, of the value of the military regime and loyalty to comrades in arms celebrated by the aforementioned Tyrtaeus.

4. The comparison between Spartan traits and Socrates's philosophical position becomes especially clear when we recall Spartan's famous loyalty to the law, which was pointed out by classical Greek historians and the followers of Socrates, Plato and Xenophon. But this position stands in perfect harmony with the one held by Socrates in *Crito*, where he explains why he has no desire to flee from prison in the following manner:

...and ought either to convince her by persuasion or to do whatever she commands, and to suffer, if it commands you to suffer, in silence, and if it orders you to be scourged or imprisoned or if it leads you to war to be wounded or slain, it will be done, and this is right [51b].

4. See [*Symp.* 221ab]. Also there is more information about Socrates as the warrior in [Anderson 2005: 273–289].

Compliance with the stipulations of the law implies the execution of even those stipulations which appear strange to us. Let us examine one more testimony of Laws in [52b]:

...you would never have stayed in it more than all other Athenians if you had not been better pleased with it than they; you never went out from the city to a festival, or anywhere else, except on military service, and you never made any other journey, as other people do, and you had no wish to know any other city or other laws, but you were contented with us and our city. So strongly did you prefer us and agree to live in accordance with us; and besides, you begat children in the city, showing that it pleased you.

Escaping from the law would have resulted in Socrates “having to curry favour with everybody and being subservient” [53e], that is, to be disgraced and lose honour. Tyrtaeus speaks of the same idea: a runaway from the battlefield will “taste a bitter fate.” Socrates claims: finding himself, for example, in Thebes, where laws are good, he who fled his native city will become their enemy. Tyrtaeus affirms in the elegy already quoted here that far and near a fugitive will be an enemy to those who receive him.

The fragment drawn from *Crito* is especially important for the theme of comparing the image of Socrates with that of Spartans in the traditions of antiquity because Plutarch claims: Lycurgus forbade Spartans from leaving the confines of their country with the exception of periods of military operations or participation in diplomatic and religious missions [Plutarch *Par. Lives* 27]. In his opinion, trips abroad could induce a weakening of the solid foundations of Spartan demeanour.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps it is due to this very reason that Socrates did not go to foreign rulers who invited him, particularly Archelaus I of Macedon and Scopas from Crannon, whom he “despised” [Diogenes Laertius *Lives* ii 5.27]. As we know, Socrates left Athens only at times of military operations and once went to Isthmus at a time of a religious celebration. Even if he had been the owner of land, then he hardly ever visited this property: it is not without reason that in *Phaedrus* we read that Socrates almost never went beyond the city walls [Plato *Phaedrus* 230c].

5. Activities to which Socrates and Spartans devoted themselves on their home grounds, it seems, differed greatly. Spartans, if one is to be-

5. See the story about king Leotychidas, bribed by the Thessalians, or the sad fate of general Pausanias who defeated the Persians in the battle of Plataea and was then corrupted by the lifestyle of the conquered barbarians.

lieve the tradition of antiquity as represented in works by Thucydides,<sup>6</sup> Plutarch and other authors, were constantly preparing themselves for military actions.<sup>7</sup> It is precisely with regard to this that the special attention given to the education of children, which is described in detail in Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, was connected [Xenophon *Const. Lak.* 2–7]. What should be noted is, on the one hand, the austerity of their upbringing, and, on the other hand, the fact that, according to Xenophon's words, Lycurgus “mixed all ages in Sparta” in spite of the custom where peers spent their time in the company of their equals in age. The legendary legislator believed that this would enable young people to learn from the elders' experience and to prepare more aptly for the tribulations of adult life.

But Plato's Socrates also aspires to spend time with people of different ages. In the dialogue *Parmenides* he is portrayed as an inquisitive adolescent conversing with wise eleatic thinkers. In the dialogue *Theaetetus*, the elderly philosopher acts as an educator of youths. The Thirty Tyrants aimed to prohibit Socrates from associating with young people [*Mem.* i 2.33], and in 399 BC he was tried for “the corruption of youth.”

It is also worth noting here that upon taking to philosophy, Socrates gave up all other activities [Plato *Apol.* 31b]. One place from Diogenes Laertius suggests that he undertook certain commercial activities from which he derived income [Diogenes Laertius *Lives* ii 5.20]. However, in Plato's dialogues, Socrates does not engage in any business. Although he owns enough property to serve in the ranks of the hoplites, this property was long abandoned by the philosopher [Plato *Apol.* 31b]. Socrates fully immerses himself in philosophy and avoids distraction by anything but unavoidable public and military duties. Plutarch's words are in line with this image of a man who withdraws from economic concerns:

For one of the noble and blessed privileges which Lycurgus provided for his fellow-citizens, was abundance of leisure, since he forbade their engaging in any mechanical art whatsoever, and as for money-making, with its laborious efforts to amass wealth, there was no need of it at all, since wealth awakened no envy and brought no honour [Plutarch *Par. Lives* 24].

In the historical and philosophical tradition, Socrates is portrayed as a truly free man. In the dialogue *Theaetetus*, Plato ascribes words to Socrates about the necessity of the true sage's withdrawal from philistine

6. See the famous place from Pericles: [Thucydides *Hist.* ii 39].

7. Socrates also “did physical exercises and had solid health” [Diogenes Laertius *Lives* ii 5.22].

hustle linked to money-making, the fear of social deprivation and the reign of judiciary erestic. But the mode of life of Spartan men, to the degree that it is described by the authors of the “Spartan mirage,” is completely devoid of the traits of the ordinary people from *Theaetetus*. In Plutarch’s opinion, the main virtue of Lacedaemonians was freedom:

Therefore it was that one of Lacedaemonians who was sojourning at Athens when the courts were in session, and learned that a certain Athenian had been fined for idleness and was going home in great distress of mind and attended on his way by sympathetic and sorrowing friends, begged the bystanders to show him the man who had been fined for living like a freeman [24].

6. One more place where Socrates’s image can be linked to the “Spartan mirage” is Delphi. The pythian sanctuary that declared Socrates as the wisest man among Athenians traditionally was in amicable relations with Sparta. According to the legend, the approval of Lycurgus’ legislation by Delphi became one of the first manifestations of this friendship. When Lycurgus came to the sanctuary, the oracle addressed him with the words: “I cannot understand how to call you, a god or a man?” Socrates “humbly” admits that the oracle did not equate him to a god, but “merely” declared that he excelled far beyond Athenians [Xenophon *Apol.* 15]. Quite possibly the main motive here is not so much in highlighting the sage’s special status, but in comparing Socrates with the famous legislator. If we cannot ascribe Plato’s political projects (for example, *The Republic*) to the historical figure of Socrates, then Socrates certainly could claim his closeness to Lycurgus with regard to caring for youth’s education [24].

7. For authors of antiquity, Socrates’s eroticism had not only philosophical implications. The passionate nature of Socrates is expressed in his appearance. Both Plato and Xenophon talk about it. Alcibiades, in Plato’s *Symposium*, compares the appearance of his teacher with portrayals of Silenus, one of the hypostases of the agricultural demon of fertility [Plato *Symp.* 215b]. The meaning of the comparison is clear: Alcibiades juxtaposes the image of Socrates, referring us to its “rusticity” which was ridiculed in “satyr plays” (and which could, at times of growing animosity between poleis, be associated with “rural” Sparta), with the inner beauty of his soul. However, it should not be forgotten that sileni and satyrs are associated with a sexuality characteristic of agricultural cults. Plato is echoed by Xenophon. In his *Symposium*, Socrates ironically dis-

cusses his “crayfish” eyes, pug nose and pouty lips (see [Xenophon *Symp.* v 5] and onwards), which, in antiquity, were indicators of sensuousness.

From the point of view of the Athenian sage’s inheritors, philosophical musings entirely transformed his passionate nature. Porphyry mentions this theme in *The History of Philosophy*.<sup>8</sup> Cicero’s story, in *Tusculan Disputations*, about the mistake of the physiognomist, Zopyrus, who tried to “read” the philosopher’s character in the traits of his face, is also indicative.<sup>9</sup> The victory of the “heavenly” Eros over passionate nature is especially evident in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Here, Socrates urges not to surrender to bodily appetite, thus taming the “black steed” responsible for voluptuous desires [Plato *Phaedrus* 256ab].

Here again we see Spartan parallels. Xenophon talks about the very same erotic restraint in *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*—only now in relation to Lycurgus’ legislation [Xenophon *Const. Lak.* ii 13]:

The customs instituted by Lycurgus were opposed to all <...>. If someone, being himself an honest man, admired a boy’s soul and tried to make of him an ideal friend without reproach and to associate with him, he approved, and believed in the excellence of this kind of training. But if it was clear that the attraction lay in the boy’s outward beauty, he banned the connexion as an abomination; and thus he caused lovers to abstain from boys no less than parents abstain from sexual intercourse with their children and brothers and sisters with each other.

8. Many other more or less direct indications of similarities between the Spartan mode of life and Socrates’s behaviour can be pointed out: his spouse Xanthippe, who resembles Spartan rather than Athenian women; the comparison of the Sophists with the Peltasts in *Theaetetus*—that branch of fighters which brought about the destruction of the norms of classical Spartan hoplite combat.

8. “Porphyry claims that Socrates, Sophroniscus’ son, was intemperate early in his life, but, upon overcoming himself and pursuing the sciences in earnest, he managed to get rid of the worst and to reveal the traits of philosophy” [Theodoret *GAC* iv 2]. Also [Cyril *Con. Jul.* vi 76, 784d-785a]: “Furthermore, Porphyry writes about Socrates: “He was modest in his daily life and did not require much for the satisfaction of day-to-day needs; as for love affairs, he was eager for them, although they did not compel him to become an ill person” Cited by [Porphyry *Hist. Phil.* 12a].
9. “Zopyrus, who professed to know a man’s character from his appearance, when in a public assembly he had given a long catalogue of the faults of Socrates, and was derided by others who did not recognize those faults in him, was relieved from blame by Socrates himself, who said that these faults were implanted in him by nature, but that he had exterminated them by reason” [Cicero *Tusc. Disp.* iv 37].

However, the most important and obvious trait of Socrates in the view of his contemporaries was his appearance. Was there anything Spartan in it? If one adheres to the principle of stylisation in the “strict” sense of the word, then some Spartan traits should be revealed also in the outward demeanour of the Athenian sage. Our expectations are met again in this case. In complete sympathy with traditions established by Lycurgus, Spartans did not look after their bodies in the same way other Hellenes did. They washed themselves, dressed up and adorned their heads with wreaths only when they went to war. Paradoxically, something similar can also be said of Socrates’s behaviour. Aristophanes recorded at least two confirmations of this. Chronologically, the first one can be found *The Clouds*, where Aristophanes compares Socrates’s disciples, gloomy, looking under their feet and negligently clad, with the Laconians who were taken as captives in the battle of Pylos [Aristophanes *Clouds* 225]. Later in *The Birds*, Aristophanes describes the “fashion” of Spartan lifestyle, widespread among Athenians, with reference to the example of Socrates [*Birds* 1281–1284]:

Before your city was built, all men had a mania for Sparta;  
long hair and fasting were held in honor,  
men went dirty like Socrates and carried staves.

There is a strong possibility that this fashion was widespread at the time of the Peace of Nicias.

Socrates evidently did not take “bathing” and “perfume” care of himself. “Hygienic ascesis,” obviously aimed at the habituation of the body to hardships, is similar to the case of Lacedaemonians. We encounter Socrates, “washed and in sandals,” in *Symposium* (which amazes all the participants of this dialogue [Plato *Symp.* 171a]). However, it should be noted that this text is dedicated to the theme of Eros and appears as a debating contest in the restoration of the “ancient demon.” This contest becomes for Socrates a kind of ordeal, as war is for Spartans. And as we see, he engages tirelessly—even when everyone else falls asleep, our philosopher is busy conversing on whether the authors of comedies can write tragic works and visa versa [223c]. Moreover, up to the appearance of Alcibiades, companions in this dialogue keep the pledge not to drink wine, exhibiting the same firmness as participants of legendary Spartan *syssitias* [Xenophon *Const. Lak.* v 3–7; Plutarch *Par. Lives* 12].

9. Summing up the Spartan traits of Socrates’s image in the texts by his disciples, we can assume that a new, not yet developed side of historical and philosophical studies opens before us: a non-verbal dimension

of antique (and not only antique) philosophy, expressed not in an esoteric silence but in the symbolic reflection of some real and fictional patterns in philosophers' lives. This theme is particularly important in relation to Socrates, due to his "not knowing," which was welcomed by the Delphian oracle. Whether we understand the Athenian philosopher's "not knowing" as a methodical principle "breaking new ground" for the "searching of one's self" for his disciples and their future philosophical doctrines, or interpret it as a criticism of sophistic wisdom, the verbal "not knowing" does not, in any case, imply the loss of behavioural orientation. The sage, refusing to define courage, beauty and correct opinion, in his practical activity is courageous, just and morally beautiful; he is absolutely one and the same with himself and his behavioural symbolism in his stamina at the trial and before death. From this point of view, he appears before his disciples as fully "knowing," only this knowledge is so difficult to express through language, through dialogue or in a biography...

### References

- Anderson, M. (2005). "Socrates as Hoplite." *Ancient Philosophy* 25: 273–289.
- Foucault, M. (2008). "Diskurs i istina." *Logos. Filozofsko-literaturnyi zhurnal* ["Discourse and Truth." *Logos. Philosophical and Literary Journal*] 2(65): 159–262.
- Foucault, M. (2011). *Upravlenie soboi i drugimi. Kurs lektsii, pročitannykh v Kollezhe de Frans v 1982–1983 uchebnom godu* [The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–1983]. Saint Petersburg: Nauka.
- Oliva, P. (1971). *Sparta and Her Social Problems*. Prague: Academia.
- Ollier, F. (1933–1943). *Le Mirage spartiate. Étude sur l'idéalisation de Sparte dans l'antiquité grecque du début de l'école cynique jusqu'à la fin de la cité*. T. I–II. Paris: Les Belles-Lettres.
- Patzer, A. (1986). *Der Sophist Hippias als Philosophiehistoriker*. Freiburg: Alber.
- Rosen, R., and Sluiter, I. (eds). (2004). *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.
- Surikov, I. E. (2011). *Sokrat [Socrates]*. Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia.
- Vlastos, G. (1991). *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.