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## Σωκρατικοί λόγοι as a literary genre and a way of life

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**ABSTRACT:** The author's main objective is to show that it is possible to interpret the 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' not only as literary representations of Socrates' figure, but also as the resources for reconstruction of the Socratic philosophical conception of leading an examined life. Aristotle considers as 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' only literary texts imitating Socrates explicitly and defines this genre's distinctive features, but the author of this paper supposes that despite the absence of Socrates' direct representation in the works of other Socratics (mostly those of Aristophanes, Xenophon and Plato), their texts are marked by Socrates' influence too. The author of this paper also argues that it is not precisely this literary form of Socratic dialogue as such what makes Plato share the common Socratic heritage with the other Socratics. It is rather the conception of examining one's true ethical character (ἡθός) which we find in his early dialogue *Laches*.<sup>1</sup>

**KEY-WORDS:** Socrates, mimesis, Σωκρατικοί λόγοι, brief speech, Socratic dialogue

### THE FOUR 'TRADITIONAL' SOURCES OF THE SOCRATIC LITERATURE

The role of Socrates in the ancient thought is unforgettable. Various different movements, schools, and thinkers avowed of being Socrates' followers even in the time of his life and also after his trial and execution. They pointed to Socrates as to their predecessor and used to legitimize their thought as inspired by him. But the question of "historical Socrates" brings about many peculiar difficulties and complications, mostly because of these two well-known reasons: the first is that no

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works or records of Socrates' authorship had survived up to our days. The interpretative tradition claims that Socrates did not write anything. The second is that there are too many available references to Socrates, but in many cases they are significantly diverging and sometimes even contradictory. The traditional scholars had recognized and investigated four main considerably reliable sources which inform us about Socrates' activity – the works of Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> My suggestion is that by analyzing the selected excerpts of their works, it is possible to reveal that these authors significantly disagree in what they take to be the distinctive features of their representations of Socrates.

Aristophanes was the eldest of these four and was supposedly also the first to leave us some literary evidence of Socrates' life. The caricature of Socrates appeared in his popular comedies.<sup>3</sup> But the ancient tradition did not hold his testimony for reliable, because his representation of Socrates diverged mostly from that of the other Socratics and it was in fact Aristophanes' comic form what caused Socrates' disrepute. In spite of all its defamatory aspects, the evidence of Aristophanes is still of high value, since he was the only one of the four abovementioned authors, who was most probably literary active even before the death of Socrates.<sup>4</sup> Xenophon and Plato are both told to be the originators of the Socratic dialogic form, but Xenophon is moreover supposed to be the first Socratic, who had published some examples of it.<sup>5</sup> In Xenophon's Socratic writings *Apology*, *Symposium*, and *Memorabilia* we find some most lucid evidence of Socrates conversing with his companions in which the dialogic form frequently occurs, and it is possible to consider them being the first texts of the personal memoirs genre in Socratic literature.<sup>6</sup> Plato depicts Socrates as a

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<sup>2</sup> See: (Clay 1994, 23-47).

<sup>3</sup> cf. (Waerdt, 1994, 48-86).

<sup>4</sup> Aristophanes' *Clouds* presenting Socrates' caricature in a comic light were supposedly published two times in years 423 and 421 BC. cf. (Canfora 2001, 210-211).

<sup>5</sup> cf. (DL II. 48): "He had been the first who made notes and published Socrates' conversation under the title 'Ἀπομνημονεύματα'."

<sup>6</sup> For a significant period of time, Xenophon was held to be the most reliable Socratic author. Until the 18th century the interpreters' prevailing view had been that Xenophon's Socrates is closer to the 'historical' one than Plato's. This approach originated in the Hellenistic tradition for which Xenophon's Socrates was 'more useful.' Hellenistic doxographers sought various methods of relating Socrates to the Hellenistic (most often Stoic) philosophy. For Hellenistic philosophy Socrates' affection for the ethical questions or philosophical practice seemed 'more attractive' and Xenophon's Socrates fitted this purpose well. Long (1998, 154) argues: „In fact Plato, or what we call Plato's Socratic dialogues, appear to have been widely regarded as neither more nor less authentic witnesses to Socrates than Xenophon's writings." Cf. Xenophon maintained his position till the end of the first half of the 19th century by which modern scholars approached his works reservedly. The doubting of Xenophon's Socrates was triggered by Schleiermacher who did not consider Xenophon's representation of Socrates to be sufficient and acquisitive. Xenophon's Socrates was interested primarily in ethical questions which were, from Schleiermacher's romantic point of view, unbeneficial as they did not help to develop the philosophical discourse. Schleiermacher sought a more fascinating, literally put - "more philosophical" Socrates. Dorion (2011, 4) points out that the main Schleiermacher's theses were Platonic and misleading. He sums up his approach as follows: „But where does Schleiermacher intend to find this other dimension of Socrates that is presumably absent in

keen thinker occupied primarily with the issues of virtue. As soon, as in his early dialogues, he puts forward the problem, if the virtue is teachable or not. Plato's Socrates uses Socratic dialogue to examine the interlocutors' character (ἦθος).<sup>7</sup>

### **ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF THE 'SOKRATIKOI LOGOI'**

Many of Socrates' friends and companions who later attempted to portray him in their literary works followed Socrates primarily in his way of living, but some of them imitated him even in his public performances. The investigation of Socrates' heritage thus requires also some close examination of all its accessible aspects – be it its definition as a literary genre, or the various modes of imitation of Socrates. Socrates' figure could have served in antiquity as a mask by the use of which many authors investigated various practical questions. In many works Socrates appears purposely to make the discussion more 'tough,' because of his reputation as a gifted discussor. The tradition lifted up the writings of Plato, Xenophon, in few cases also of Aristophanes. This has caused that the exegesis of the Socratic literature turned in many cases obscure and misleading. The writings of these authors can be sometimes besides other things inspired also by literary ambitions.<sup>8</sup> This momentum fogs the motif of the 'historical Socrates' and Socratic thought in general. It also impedes our adequate evaluation of Socrates' philosophical heritage as such. All our investigation concerning Socrates is nowadays dependent mostly on the indirect evident recorded in the corpus of the so-called 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι (Socratic speeches).'

Aristotle was the first to sum up the works of the Socratics under one heading and to coin the term 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι.' His definition is undoubtedly very original. He defines 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' as a literary genre in which 'ποίησις' of the individual Socratic author is intermingled with 'μίμησις' of Sophron and his son Xenarchus, the authors of Sicilian comedies.<sup>9</sup> Even for Aristotle it had been an utmost challenge to define this genre satisfyingly. Why does Aristotle mention Socrates' conversation in connection with μίμησις?

The possible translation of 'μίμησις' is 'an imitation,' i.e. a production of 'resemblance.' But what might be the shared feature of 'μίμησις' and the conversations of Socrates; for Aristotle supposes them to be interrelated. In *Rhet.* 1417a16-23 a more general definition appears. It makes clear a few obscure points:

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Xenophon's text? Schleiermacher intends to find the more philosophical dimension of Socrates - "philosophical" in the modern and speculative sense of the term - in Plato, of course. Schleiermacher's work from 'Über den Werth des Sokrates als Philosoph' (1818) has influenced the study of the Socratic issue in the following century too.

<sup>7</sup> Ford (2008, 35) illustrates this fact and emphasizes that the element of ἦθοποιόι (character descriptions) is distinctive both for Socratic dialogue and for 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' in general. He argues that this is precisely the point distinguishing Socratic dialogue from the other kinds.

<sup>8</sup> Waerdt (1994, 2) points out: „The fact that Socrates is accessible to us only through the eyes of three authors, each possessed of great literary ambition, inevitably complicates philosophical evaluation [...]“

<sup>9</sup> See: Aristot. *Rhet.* 1417a16-23. But in *Poet.* 2, 1447b10-11 Aristotle states: „we can find no common term to apply to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and to the Socratic dialogues“.

“The narration should depict character; to which end you must know what makes it do so. One such thing is the indication of moral purpose; the quality of purpose indicated determines the quality of character depicted and is itself determined by the end pursued.”<sup>10</sup>

Aristotle thus considers Socratic conversations to be specific as they depict interlocutors' character. Aristotle furthermore emphasizes the special attribute of 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' which lies in the requirement that the object of examination must contain the attributes of one's personality. For the genre of 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' the character traits are thus crucial.

But in this definition, Aristotle does not distinguish the various modes of imitation (μίμησις). He does not include into Σωκρατικοί λόγοι those works in which nor Socrates nor his conversations do appear explicitly, or absent as the object of imitation.<sup>11</sup> Why does Aristotle also eliminate those works in which Socrates absents? Aristotle's definition to a great degree builds on the work of Plato inspired by the rhythmic prose of Sophron and Xenarchus.<sup>12</sup> The presence of meter was Aristotle's cardinal criterion for classification of the literary genres which might have had influenced also his definition. Many other similarities of 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' rather with the genre of poetry than prose, or the imitation of Socrates' figure could have led to the same conclusion concerning the classification of this genre. The works of the so called 'ἡθοποιοί' (character describers) are capable of giving a distinctive feature helpful when endeavoring after defining this genre more accurately. Its essential function is to depict the distinctive attributes of one's character (ἦθος) and discover individual character traits formable in conversation. This wider perspective helps to grasp the core of Aristotle's literary theory more transparently, and approach his definition with somewhat greater understanding. Thus I suppose it to be deeply Platonic. The main hypothesis of this paper is that 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' as “Socratic speeches” are fundamentally connected with the way of life characteristic of Socrates. The fact that Aristotle did not belong to the generation of Socrates' disciples who were supposedly present at his trial and execution, moreover causes that his work too cannot be seen as reliable with no reserve. Aristotle belongs to the first generation of thinkers writing after these events happened. Messages discovered in his texts would not help us to reconstruct the historic Socrates but they are worthy for the

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<sup>10</sup> cf. Aristot. *Rhet.* 1417a16-23. The English translation follows: Aristotle's *Ars Poetica*, ed. R. Kassel, Loeb Classical Library. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>11</sup> See: Clay, 1994, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Sophron and his son Xenarchus of Syracuse (5<sup>th</sup> century BC) were authors of rhythmic prose depicting moments of everyday life of men and women represented as literary caricatures. Antonín Kříž (1999, 391), Czech translator and commentator of Aristotle's *Rhetorics* and *Poetics*, described even more accurately the relation of 'μίμησις' to Plato's representation of Socrates: “The mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus: Sophron was Plato's favorite – mime depicted by the use of a play, monologue or a dialogue, a short life inspired revelation [...] Conversations with Socrates: the philosophical writings of Socrates' disciples are meant.”

reconstruction of Plato's adaptation of the 'Socratic doctrine.'<sup>13</sup> In the framework of 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι', the literary figures and themes later found in the works of various even non-Socratic authors were formed. Literary figure as an instrument of investigation can be applied to Socrates' own case, because it is necessary to resign to an endeavor after reconstructing his 'reliable,' or even 'realistic' historical representation. Plato's version too cannot reach such goal. We are still primarily dependent on *literary* representation of Socrates. However, there are also few other figures which constantly reappear in the context of 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι'.

### **THE ELDER REPRESENTATIONS: IMITATING SOCRATES AND THE SOCRATIC DIALOGUE**

Some of the Socratics moreover led their life according to Socratic pattern and their manners of imitating Socrates were drawn into the most trivial details. It is not certain to tell the same about Plato. Aristophanes' *Clouds* are possibly the eldest work in which Socrates appears as a literary figure. They profess his affection for examination and exploration of personal character traits with the use of 'βραχυλογία' (brief speech). In *Clouds* we find e.g. Socrates' conversation with Strepsiades illustrating these Socratic features:

Soc.

Come now, tell me your own turn of mind; in order that, when I know of what sort it is, I may now, after this, apply to you new engines.

Strep.

What? By the gods, do you purpose to besiege me?

Soc.

No; I wish to briefly learn from you if you are possessed of a good memory.<sup>14</sup>

Aristophanes' work presents an important source for us also because his comic depictions of Socrates are not solitary. Even other than the four abovementioned authors of 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' also created his comic representations.<sup>15</sup> In another comedy *Birds*, Aristophanes informs us of an imitation which effected in the most rudimentary aspects of everyday life:

<sup>13</sup> Ahbel-Rappe (2009, 6) comments Aristotle's message as follows: "[...] with an emphasis on Aristotelian texts that report [...] not at all on the life of Socrates, but on Socratic doctrine and - to a lesser extent - on Socratic method". See: Ahbel-Rappe, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Aristoph. *Nub.* 479-484.

<sup>15</sup> Clay (1994, 38) points out that it is possible to find traces of Socratic dialogue in Aristophanes' texts too: „The character of Aristophanes' representation of Socratic questioning coheres with what we know about the character of his conversations rendered by the Socratics who wrote later. Socrates operates by question and answer rather than by long epideictic speeches; he prefers 'βραχυλογία' and is concerned with the quickness to learn and the memories of his would-be associates.“

„...all men had a mania for Sparta; long hair and fasting were held in honor, men went dirty like Socrates...”<sup>16</sup>

This evidence indicates that Socrates indeed had been imitated in the most trivial everyday activities (such as clothing, manners of expression); in his behavior; and what is most important, in his manner of speaking.<sup>17</sup> The imitations however did not relate only to Socrates’ ‘external’ resemblance, but appear also in the ‘Socratic dialogues’ in which their authors are trying to build up their speeches (λογοί) so that their theme is - Socrates leading a conversation.

Dialogue is most frequently the basic form which authors of Σωκρατικοί λόγοι operate with because it can serve well as a method of recording Socrates’ teaching.<sup>18</sup> In ancient times, controversies were raised as to who was the originator of the dialogic form. These controversies concerned mainly opinions on this problem present in Aristotle’s corpus.<sup>19</sup> It is possible nowadays to ask who could have been the first to give the examination of characters a dialogic form of brief questions and responses. The field of possible answers does not exclude even some further Socratics of whom we know very little today. According to the doxographers’ evidence it could have been Simon the shoemaker, possibly another close companion of Socrates.<sup>20</sup> Despite he was supposed to be the creator of the literary represented dialogue in Athens, his version of dialogical form was most probably very simple. It was based upon the question-answer alterations and not on a carefully schemed conversation concerning some special issue with a special investigative purpose. The dialogues of Simon probably reminded rather of descriptions of common everyday conversations. The element of dialectic used as a method of examination, which can be found in Plato’s dialogues, clearly absents.

### **PLATO’S ‘ELENCHOS’ AND THE EXAMINATION OF ‘ETHOS’:**

The definition of Socratic conversation as a genre proceeding exclusively by the method of alternation of brief questions and answers would thus be too narrow and

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<sup>16</sup> See: Aristoph. Av. 1280.

<sup>17</sup> cf. (Clay 1994, 24-25).

<sup>18</sup> The conception of dialogue as a recording mode of the whole of Plato’s teaching has already survived in the historians’ circle for a significant period of time. This approach has reached a conclusion that the first generation of Socrates’ disciples had tried to record his teaching and character with the help of dialogue in a very complex form. The dialogue was supposed to present a solution. cf. (Ford 2008, 31).

<sup>19</sup> Kerferd (1981, 59) suggests that Aristotle’s testimony was provocative and oriented against Plato who claimed himself to be the first dialectician.

<sup>20</sup> Diogenes Laertius writes on Simon: “Simon of Athens was a shoemaker. Whenever Socrates entered his shop and started to discourse on something he made notes of everything he remembered. [...] It is said that he was the first to introduce Socratic dialogues as a form of conversation.” cf. (DL II, 122-123).



oversimplifying. The more important feature of Plato's dialogues is that Socrates plays the role of a companion who always enters the dialogue with a certain personal opinion (δόξα), or conviction concerning some particular example of virtue. Plato's Socrates examines the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of his interlocutor and finally, asking questions and seeking answers, together they usually reach the aporetic situation. This is the point at which the early dialogues most often end. This aporetic conclusion of a dialogue serves as an inspiration for a further examination and an improvement in virtue. At the same time, through his prism of disavowal of knowledge, Plato's Socrates exhorts his companions to a perpetual doubting of one's own opinions (δόξαι) which are frequently not really their own, but are overtaken from someone else. Socrates in his questioning tries to exhort them to a ceaseless care for the self (ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ) which is the crucial part of his conception of living an 'examined life.'

In the centre of attention of Plato's version of Socratic dialogue thus does not stand solely an endeavor after knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), or simply a perfect completion of a craft (τέχνη). Socrates' method, which occurs in early Plato's dialogues by this kind of examination, is the well known elenchus (ἐλεγχος).<sup>21</sup> Vlastos defined it as follows.

„Socratic elenchus is a search for moral truth by question-and-answer adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer's own belief and is regarded as refuted only if its negation is deduced from his own beliefs.“<sup>22</sup>

Elenchus enables Socrates to effectively lead a conversation in which he examines both his interlocutor and himself. An example of typically Socratic conversation explaining its purpose of examination of the interlocutor's character traits we can find e.g. in the early dialogue *Laches*. In the conversation between Nicias and Lysimachus, Nicias tells Lysimachus that anyone who entered a dialogue with Socrates found himself after a while being examined as to his character and his way of living.<sup>23</sup> This clearly shows the Socrates' method of examining characters with the help of which he seeks the ethical 'truth' (ἀλήθεια). It is the truth of which Socrates himself does not possess knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and which he cannot express in words. Its investigation is drawn in this kind of conversation into the minutest details and the dialogue ends in an aporia. The aporetic situation is a demonstration of the fact that any ethical truth is not definable by anyone else than ourselves. Vlastos distinguishes Socrates' ἐλεγχος from the other methods used in the other spheres of knowledge which do not relate to the human character of the participants in investigation. An example of such abstract sphere is e.g. mathematics.<sup>24</sup> One of the conditions for leading an *elenctic* conversation is the acceptance of the brevity of speech (βραχυλογία). Plato's Socrates

<sup>21</sup> Vlastos (1994, 2) points out that Plato's Socrates despite some allusions does not literally define *elenchus*. *Elenchus* as a method of refutation which had been ascribed to Socrates' way of leading a conversation was named and defined as late as in modern times.

<sup>22</sup> cf. Vlastos (1994, 4).

<sup>23</sup> See: Plat. *Lach.* 187e-188a.

<sup>24</sup> c.f. (Vlastos 1994, 5).

in his discussions rejects the use of long rejoinders. For his goal of revealing the truth (ἀλήθεια) in its moral sense and in respect of knowing oneself (γνῶθι σαυτόν), the brevity of expression or a brief speech (βραχυλογία)<sup>25</sup> is very typical. In another Plato's early dialogue, Socrates talks in this context about an ideal of the 'Laconian brevity.'<sup>26</sup>

These Socratic methods are characteristic of all of the Plato's early dialogues. In *Gorgias* we find Socrates' emphasizing the same requirement.<sup>27</sup> The short replicas in conversation are also crucial for the distinction of Socrates' activity from the eristic and the sophistic movement of the end of 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>28</sup> What may then be the cause of Socrates' insisting on the brevity of expression (βραχυλογία)? The brief speech (βραχυλογία) and elenctic argumentation enable Socrates to examine his interlocutor and demonstrate to him the uncertainty and doubtfulness of (possibly even not really) his attitudes. It is precisely this method by which Socrates depicts individual character of his interlocutors. Socrates in his refuting (ἔλεγχος) and the use of brief speech (βραχυλογία) is in this sense very close to the 'ἠθοποιοί' (character describers). This explains the abovementioned Aristotle's definition of 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' and for this same reason it is possible to identify Plato's inspiration by Sophron's imitating (μίμησις).

Based on his interpretation of Socrates' refuting technique (ἔλεγχος), Vlastos divided Plato's dialogues into three groups: "early" (for which he elaborates a further subdivision into "elenctic" and "transitional"), "middle", and "late".<sup>29</sup> Ahbel-Rappe claims that Vlastos' classification brings an evolutionary thesis according to which a considerable number of Plato's dialogues written in the beginnings of his career represent the message of historical Socrates.<sup>30</sup> Plato's early dialogues are thus in the context of Σωκρατικοί λόγοι substantially more significant than middle or late dialogues. Socrates' character appearing in the early dialogues shows the same traits that can be found also in the works of other Socratics. In this aspect Plato starts to deviate from the other Socratics in his middle dialogues. In the preceding period of his writing dialogues such as e.g. *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, *Menexenus*,<sup>31</sup> Socrates uses the elenctic method less frequently and he sometimes replaces it with the maieutic method. This method derives its origin from 'μαϊεία' (art of the wise woman), i.e. the birth assistance. This is a metaphorical expression of the dialectic activity of Plato's Socrates who helps to induce knowledge in conversation with the interlocutors. In the late dialogues e.g. in *Theaethetus* this change in method is even formulated

<sup>25</sup> Βραχυλογία: 'kata-brachy:' in sequel, step by step. cf. (LSJ, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> cf. Plat. *Prot.* 343a-343b.

<sup>27</sup> cf. Plat. *Gorg.* 449c.

<sup>28</sup> Vlastos (1994, 8-9) describes Socrates' fight with the eristic as follows: "In eristic, where the prime object is to win, one is free to say anything that will give one a debating advantage. In elenchus, where the prime object is search for truth, one does not have that option. One must say what one believes, even if it will loose on the debate." cf. Vlastos (1994, 8-9).

<sup>29</sup> cf. (Vlastos 1991, 46-47).

<sup>30</sup> cf. (Ahbel-Rappe 2009, 6).

<sup>31</sup> cf. (Vlastos 1991, 46-47).



explicitly.<sup>32</sup> In this case it is difficult to distinguish Socrates' method clearly – is it 'ἔλεγχος', or 'μαϊεία'? Despite Socrates speaks of his aid to getting the thoughts of his interlocutors 'delivered', the question of clearly defining this method remains open. The reason may possibly be that Plato evolved his method by sequel. But in the *Meno* 82-83d the shift towards maieutic is relatively clear.<sup>33</sup> Plato touches here upon his philosophical teaching on ideas developed later in *Republic*.

The themes of early Plato's dialogues are however very similar to the themes of other 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι'.<sup>34</sup> We are thus able to observe that both Vlastos' definition and Kahn's summarization of the Socratic themes apply also in individual cases to other Socratics, such as Antisthenes, Aeschines, or Xenophon. These contingencies convince us that Plato was inspired by the other Socratics with the works of whom he was very probably more than familiar. Themes which might have been common to Plato's early Socrates and the figures and characters of other Socratics were however in individual cases of Socrates' followers developed in different, sometimes even contradictory directions.<sup>35</sup> The diverging conclusions implied by the agency of the other Socratics only testify two facts: the first, that Socrates did not lead his followers in any kind of a secretive school of thinkers; the second, that Socratic thought must have been based on a certain kind of ethical individualism. Between Plato and also between other Socratic individualities various disagreements must have reigned for sure. Besides Xenophon and Antisthenes, Plato was very probably in conflict with

<sup>32</sup> cf. Plat. *Theaet.* 150b-150d.

<sup>33</sup> In this dialogue, Socrates converses with a slave on whom he intends to demonstrate that he does not teach him, but in the slave's mind appears a recollection (ἀνάμνησις) of what he has known before. Socrates, in his own words, only helps him to recollect, i.e. to 'deliver' an answer to the questions raised by the examination. cf. Vlastos (1994, 5): „The method of discovery in the interrogation of the slave-boy is *not* elenctic but maieutic [...].”

<sup>34</sup> Based on this thematic agreement Kahn (1996, 4) inquires that Plato as the author of the dialogues could have been inspired also by the other Socratics who wrote 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' and thus could not have been the first author of this genre in the sense in which Aristotle defined it. Similarly to Vlastos, Kahn also enumerates nine points that sum up the themes of Plato's early dialogues. Here are few of Kahn's (1996, 4) points showing that 'Σωκρατικοί λόγοι' are rather oriented also towards a Socratic way of life, than only towards a literary imitation: “1.Relative significance of knowledge or theory (λόγος) and moral power (ἐγκράτεια, καρτερία - i.e. self-control or perseverance) in the conception of virtue (and in contrast to Antisthenes); 2.The existence of many names for the same thing (cf. Euclid of Megara), or one and only λόγος for one single thing (cf. Antisthenes); 3.The relation between knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and opinion (δόξα) (cf. the title of Antisthenes' book 'Περὶ δόξης καὶ ἐπιστήμης α, β, γ, δ' [= V A 47, SSR, G.] ); 4.The role of poets and poetry in the education (cf. Antisthenes, Aeschines, Phaedo, Xenophon, Euclid).”

<sup>35</sup> Waerdt (1994, 7) describes these circumstances as follows: “Yet in ancient doxography Plato's portrayal of Socrates was not accorded the primacy it receives in contemporary scholarship, while in his own time and place Plato's was only one among several competing interpretations of Socrates' philosophy. Plato's competitors include figures as diametrically opposed in their interpretations of Socrates as Antisthenes, spiritual father of the Cynics and apparently the most influential of the Socratics during the first fifteen years after Socrates' death, and Aristippus, the hedonist to whom the Cyrenaics traced their ancestry. There were also a host of others “minor Socratics,” so grouped by tradition, although some were influential philosophers of the first rank.”

Aeschinus as well.<sup>36</sup> These conflicts might have been caused by the common subject of their literary activity and by laying claims to Socrates and the Socratic motif in general.

## CONCLUSION

I however suppose that it is possible to explain the obscurities surrounding the genre of ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’ through a closer examination of the context in which this genre has been formed. In Plato’s case the crucial contextual feature is his early inspiration by Sophron’s dramatization and probably also by the dialogues of some other less known Socratics. Aristotle too must have been conscious of this influence because when defining ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι,’ he related them precisely to the ‘μίμησις’ of Sophron and Xenarchus which comically imitated characters of the individuals belonging to the ‘lower’ layers of society. Sophron’s and Xenarchus’ mimes are very important in this context because their imitation of simple men and women does not limit itself to the surface but dives into analyses of individual types – put in the terminology of literary theory – ‘the round characters.’<sup>37</sup> Mimes reveal the heterogeneity of ‘human types’ on which Socrates, as we know him from Plato’s dialogues, was focused in his examinations.<sup>38</sup> Plato’s imitation thus evidently does not limit itself to the forms of Sophron and Xenarchus. Plato had been capable of creating a whole specific language with own vocabulary.

This all shows that among his literary inspiration’s it is possible to identify not only Sicilian ‘μίμησις’, but also an influence of the tragic poets, because in Plato’s dialogues some stylistic features of their plays are present too. Thus Plato’s sources of inspiration are to be sought also in tragedy. Socrates’ trial and execution could have marked many authors of ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’ as a tragic inspiration. This however does not exclude at all that Socratics (or at least some of them) could have had been writing about Socrates in the time of his life and in an optimistic tone.<sup>39</sup> The dialogic

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<sup>36</sup> Clay (1994, 46) points out that: “[...] Plato wrote Socratic dialogues of the kind we know from Antisthenes, Aeschines, Aristippus, and Xenophon of the *Memorabilia*.”

<sup>37</sup> Clay (1994, 24) assumes: “[...] Aristotle’s conception of poetry as mimesis and the term *mimoi* suggest a larger interpretation of the adjective: just as the mimes of Sophron represented the different sexes and the variety of human types engaged in their characteristic pursuits, the authors of ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’ imitated the character of Socrates as he engaged in his characteristic manner of conversation and interrogation.” This is right, but we still can not forget the fact that Aristotle himself was influenced by the Academic tradition.

<sup>38</sup> Clay (1997, 24) even calls attention to the three following facts concerning Socrates’ relation to μίμησις: “Presumably, the mimesis of Socrates and his conversations by the writers of the ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’ was on a higher level both in the object of its imitation and in its language. But in search of the origins of the Socratic dialogue it is well to keep in mind Aristotle’s significant pairing of the Sophronic mime and the Socratic dialogue, for this is the beginning of the tradition that associates Plato with the Sicilian mime of Sophron.”

<sup>39</sup> Ford (2008, 29-31) prefers an interpretation in which the inspiration of ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’ could have been brought by the effort of Socrates’ contemporaries and followers to sum up his teaching into a

form of ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’, however, does not have to be the only considerable method which might be characteristic of this genre.

In the corpus of ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’ survived works in which the dialogical form absented, but which were rather of the nature of apologetic or epideictic speeches (ἐπιδείξις or ἐπιτάφιος). Their authors operated exclusively with speech (λόγος) as a rhetorical performance. They wrote apologies, speeches which in many cases examined ethical questions, e.g. if the virtue is definable and teachable. This element penetrates also the ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’ in a wider cultural context, mainly in the form of ‘ἐπιδείξις’ or ‘ἐπιτάφιος.’ With ‘ἐπιτάφιος’ one meets also in Gorgias’ works.<sup>40</sup> These funeral speeches (ἐπιτάφιος) are also mentioned by Plato in *Menexenus*, where Socrates says that he heard Aspasia delivering such kind of speech.<sup>41</sup> Despite the epideictic speeches, funeral speeches, and the apologies are present in ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι,’ at least for authors like Plato, they do not represent characteristic forms of Socrates’ expression. As has been mentioned before, in early Plato’s dialogues the extensive speeches are that which Socrates distances from, if he has a chance to do so. It is however open for suggestion that the other authors of ‘Σωκρατικοί λόγοι’, who were concerned with the same Socratic themes, could have used them with the aid of different methods for achieving the same rhetorical goals. This could be another point in which it is possible to identify the original impact of Socrates’ influence upon his followers and at the same time it points to the connection of the Socratic thought to its practice in public discourse (ἀγορᾶ).

Š.K.

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coherent whole: “[...] Socratic *logoi* began to be written while Socrates was still alive or if it was his execution that provided the impulse for the new form [...].”

<sup>40</sup> This kind of speech can be found e.g. in the following fragment: *Planudes on Hermogenes Rb. Cr. V 548 Walz*: “[...] I have not met with judicial speeches by him, but with a few deliberative speeches of a sort and technical treatises and numerous epideictic speeches.” c.f.: (Sprague 2001, 48).

<sup>41</sup> cf. Plat. *Men.* 236b.

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