

# Socrates Represented: Why Does He Look Like a Satyr?

Maria Luisa Catoni and Luca Giuliani

## 1

The Swiss pastor Johann Caspar Lavater promoted the discipline of physiognomics in the 1770s as a scientific method to gain a better understanding of humankind. He considered the case of Socrates *the* physiognomic scandal: Why did this philosopher, the wisest and noblest of men, look like a satyr and thus subhuman?<sup>1</sup>

Today not many would consider physiognomics a scientific approach; still, what Lavater considered a scandal remains a puzzle, even though his question should be asked in slightly different terms. The physiognomy of Socrates—as both described in Plato’s and Xenophon’s works each titled *Symposium* and depicted in Socrates’s sculptured portraits—is an artifact, not a product of nature; therefore, the pertinent question is not why Socrates *looked* like a satyr but rather why he was *made to look* like one. From this perspective further questions arise: who made this choice (because it must have been a deliberate choice)? Under what circumstances and with what purpose? These questions are precisely what we will try to answer in this paper. Our primary evidence is certainly first rate: we have two very famous and highly influential texts written by two eminent personalities,

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1. See Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1775–78), 2:64–75.

Plato and Xenophon, several years after Socrates's death; we also have two portrait statues, erected in Athens, that date to the first and second halves of the fourth century BC. The bronze originals are lost, but we can rely on a number of copies produced in Roman times. The earlier statue, as we shall see, was erected in quite problematic and mysterious circumstances.

Before we examine this evidence, let's begin with a very brief outline of Socrates's juridical affair and its aftermath. In Athens in 399 BC Socrates, then aged about seventy, was tried, condemned, and put to death.<sup>2</sup> In his *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius gives us the text of the indictment: "Socrates has broken the law by . . . not duly acknowledging the gods whom the *polis* acknowledges and by . . . introducing other new divinities [*daimónia*]. He has also broken the law . . . by cor-

2. For a small selection of the relevant literature, see Isidor F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates* (New York, 1989); Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), pp. 291–97; Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (New York, 2002); Paul Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice* (New York, 2009), pp. 76–90; Robin Waterfield, *Why Socrates Died: Dispelling the Myths* (London, 2009); Gabriel Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates: How Plato and Xenophon Created Our Socrates* (Lanham, Md., 2010); Robert W. Wallace, "Plato *Logographos*: Defense of Socrates," *Philosophia* 43 (2013): 99–112. On impiety trials, see Kenneth J. Dover, "The Freedom of the Intellectual in Greek Society," in *The Greeks and Their Legacy*, in *Collected Papers*, 2 vols. (New York, 1988), 2:135–58; Jakub Filonik, "Athenian Impiety Trials: A Reappraisal," *Dike* 16 (2013): 11–96; Douglas M. MacDowell, "Hybris in Athens," *Greece and Rome* 23 (Apr. 1976): 14–31; Nicolas R. E. Fisher, "Hybris": *A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, 1992); Douglas L. Cairns, "Hybris, Dishonour, and Thinking Big," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 116 (1996): 1–32; and William Desmond, "The Hybris of Socrates: A Platonic 'Reevaluation of Values' in the *Symposium*," *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society* (2005): 43–63.

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rupting the young. The Penalty proposed is Death.”<sup>3</sup> In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates states that these were just the recent accusations. Aristophanes had popularized older charges in the comedy *Clouds*, staged in 423 BC.<sup>4</sup> These had been vague allegations, says Plato’s Socrates, but for exactly this reason they were all the more dangerous and difficult to fight, in a battle that appeared like “fighting against shadows [*skiamachéin*].”<sup>5</sup> Aristophanes blamed Socrates for studying celestial things and things underground and, therefore, for not worshipping the gods of the polis but strange and new deities—or, again, for teaching his disciples how the unjust and worse discourse might win over the just and better discourse.

After Socrates’s death, the verdict pronounced in the name of the Athenian people became a matter of deep controversy. Many (most likely a large majority) argued in favor of the verdict, some even adding political charges that had not been formalized at the trial. An accusation surfaces from a number of sources that Socrates had among his disciples two politicians whom some considered particularly harmful: Alcibiades and Critias, the latter of whom was a leading member of the antidemocratic junta of the Thirty Tyrants in the period 404–03.<sup>6</sup> On the other side, Socrates’s

3. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, 2.5.40, quoted in Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice*, p. 85. In this passage Diogenes is quoting Favorinus, a sophist of the first to second century AD, who claimed he had seen the document in the Athenian state archive; compare Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, trans. E. C. Marchant, in *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*, trans. Marchant and O. J. Todd, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), 1.1.1, pp. 8–9, and with minor differences, *Apology*, trans. Todd, in *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*, 10, p. 673; and Plato, *Apology*, in *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*, ed. and trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (Cambridge, Mass., 2017), 24b, p. 131.

4. See Giovanni Cerri, “Le *Nuvole* di Aristofane e la realtà storica di Socrate,” in *La commedia greca e la storia*, ed. Franca Perusino and Maria Colantonio (Pisa, 2012), pp. 151–94. On the accusation of making money through his teaching, see Livio Rossetti, “Le *Nuvole* di Aristofane: Perché furono una commedia e non una farsa?” *Rivista di cultura classica e medievale* 16 (1974): 131–36.

5. See Plato, *Apology*, 18a–d, pp. 108–13.

6. On the origin of the political accusations against Socrates, see Anton-Hermann Chroust, *Socrates, Man and Myth: The Two Socratic Apologies of Xenophon* (London, 1957), pp. 69–100, 253 n. 378; Vincenzo Longo, “Premessa al problema della composizione dei ‘Memorabili’: lo ‘Scritto di difesa’ (*Mem.* I, 1–2) e il tempo dell’ ‘*Apologia* senofontea,’” *Serata Eusebiana: Miscellanea Philologica* 11 (1958): 89–114 and *Aner ophelimos: Il problema della composizione dei ‘Memorabili di Socrate’ attraverso lo ‘Scritto di difesa’* (Cuneo, 1959); Mariano Raoss, “Alla ricerca del *kategoros* di Socrate nei *Memorabili* di Senofonte,” in *Miscellanea greca e romana*, ed. A. Colombini et al. (Rome, 1965), pp. 53–176; Rossetti, “Due momenti della polemica fra Policrate e i socratici all’inizio del IV secolo a. C.,” *Rivista di cultura classica e medievale* 16 (1974): 289–98; Gabriele Giannantoni, “Socrate e i Socratici in Diogene Laerzio,” *Elenchos* 7 (1986): 183–216; Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial*, pp. 71–87; Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Trial of Sokrates from the Athenian Point of View* (Copenhagen, 1995); Mario Montuori, *Socrate: Fisiologia di un mito* (Milan, 1998), pp. 13, 131; Niall Livingstone, *A Commentary on Isocrates’ ‘Busiris’* (Boston, 2001), pp. 28–47; Gilbert Romeyer

disciples and friends considered the master's condemnation a terrible mistake. Needless to say, the verdict could result in a catastrophic blow to the philosophical and rhetorical reputation of his disciples and Socrates himself.<sup>7</sup> In the attempt to defend that reputation, those disciples began to produce and publish writings about Socrates in various forms.

In the long run, the opinion of Socrates's apologists prevailed, and the philosopher was publicly rehabilitated. The most detailed account comes, again, from Diogenes, who tells us that "the Athenians felt such remorse that they honoured Socrates with a bronze statue, the work of Lysippus, which they placed in the Pompeion."<sup>8</sup> Diogenes was himself a philosopher driven by the conviction that Socrates's condemnation had been unjust; he obviously approved of Socrates's rehabilitation. This bias is no reason, though, to refuse as unreliable the information Diogenes provides. As a matter of fact, it is self-evident that Socrates *must* have been rehabilitated at some point in time. The problem is simply to establish when exactly this happened. Among the preserved Attic judicial speeches from the fourth century BC, two mention Socrates's condemnation as a positive example. The first one, by Hyperides, dates to around 360 BC; the other, by Aeschines, was held

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Dehrbey, "Socrate et la politique," in *Socrate et les Socratiques*, ed. Dehrbey and J.-B. Gourinat (Paris, 2001): 25–43; Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice*, pp. 76–90; and Michael Stokes, "Three Defences of Socrates: Relative Chronology, Politics and Religion," and Waterfield, "Xenophon on Socrates' Trial and Death," in *Xenophon: Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry*, ed. Fiona Hobden and Christopher Tuplin (Boston, 2012), pp. 243–67, 269–305.

7. On the Socratics after 399 BC, see the works by Rossetti, especially Rossetti, *Aspetti della letteratura Socratica antica* (Chieti, 1977), pp. 29–59, "Alla ricerca dei logoi Sokratikoi perduti (II)," *Rivista di Studi Classici* 23 (Apr. 1975): 87–99, and *Le Dialogue Socratique* (Paris, 2011). On the need to justify Socrates's conduct in court—his boastfulness (*megalegoria* in Xenophon, *Apology*, 1.1.1, pp. 668–69), documented in both Plato's and Xenophon's apologetic writings—see Rossetti, *Le Dialogue Socratique*, pp. 389–90; Waterfield, *Why Socrates Died*; and Danzig, "Apologetic elements in Xenophon's Symposium," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 55 (2004): 17–48 and *Apologizing for Socrates*, pp. 19–68.

8. Diogenes, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 2.5.43, p. 172. On the Pompeion, see Wolfram Hoepfner, *Das Pompeion und seine Nachfolgerbauten* (Berlin, 1976). Built around 400 BC in the northwest area of the city inside the walls in the quarter of the Ceramicus between the Dipylon Gate and the Sacred Gate (that is, on the path leading to the Academy), the Pompeion served as a location for storage and preparation on the occasion of processions such as the one held during the Panathenaic Festival. The presence of dining halls indicates that it also hosted common sacrificial meals. A number of ephebic inscriptions, which correspond to a typology often associated with gymnasia, could document that some spaces might have been used as a gymnasium. In the propylon at the entrance, the base of a bronze statue has been found, which was identified as the statue of Socrates; see Hoepfner, *Das Pompeion und seine Nachfolgerbauten*, pp. 106–07, 124 and "Bildung für Athens Epheben: Das Pompeion-Gymnasion in Athen," in *Antike Bibliotheken*, ed. Hoepfner (Mainz, 2002), pp. 53–55; Enzo Lippolis, "Edifici pubblici e pasto rituale in Attica," *Thiasos* 1 (2012): 81–92; and Maria Chiara Monaco, "Il Pompeion," in *Topografia di Atene*, 4:1263–68.

in 346 or 345.<sup>9</sup> Both speakers, addressing the audience at large and the judges in particular, refer to Socrates's conviction as a model to follow. Such a strategy would be absurd if Socrates had in the meantime already been rehabilitated. The rehabilitation must therefore have taken place after 345 BC. Diogenes also ascribes the statue erected in Socrates's honour to Lysippus; the sculptor was particularly famous for his portraits of Alexander the Great. This could point, perhaps, to an even later date, most likely to the '30s or '20s of the fourth century BC.

## 2

We shall start by examining the portraits. A considerable number of Roman herms, busts, and heads can be related to Socrates and grouped in two distinct series of replicas.<sup>10</sup> The first series, of which we have thirty-two replicas, is identified by two herms bearing the inscribed name SOKRATES.<sup>11</sup> Among the other replicas, the specimens of highest quality are a head in Rome<sup>12</sup> and one in Paris (figs. 1–2).<sup>13</sup> The consistent recurrence of invariant patterns in different heads produced at very different times and in very different workshops can be explained only by postulating the existence of a common prototype—in our case a Greek portrait now lost—on which the Roman copies directly or indirectly depend. Fourth-century Greek culture did not know the genre of portrait heads, so the original must have been a portrait statue presenting Socrates from head to toe. The body of

9. See Hyperides, *Against Autocles for Treason*, in *Minor Attic Orators*, trans. J. O. Burtt, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1953–54), 2:573, and Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, in *Against Timarchus, On the Embassy, Against Ctesiphon*, trans. Charles Darwin Adams (Cambridge, Mass., 1919), 173, p. 138.

10. See Reinhard Kekule von Stradonitz, *Die Bildnisse des Sokrates* (Berlin, 1908); Gisela Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, 3 vols. (London, 1965), 1:109–19; Ingeborg Scheibler, "Zum ältesten Bildnis des Sokrates," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 40 (1989): 7–33; Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 32–39, 57–62; Luca Giuliani, "Das älteste Sokrates-Bildnis: Ein physiognomisches Porträt wider die Physiognomiker," *Freiburger Universitätsblätter* 132 (June 1996): 9–28; Scheibler, "Rezeptionsphasen des jüngeren Sokratesporträts in der Kaiserzeit," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 119 (2004): 179–258; and Kenneth Lapatin, "Picturing Socrates," in *A Companion to Socrates*, ed. Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar (Malden, Mass., 2009), pp. 110–55.

11. For catalogues of the replicas, see Scheibler, "Rezeptionsphasen des jüngeren Sokratesporträts in der Kaiserzeit," pp. 195–245; Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, 1:113, 1:114; and Emmanuel Voutiras, "Sokrates in der Akademie: Die früheste bezugte Philosophenstatue," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 109 (1994): 136.

12. See Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, 1:3; Voutiras, "Sokrates in der Akademie," p. 136; and Scheibler, "Rezeptionsphasen des jüngeren Sokratesporträts in der Kaiserzeit," p. 194 fig. 8.

13. See Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks* 1:B13; Scheibler, "Rezeptionsphasen des jüngeren Sokratesporträts in der Kaiserzeit," p. 195 fig. 9.

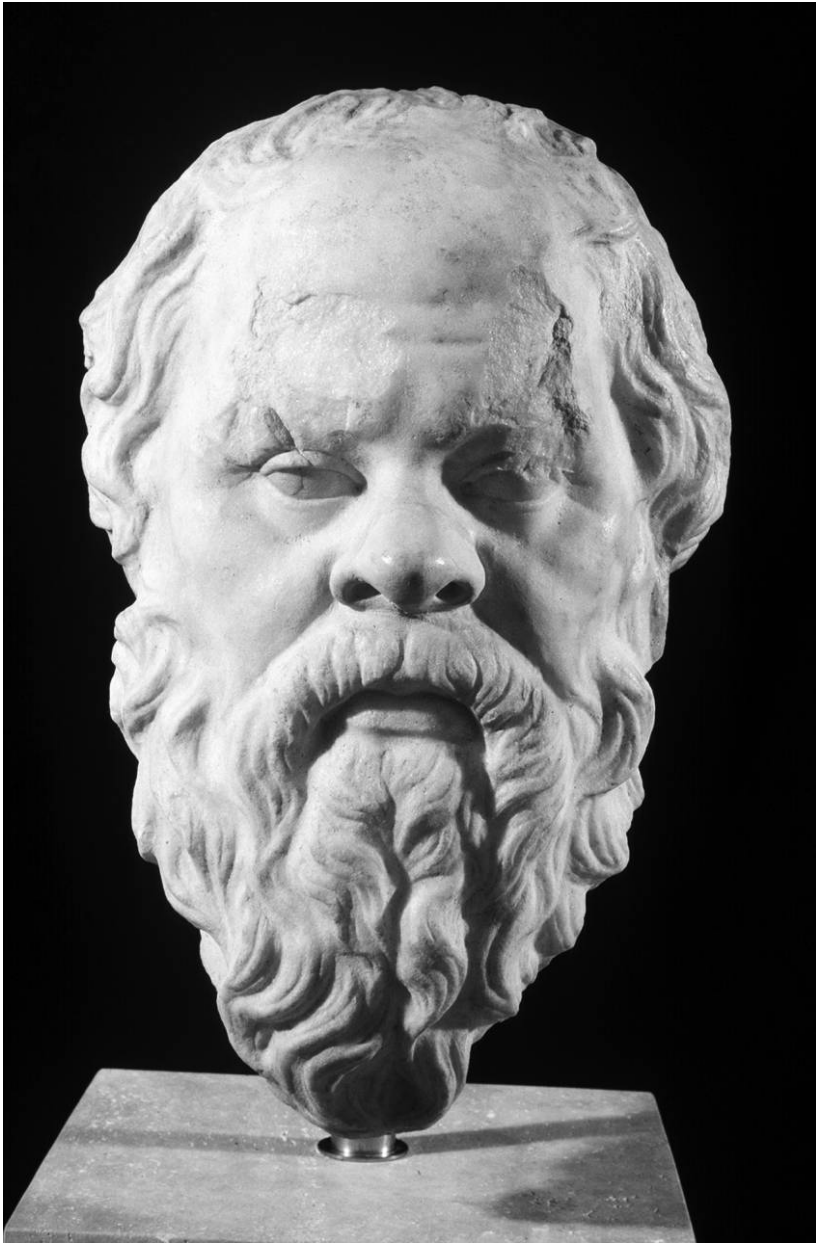


FIGURE 1. Head of Socrates. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, 1236. Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo—Museo Nazionale Romano.

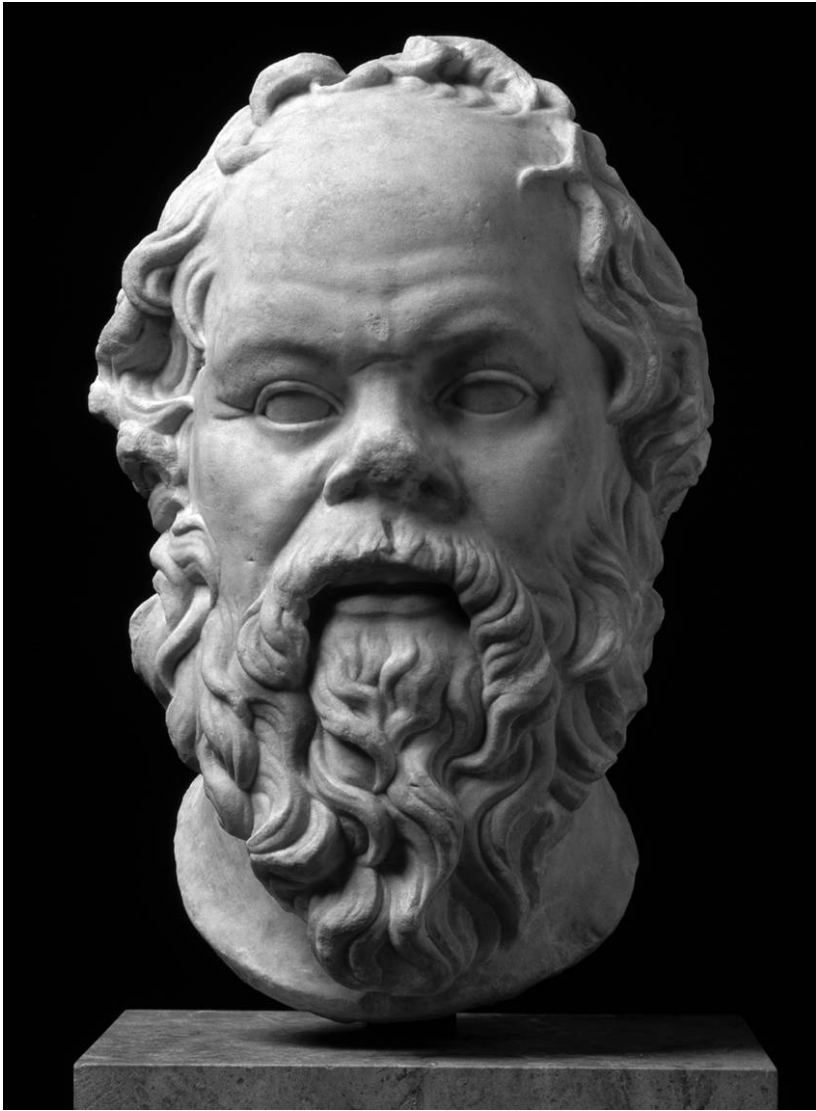


FIGURE 2. Head of Socrates. Paris, Musée du Louvre, MA 59. © Musée du Louvre.

this statue is possibly reflected in a statuette from the second century AD in London (fig. 3).<sup>14</sup> It shows Socrates standing with his head slightly turned to the right; he wears a *himation* falling over his shoulder, the end of which

14. See Scheibler, "Rezeptionsphasen des jüngeren Sokratesporträts in der Kaiserzeit," pp. 181 fig. 3, 221 fig. 20.

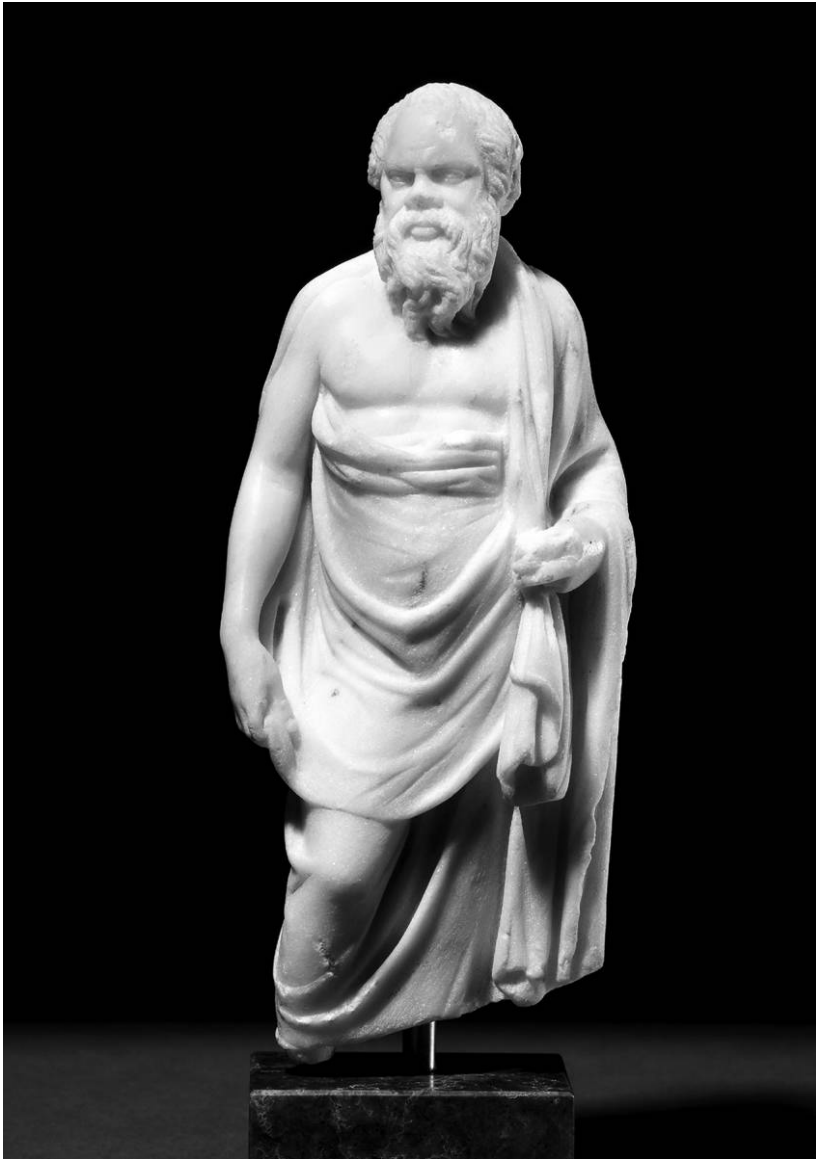


FIGURE 3. Statuette of Socrates. London, The British Museum, 1925, 11-18.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

he casually holds in his left hand. He looks like one of the many Athenians we can see on grave monuments from the fourth century BC—that is, like a common passerby (fig. 4).<sup>15</sup> Later portrait statues of philosophers will

15. See Christoph W. Clairmont, *Classical Attic Tombstones*, 8 vols. (Athens, 1993), 4:415, 90–91.





FIGURE 4. Grave relief. Ca. 350 BC. Athens, Kerameikos-Museum, P688. © D-DAI-ATH-Kerameikos-6004.

present them in a completely different and far more dignified way, seated while teaching.

Of a second series, we have only six replicas; the two best specimens are a bust in Naples and a head in Toulouse (figs. 5–6).<sup>16</sup> No extant portrait belonging to this series bears an inscription of Socrates's name.<sup>17</sup> The identification is therefore based solely on the physiognomic similarity to the portraits of the first series, which is so precise that we may legitimately relate both series of portraits to one and the same person. On the other hand, the differences in the treatment of the beard and the hair are distinctive enough to clearly separate one series from the other. Unfortunately, for the second series we have no copy of the body of the statue. It is unlikely, though, that it looked very different from the body found in the first series. What made both portraits of Socrates so extraordinary is neither posture nor clothing; it is, as we shall see, the physiognomy.

The existence of two distinct series of Roman replicas can be explained only by postulating the existence of two different Greek portrait statues that were copied; quite often in one case, far more rarely in the other. Although the Roman copies are all we have, they allow us to reconstruct certain features of the lost Greek originals—and even to determine their date. On stylistic grounds, it is possible to safely place both Socrates portraits in the fourth century BC. Both can be fruitfully compared with the portrait head of Plato, the original of which seems to have been produced shortly after Plato's death (347 BC).<sup>18</sup> Such a comparison shows that the original portrait of Socrates on which the first series of Roman copies depends is stylistically later than Plato's portrait, while the Socrates portrait of the second series is somewhat earlier. This is why the portraits of the second series are conventionally designated Socrates type A, the ones of the first series as type B. On stylistic grounds, type A is to be dated in the first half and type B in the second half of the fourth century BC.<sup>19</sup>

At this point, it is plausible to identify Socrates's portrait type B, whose original we have dated after the portrait of Plato, with Lysippus's

16. See Scheibler, "Zum ältesten Bildnis des Sokrates," pp. 11–18; Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, 1:A4, 1:19; and Antoine Hérmary, "Socrate à Toulouse," *Revue archéologique de Narbonnaise* 29 (1996): 24–26.

17. A head in the Vatican is inserted into a herm inscribed SOKRATES; both head and herm are ancient, but the herm does not belong, so the inscription tells us nothing about the identification of the portrait; see Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, 1:A1, and Scheibler, "Zum ältesten Bildnis des Sokrates," p. 14.

18. See Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, 2:167; Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, pp. 40–43, 67–77; and Claude Rolley, *La période Classique, in La sculpture Grecque*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1999), 2:301–02.

19. For a detailed discussion, see Scheibler, "Zum ältesten Bildnis des Sokrates," pp. 21–24 and "Rezeptionsphasen des jüngeren Sokratesporträts in der Kaiserzeit," pp. 179–82.

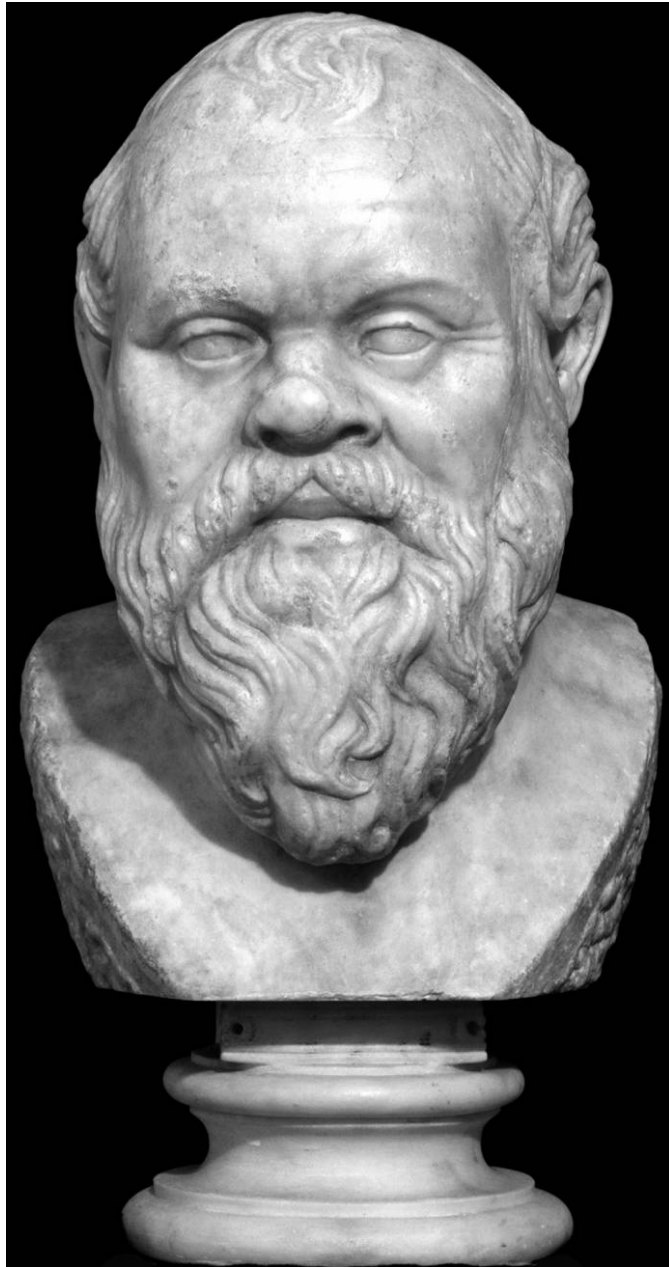


FIGURE 5. Head of Socrates. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 6129. Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo—Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

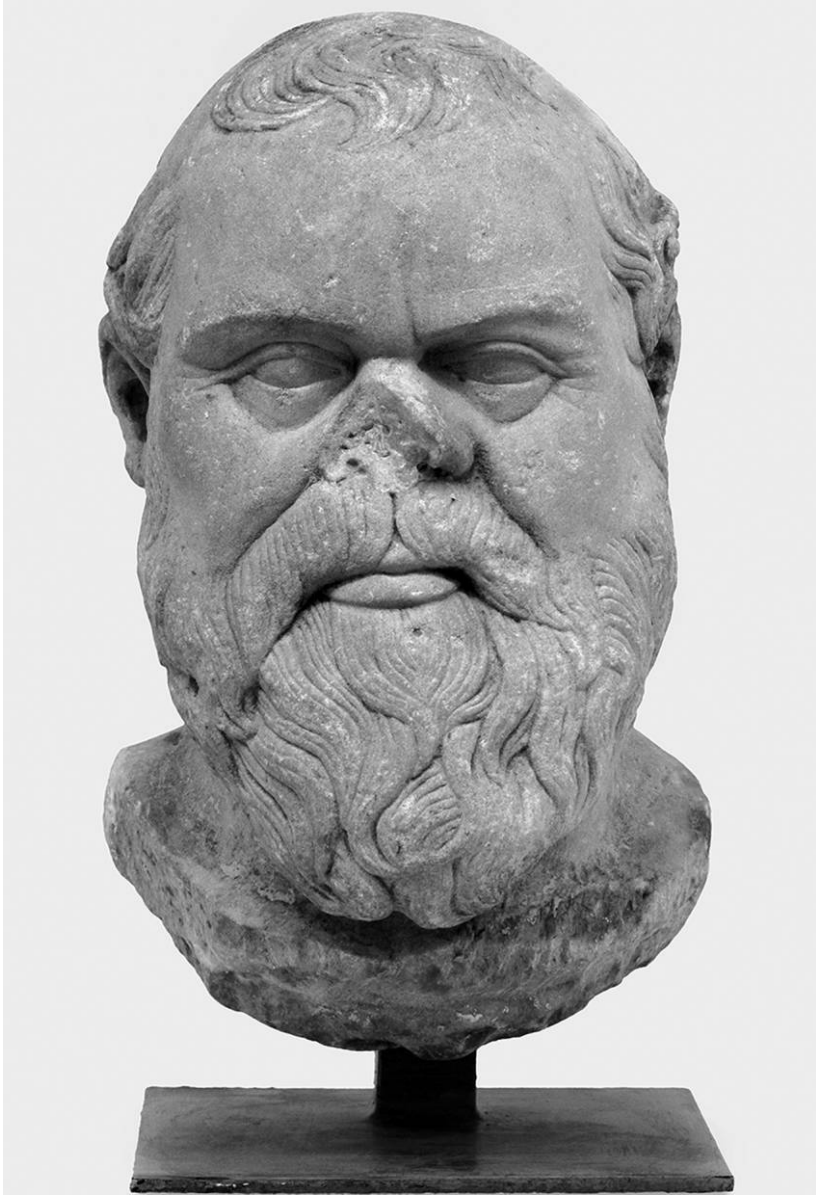


FIGURE 6. Head of Socrates. Toulouse, Musée Saint-Raymond, 30911. © Musée Saint-Raymond. Photographer Jean-François Peiré.

portrait statue mentioned by Diogenes. What about the earlier Socrates, type A?

### 3

Those of type A must have been produced in Athens as well, because outside of Athens Socrates was still completely unknown in the first half of the fourth century BC. A remarkable and historically unexpected consequence follows; we have to assume that someone in Athens took the initiative to erect a portrait statue of a man who only a few years earlier had been convicted and put to death as a public criminal. Under such circumstances, this portrait statue could not possibly be a public monument; it was rather a private dedication. A dedication needs a deity to be dedicated to and a sanctuary in which to be placed, and we could not possibly expect to find such a dedication in a prominent sanctuary like the Athenian Acropolis. In search of some kind of peripheral sanctuary, we can, once again, rely on Diogenes. He recounts that Plato, upon his return to Athens in 387 BC, purchased a property in the area called Academy in honour of the hero Akademos. The place was located west of the city, outside the walls. In this area, Plato would also dedicate a sanctuary to the Muses where henceforth he would meet with his disciples.<sup>20</sup> Such a sanctuary would be the most obvious site for the dedication of a statue of the beloved master. As for the chronology, we can only rely on a *terminus post quem*, namely 387 BC, when Plato returned to Athens.

Another literary source allows us to go one step further. A papyrus from Herculaneum preserves fragments of a history of Plato's academy written by the Greek philosopher Philodemus in the first century BC. In the portion of text that bears on our investigation, Philodemus quotes a passage

20. See Diogenes, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 3.7 and 4.1.1, pp. 282, 374. On the difficulties in identifying the location of Plato's school, his property's precise size and location and its relationship with the public property in the Academy, see Ada Caruso, *Akademia: Archeologia di una scuola filosofica ad Atene da Platone a Proclo (387 a.C.–485 d.C.)* (Atene-Paestum, 2013), pp. 29–117, 197–213, and Robert Lamberton, review of *Akademia* by Caruso, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 19 Sept. 2013, [bmcbr.brynmawr.edu/2013/2013-09-37.html](http://bmcbr.brynmawr.edu/2013/2013-09-37.html). Caruso offers a precious survey of the scholarly debates on the subject. See also Konrad Gaiser, *Philodems Academics: Die Berichte über Platon und die Alte Akademie in zwei herkulanensischen Papyri* (Stuttgart, 1988); Hoepfner, "Platons Akademie. Eine neue Interpretation der Ruinen," in *Antike Bibliotheken*, pp. 56–62; John Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy (347–247 BC)* (New York, 2003), pp. 2–15; Daniela Marchiandi, "L'Accademia," in *Topografia di Atene: Sviluppo urbano e monumenti dalle origini al III secolo d.C.*, ed. Emanuele Greco, 8 vols. (Paestum, 2014–), 4:1465–1501, 1506–10; and Caruso, "La storia dell'Accademia da Platone a Proclo" and "Il Peristilio Quadrato, cd. 'Peripatos' o 'Didaskaleion,'" in *Topografia di Atene*, 4:1501–05. On the status of philosophy and its link with the Muses according to Plato, see Pierre Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses chez les philosophes grecs: Études d'histoire et de psychologie religieuses* (Paris, 1937), pp. 261–62.

from the *History of Athens* written by Philochorus (340–261 BC): “and they dedicated a portrait of Socrates [*eikóna Sokrátous*] and its base, on which it is written: [B]utes made. . . . It is inscribed with many names.”<sup>21</sup>

In this short passage three points are particularly relevant. First, Philodemus makes it explicit that the quotation comes from the fifth book of Philochorus’s *History of Athens*. We know that this particular book dealt with the period between 403 and 360 BC. The statue of Socrates mentioned here must therefore be dated before 360. Such a circumstance would perfectly fit Socrates’s portrait type A. Second, the inscribed name of the sculptor, Philochorus says, is Butes.<sup>22</sup> No other ancient source mentions a sculptor by this name. It seems plausible to suppose that Butes was not a celebrity like Lysippus, to whom the Athenians would later commission a second Socrates statue. The point might have been not to engage a well-known artist but simply a local (and probably less expensive) craftsman who would be willing to deliver what the customers wanted. Three, Philochorus specifies that the base of Socrates’s statue is inscribed with many names (*onómata suchná*). Dedications are normally made by a single person or a group of close relatives or, again, by a formal group. If, as in our case, several men join together to make a dedication, by this very act they declare themselves to be members of a circle, a club (in Greek, *koinonía* or *hetaireía*).<sup>23</sup> Such clubs were a common phenomenon in Greek society. In Athens, during the fifth and fourth century BC in particular, they often came to be perceived as opposing the democratic authorities of the polis. The hypothesis has been convincingly put forward that Socrates and his disciples and friends might have been organized (or perceived as being organized) in such a club, albeit one not directly political in orientation.<sup>24</sup> Were this true, it would hardly be surprising that Socrates’s disciples chose to keep such a connection even after

21. See Filodemo: *Storia dei Filosofi: Platone e l’Academia* (“PHerc.” 1021 e 164), ed. Tiziano Dorandi (Naples, 1991), pp. 128, 210; Voutiras, “Sokrates in der Akademie,” p. 146; Philochorus, “F59,” in *Testimonianze e frammenti dell’ “Atthis”*, vol. 1 of *Filocolo di Atene*, ed. Virgilio Costa (Rome, 2007), pp. 356–58.

22. See Sascha Kansteiner and Bernd Seidensticker, “Butes,” in *Spätclassik*, in *Der Neue Overbeck: Die antiken Schriftquellen zu den bildenden Künsten der Griechen*, ed. Kansteiner et al., 5 vols. (Berlin, 2014), 3:1–2.

23. See *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v. “clubs, Greek” and “hetaireiai”; George Miller Calhoun, “Athenian Clubs in Politics and Litigation” (PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin, Tex., 1913); Franco Sartori, *Le Eterie nella vita politica ateniese del VI e V secolo a.C.* (Rome, 1957); Nicholas F. Jones, *The Associations of Classical Athens: The Response to Democracy* (New York, 1999), esp. pp. 221–67; Maria Luisa Catoni, *Bere vino puro: Immagini del simposio* (Milan, 2010), pp. 16–25.

24. See Rossetti, “Alla ricerca dei *Logoi Sokratikoi* perduti,” *Rivista di Studi Classici* 22 (Apr. 1974): 434–35 and “Il momento conviviale dell’eteria socratica e il suo significato pedagogico,” *Ancient Society* 7 (1976): 29–77.

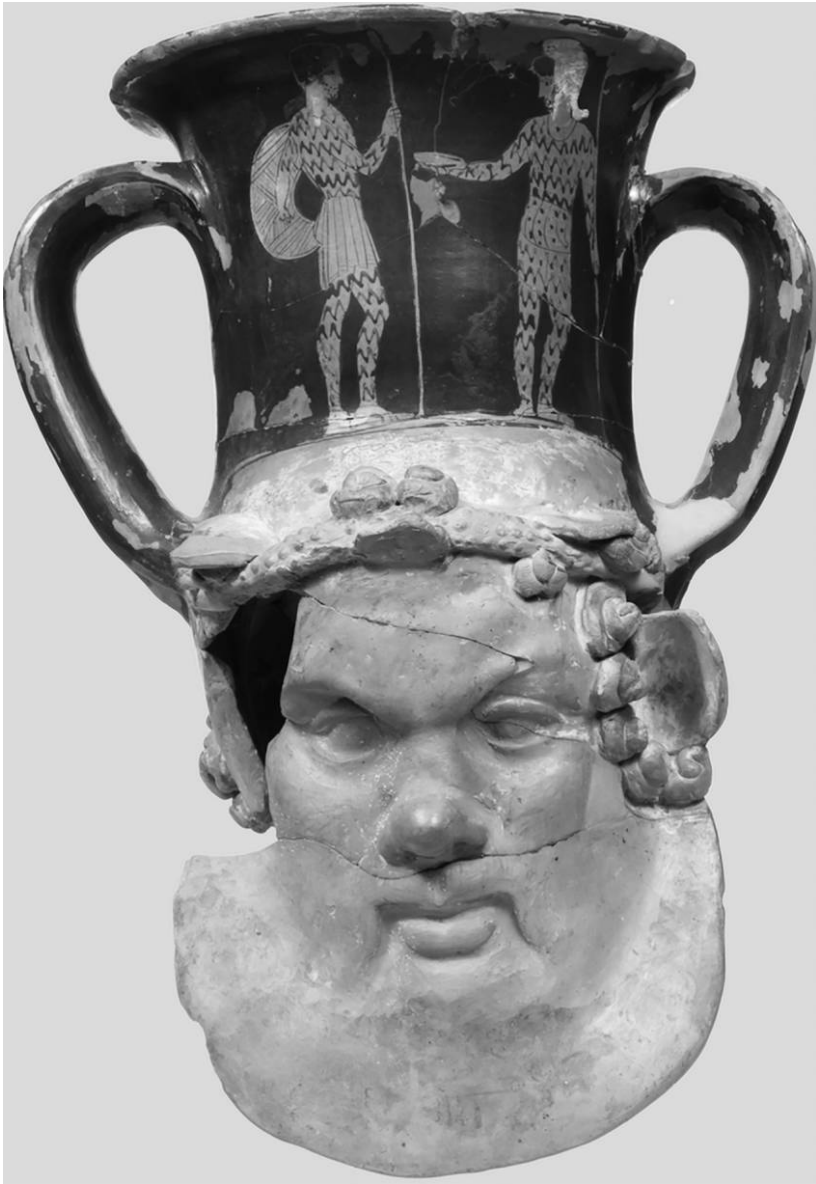


FIGURE 7. Attic *kantharos* in the shape of a satyr's head. Ca. 420 BC. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, STG 57. Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo—Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.



FIGURE 8. Silver *drachme* minted in Katane. Ca. 410 BC. Berlin, Staatliches Münzkabinett. © Photo from Franke-Hirmer, 1972.

the death of the master. The dedication of a portrait statue of Socrates, who had not yet been rehabilitated, entailed a deeply provocative political statement. By having their names inscribed on the base, the dedicants would take full responsibility for such a provocation (while, at the same time, spreading the risk across many shoulders).

The portrait statue was not only politically but also aesthetically provocative: Socrates was given the unmistakable features of a satyr. We can compare the portrait with a few late fifth-century depictions of satyrs, whose physiognomies follow a highly codified iconography (figs. 7–9).<sup>25</sup> The common traits are self-evident: a bald head, a short and broad nose with wide-open nostrils, and thick lips. Satyrs, of course, have equine ears and their eyes are usually big and bulging, whereas Socrates's ears look

25. See John D. Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1963), 2:1251. And see the silver *drachme* minted in Katane and *litra* minted in Katane; see Peter R. Franke and Max Hirmer, *Die Griechische Münze* (Munich, 1972), p. 41 and figs. 15, 46, 45.





FIGURE 9. *Litra* minted in Katane. Ca. 420 BC. Private collection. © Photo from Franke-Hirmer, 1972.

perfectly human and his eyes inconspicuous. Nevertheless, the similarity is unequivocal and would have been immediately appreciated by any Greek contemporary.

Let's sum up what we have been able to establish about the date of the two portraits of Socrates. Type A must have been commissioned after 387 BC, when Plato returned to Athens, and before 360, this being the later term of Philochorus's narration occupying book 5 of his *History of Athens*. On the other hand, Aeschines gave his speech against Timarchus in 346 or 345; this provides us with a *terminus post quem* for both the rehabilitation of Socrates and the public commission of his portrait statue type B.

#### 4

Plato's and Xenophon's works titled *Symposium* also famously make Socrates look like a satyr. These two famous texts are the earliest preserved and prototypical examples of the new genre of the literary symposium.<sup>26</sup> The two works present similarities so conspicuous as to make

26. On the genre of the literary symposium, see Josef Martin, *Symposion: Die Geschichte einer literarischen Form* (Paderborn, 1931); Joel C. Relihan, "Rethinking the History of the Literary Symposium," *Illinois Classical Studies* 17 (Fall 1992): 213–44; Catoni, *Bere vino puro*, pp. 26–33 and "Symposium," trans. Patrick Baker, in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony

scholars hypothesize some kind of dependence, which is nonetheless very difficult to specify. No firm argument allows us to date either text or to establish a priority between them. Most scholars give the priority to Plato, dating his *Symposium* between 385 and 370 while proposing for Xenophon's *Symposium* a range of dates spanning from more or less the same period to the late 360s.<sup>27</sup> Others, on the contrary, suppose that Xenophon's *Symposium* was written first.<sup>28</sup> A third and more complex hypothesis suggests that Xenophon wrote his *Symposium* (chapters 1–7) around 385 BC; some years later Plato, having read Xenophon's text, composed his own *Symposium*;<sup>29</sup>

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Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); and José Vela Tejada, "Why did Xenophon write a *Symposium*? *Erotica paideia* and *logos Sokratikos*," *Historika* 1 (2011): 81–99. On Socratic dialogue (*logos sokratikos*), see Rossetti, *Aspetti della letteratura socratica antica*, p. 29, "Alla ricerca dei *logoi Sokratikoi* perduti," "Alla ricerca dei *logoi Sokratikoi* perduti (II)," "Alla ricerca dei *logoi Sokratikoi* perduti (III)," *Rivista di Studi Classici* 23 (1975): 361–81, "*Logoi Sokratikoi* anteriori al 399 a.C.," in *Logos e Logoi*, ed. Rossetti and Ornella Bellini (Naples, 1991), pp. 21–40, "The *Sokratikoi logoi* as a Literary Barrier: Toward the Identification of a Standard Socrates through Them," in *Socrates 2400 Years since His Death*, ed. V. Karasmanis (Athens, 2004), pp. 81–94, and *Le Dialogue Socratique*; and Dehrbey, "Socrate et la politique." See also Diskin Clay, "The Origins of the Socratic Dialogue," in *The Socratic Movement*, ed. Paul A. Vander Waerdt (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994), pp. 23–47; Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (New York, 1996); *New Perspectives on Plato: Modern and Ancient*, ed. Julia Annas and Christopher Rowe (Cambridge, Mass., 2002); and *Plato in Symposium: Selected Papers from the Tenth Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Mauro Tulli and Michael Erler (Saint Augustine, 2016).

27. Kenneth J. Dover, "The Date of Plato's *Symposium*," *Phronesis* 10, no. 1 (1965): 2–20, dates Plato's *Symposium* after 385 BCE and before 378 BCE based on the absence of any mention of the Sacred Band of Thebes and places Xenophon's *Symposium* after 378 BCE; see also Harold B. Mattingly, "The Date of Plato's *Symposium*," *Phronesis* 3 (Jan. 1958): 31–39, and John S. Morrison, "Four Notes on Plato's *Symposium*," *Classical Quarterly* 14 (May 1964): 42–46. Gilbert Ryle, *Plato's Progress* (New York, 1966), dates Plato's *Symposium* after the Battle of Leuctra (371 BCE), based on Plato's *Symposium*, 178e–179a; see also Richard Hunter, *Plato's Symposium* (New York, 2004), and Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. M. C. Howatson, ed. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, (New York, 2008). On the dates proposed for Xenophon's *Symposium*, see Bernhard Huss, *Xenophons "Symposion": Ein Kommentar* (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 13–18, who proposes the '60s of the fourth century BC.

28. Arnold Hug, "Ueber das gegenseitige verhältniss der symposien des Sokrates und Plato," *Philologus* 7 (1852): 638–95; Karl Joël, vol. 2 of *Der echte und der xenophontische Sokrates*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1898–1901); R. G. Bury, "Introduction," *The Symposium of Plato*, ed. Bury (London, 1932), p. lxxviii; Walter Wimmel, "Zum Verhältnis einiger Stellen des xenophontischen und platonischen Symposions," *Gymnasium* 64 (1957): 230–50. Dover, "The Date of Plato's *Symposium*," p. 11 n. 30, disagrees with the hypothesis that both works are based on a lost writing by Pausanias; see also Holger Thesleff, "The interrelation and date of the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 25 (1978): 157–170, esp. 157–58 against the hypothesis that such writing could be identified with the *Peri dikaiosynes kai andreias* by Antisthenes. See also Mattingly, "The Date of Plato's *Symposium*"; Morrison, "Four Notes on Plato's *Symposium*," pp. 42–46; Ryle, *Plato's Progress*; and Hunter, *Plato's "Symposium"*.

29. See Thesleff, "The interrelation and date of the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon," and Danzig, "Intra-Socratic Polemics: The *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45, no. 4 (2005): 331–57.

then Xenophon, having read Plato, added his final chapter around 370 BC.<sup>30</sup> Whatever chronology we might accept, no evidence of whatever kind allows us to assume that either or both texts came earlier than the portrait of Socrates type A.

Both texts discuss Socrates's physical appearance at length, making detailed and coherent physiognomic remarks. This is surprising and requires an explanation. No other Socratic text by Plato or Xenophon indulges in physiognomic considerations and for good reason.<sup>31</sup> In the context of the narrations about Socrates's teaching, any detailed discussion of his physical appearance would seem paradoxical. From a functional perspective it is totally superfluous; the teaching of the master could be—and actually was—talked about, recorded, and transmitted without reference to his physiognomy. Considering the substance of his teaching, such a detailed interest in his physiognomy would become even more paradoxical, as Socrates repeatedly and polemically called into question the idea that the inner characteristics of the soul would correspond to any outside appearance. This was not an orthodox attitude. On the contrary, throughout classical antiquity, such a correspondence between inner and outer being was generally considered to hold true. Traditional aristocratic ideals such as *kalokagathía* rested precisely on such an assumption: the perfect gentleman is as beautiful (*kalós*) as he is good (*agathós*). Opposing and dismantling this equation was a substantial part of Socrates's teaching. The insistence on Socrates's physiognomy in both Plato's *Symposium* and Xenophon's is therefore surprising. Our hypothesis is that such physiognomic narrative attention must have been triggered by external, contingent factors. Before trying to identify them, let us first take a closer look at the two texts.

In Xenophon's *Symposium*, Socrates engages in a beauty contest with Critobulus, a famously handsome boy.<sup>32</sup> Critobulus begins with the boastful statement that were he not handsomer than Socrates he would actually be “the ugliest of all the Sileni ever on the satyr-play stage” (XS, 4.19, p. 602).<sup>33</sup> Then, induced by Socrates, he gives a functional definition of beauty, according to which *beautiful* is what is well constituted to serve

30. Plato's and Xenophon's literary symposia are famous and important texts, and it is therefore no wonder that so many scholars have contributed to the discussion about the relation between the two; what is surprising is that the occurrence of such a crucial event as the dedication of the portrait statue of Socrates has played no role whatsoever in any of the discussions. It looks as if an important piece of evidence has been systematically neglected.

31. With the exception of a brief remark in Plato, *Theaetetus*, in *Theaetetus, Sophist*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, Mass., 1921), 143e, p. 10.

32. See Xenophon, *Symposium*, trans. Todd, in *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*, 4.19–20, 5.1–10, pp. 602, 626–30; hereafter abbreviated XS.

33. In this sentence, as in many other cases, *sileni* and *satyrs* are used as synonyms.

its purpose. On this basis, Socrates proceeds to demonstrate his own beauty. His bulging eyes would of course be more beautiful than Critobulus's, as they can see all around; Socrates's snub nose would certainly be more beautiful than Critobulus's straight nose, as it allows him to catch scents from all around; Socrates's big mouth would certainly bite a bigger mouthful of food and his thick lips' kiss would certainly be a softer one. Socrates's final blow tries to seal the discussion by bringing together all the individual physiognomic traits resulting from his exchange with Critobulus into a single figure, that of the satyr: "But do you not reckon it a proof of my superior beauty that the River Nymphs, goddesses as they are, bear as their offspring the satyrs, who resemble me more closely than they do you?" (XS, 5.7, p. 630). At the end, the beauty contest is put to the vote, and Critobulus is unanimously declared to be the winner.

In the final part of Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades, completely drunk, bursts into the drinking party taking place at Agathon's.<sup>34</sup> The symposium has just come to an end, the participants are about to go home after having drunk moderately and entertained each other by delivering speeches in praise of Eros. Alcibiades insists that he should also be allowed to do the same: he will not praise Eros, however, but Socrates himself. From the very beginning of his speech, Alcibiades suggests a close comparison between Socrates and the satyrs in general, as well as the satyr Marsyas in particular. He starts by mentioning Socrates's physical appearance, then proceeds with a detailed exploration of the analogy under "every other respect" (PS, 215b6, p. 218). Alcibiades repeatedly focuses on two traits of Socrates that are also mentioned at the very outset of the entire dialogue; they are not, therefore, confined to the delirium of a drunken fellow. Socrates is repeatedly said to be *átōpos* (out of place, a kind of outsider, strange) and *hybristés* (arrogant, insolent). A third, important characteristic also emerges from Alcibiades's speech: Socrates is *éiron* and behaves *eironikós* (ironically).<sup>35</sup> Before the composition of Plato's *Symposium*, the words *éiron*, *eironikós*, and *eironeía* had

34. See Plato, *Symposium*, in *Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass., 1925), 212c, p. 208; hereafter abbreviated PS.

35. See Wilhelm Büchner, "Über den begriff der eironeia," *Hermes* 76, no. 4 (1941): 339–58; Rossetti, "Le Nuvole di Aristofane"; Paul W. Gooch, "Socratic Irony and Aristotle's *Eiron*: Some Puzzles," *Phoenix* 41 (Summer 1987): 95–104. Vlastos, *Socrates*; Joseph Cotter, "The Etymology and Earliest Significance of *éiron*," *Glotta* 70, nos. 1 and 2 (1992): 31–34; Jill Gordon, "Against Vlastos on Complex Irony," *Classical Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1996): 131–37; Iakovos Vasiliou, "Conditional Irony in the Socratic Dialogues," *Classical Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1999): 456–72 and "Socrates' Reverse Irony," *Classical Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2002): 220–30; Lowell Edmunds, "The Practical Irony of the Historical Socrates," *Phoenix* 58 (Autumn/Winter 2004): 193–207; and David Wolfsdorf, "The Irony of Socrates," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 (Spring 2007): 176–87. On the exegetical history of the term, see Norman Knox, *The Word "Irony" and Its Context, 1500–1755* (Durham, N.C., 1961).

been used only in the literal negative sense, to indicate a dissimulating character or behaviour. Socrates is the very first person to whom the word is applied ironically, and this happens in Plato's *Symposium*: he is supposedly a liar because he does not expose his real nature. For example, he pretends to be ignorant while he is in fact the wisest of men. His *eroneía* thus requires that someone (Alcibiades, as it happens) reveal his real nature (see *PS*, 216c, p. 222). Socrates's *eironeía* plays a crucial role in the construction of the comparison with a satyr. It should also be remembered that Socrates' *hybris*, *atopía*, and *eironeía* seem to have played a substantial role in shaping the "old accusations" against him.

Both the symposium dialogues and the sculptured portrait converge towards a curious insistence on the similarity between Socrates and a satyr. How are we to understand this insistence?

## 5

But, then again, is this really the right question? Or, more precisely, are we really sure that this is a real problem? After all, it is not impossible that Socrates, the living person one could have met in the streets of Athens, might actually have looked like a satyr; a satyr-like face is definitely within the range of human physiognomic variations. So, what if Socrates was described and depicted as a satyr for the very simple reason that he actually looked like one?

A precious testimony in this sense is to be found in Xenophon's *Symposium*. Immediately after Critobulus's statement that he would indeed "be the ugliest of all the Sileni ever on the satyr-play stage," if he were not handsomer than Socrates, the voice of the narrator adds: "Now Socrates, as fortune would have it, really resembled these creatures" (*XS*, 4.19, p. 602). This is an interesting statement indeed. Who is speaking here? And why is there any need to remark the truthfulness of what follows—and is at stake—in the beauty contest? The remark sounds rather like an external interjection that interrupts, in a markedly different tone, the flow of the very tight exchange between Critobulus and Socrates. The beauty contest that follows is based precisely on the very fact that Socrates looks like a satyr. It would therefore be very strange if the author intervened directly to testify that this fact, "as fortune would have it," were actually true. The strange tone of the remark has, indeed, led some editors to consider it a comment interpolated in the text at a certain point in its tradition. We would therefore have, in this short sentence, a reaction to Xenophon's text by an early reader (and, we might add, by a reader who is unlikely to have had more information about the living Socrates's look than we do).

A direct tradition leads from this anonymous early reader to Lavater—and beyond. Lavater trusted the portrait of Socrates as being an authentic, trustworthy likeness. In the late eighteenth century such a belief was understandable and perfectly justified. Lavater lived in a bourgeois culture in which private portraits in the form of paintings, drawings, or silhouettes were in every household and everybody expected them to offer a true, recognizable likeness of the sitter.

Such an attitude would be largely anachronistic if applied to ancient Greece. Here, since the beginning of the sixth century BC, we find life-size portrait statues on graves or as dedications in the sanctuaries; a bit later, honorary statues of worthy citizens can be erected (though less often) in public places. Such portraits were identified by a name inscribed on their base. The purpose of the portrait was to praise the merits of the man depicted in accordance with general ethical norms turned into visible norms of appearance and gesture, to make visible his *kalokagathía*. All *kaloikagathoi* tend, indeed, to look more or less the same. Their physiognomy follows a conventional type without aiming at individual recognizability. Only in the late fourth century BC did the number of portrait statues and the spectrum of physiognomic variations increase, so that portraits begin to turn into authentic physiognomic likenesses.<sup>36</sup> This happens, though, about half a century after Socrates's first portrait and, moreover, without effacing the tradition of the typological portrait. It is quite unlikely that we could find a portrait in the modern sense—a faithful, recognizable likeness of an individual—already in the second quarter of the century.

Besides this problem of internal chronology within the genre, a further simple fact lets us exclude even the mere possibility that Socrates's portrait might have mirrored his physiognomy as a living individual. Between the death of Socrates and the earliest possible date of the portrait there is a lapse of at least a dozen years, most likely even more. We have to keep in mind that, in this culture, there was no medium in which Socrates's appearance could have been recorded. Private portraits simply did not exist. The fleeting sketch, the intimate drawing or the miniature that could preserve the physiognomy of a person for his relatives and friends even after his or her death—these genres were completely unknown. We can therefore be fairly certain that no portrait of Socrates existed before the dedica-

36. See Ralf von den Hoff, "Naturalism and Classicism: Style and Perception of Early Hellenistic Portraits," in *Early Hellenistic Portraiture: Image, Style, Context*, ed. Peter Schultz and von den Hoff (New York, 2007), pp. 49–62, and Giuliani, "Il ritratto," in *Una storia greca II: Definizione*, in *I Greci: Storia Cultura Arte Società*, 4 vols., ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin, 1996–2002), 2:2:983–1011. On *schemata* as tools of the embodiment of ethical norms, see Catoni, *La comunicazione non verbale nella Grecia antica* (Turin, 2008).

tion of the statue we are dealing with. The only record of his appearance lay in the living memory of those who had known him. Such a visual memory, though, inevitably fades with time, growing indistinct and blurred. It is then quite unlikely that, at the time when Socrates's portrait was commissioned, even his closer disciples and friends could still remember what Socrates had actually looked like in such detail as to be able to put it into words for the sculptor. Under such conditions, the assumption of a portrait mirroring his physiognomic appearance can easily be ruled out.

Modern scholarship generally agrees that the memory of Socrates's actual physiognomy faded away some time shortly after his death. This has led to a modified approach and hypothesis concerning his earliest portrait statue. Even under such agreed-upon conditions, people might remember some outstanding peculiarity of the person concerned. In the case of Socrates, so the hypothesis goes, the peculiarity might have consisted in his notorious ugliness. One might not remember exactly what he looked like, but one certainly did remember that he looked ugly. This ugliness is considered exactly the reason for the choice for the portrait. The satyr would be the easiest available prototype of an ugly creature, and therefore Socrates was given a satyr-like physiognomy.<sup>37</sup>

Again, were this the case, no problem of interpretation would exist. The physiognomy of a satyr is a handy device to depict ugliness, and ugly Socrates was—"as fortune would have it," such ugliness would have been a natural fact for which no interpretation was required. Yet this theory raises a problem. No literary source carries any trace of Socrates's "notorious ugliness." No text earlier than Plato's and Xenophon's symposium dialogues mentions Socrates's ugly appearance. Indeed, his individual physiognomy is never commented upon at all. No reference, for example, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, a work in which beauty, care of the body, and the relationship between outward appearance and the inner character of the soul often constitute the predominant subject of the recorded conversations between Socrates and his fellow citizens.

The most important evidence in this context comes from Aristophanes's *Clouds*, the only literary document mentioning Socrates contemporary with Socrates's lifetime.<sup>38</sup> Here Socrates is the main target of Aristoph-

37. See Johannes Bergemann, "Attic Grave Reliefs and Portrait Sculpture in Fourth-Century Athens," in *Early Hellenistic Portraiture*, pp. 34–46: "The iconography of Dionysian Silenos has been used . . . to show the philosopher's well-known ugliness" (p. 37). See also Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, pp. 38–45, 62–66, and Giuliani, "Das älteste Sokrates-Bildnis."

38. A first version of the comedy was staged in 423 BC; the text we read today is the second version, reworked by the author between 419 and 417 (and probably never performed). See Aristophanes: *Testimonia et Fragmenta*, in *Poetae Comici Graeci*, ed. Rudolf Kassel and

anes' attacks, in a genre, moreover, that was very prone to mock the physical appearance and the defects of a person to achieve its comic effect. Significantly, not a single word is spent on Socrates's individual physiognomy.<sup>39</sup> Socrates and his disciple Chairephon are described as being part of a group of "rogues, quacks, pale-faced wretches, barefooted fellows."<sup>40</sup> Walking barefoot is a sign of poverty; pale people are those with little taste for outdoor pursuits. This description, as well as the deprivation of food mentioned some verses earlier, is totally incompatible with the appearance and the character of satyrs, who are certainly not famous for neglecting their physical appetites. Altogether, these traits do not describe any specific individual. Rather, Aristophanes is mocking the appearance and the lifestyle of the entire group of Socrates and his disciples, showing no interest whatsoever in the physiognomy of Socrates as an individual (as little as he shows interest in the physiognomy of Socrates's fellows in the comedy). The actor impersonating Socrates in Aristophanes's comedy was wearing a mask, of course, and we do not know what it looked like.<sup>41</sup> The only thing we can be fairly sure of, though, is that the mask could *not* have been a satyr mask. The satyr mask was, from a typological point of view, connected with the theatrical genre of the satyr play and would have been out of place for a main role in a comedy.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, Aristophanes's description of Soc-

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Colin Austin, 8 vols. (Berlin, 1984), 3:2:14–16; Dover, "Introduction," in Aristophanes, *Clouds*, ed. Dover (New York, 1968), pp. lxxxii–xcii; Thomas K. Hubbard, "Parabolic Self-Criticism and the Two Versions of Aristophanes' *Clouds*," *Classical Antiquity* 5 (Oct. 1986): 182–97; and Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), pp. 88–102. For Aristophanes's depiction of Socrates, see also Dover, "Socrates in the *Clouds*," in *The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Vlastos (New York 1971), pp. 50–77; Rossetti, "Le Nuvole di Aristofane"; Lowell Edmunds, "Il Socrate aristofaneo e l'ironia pratica," *Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica* 27 (1987): 7–21 and "The Practical Irony of the Historical Socrates"; and Cerri, "Le Nuvole di Aristofane e la realtà storica di Socrate" and "La pagina autobiografica del *Fedone*: Da Socrate a Platone," *Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica* 75, no. 3 (2003): 51–62.

39. See Aristophanes, *Clouds*, in *Clouds, Wasps, Peace*, trans. and ed. Henderson (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 102–04, 362–63, pp. 20, 58.

40. Aristophanes, *The Comedies of Aristophanes: A New and Literal Translation, from the Revised Text of Dindorf*, trans. William James Hickie (London, 1853).

41. On this mask, see Dover, "Portrait-Masks in Aristophanes," in *Komoidotragemata: Studia Aristophanea Viri Aristophanei W. J. W. Koster in Honorem* (Amsterdam 1967), pp. 16–28, esp. 26–28; less convincing is Scheibler, "Rezeptionsphasen des jüngeren Sokratesporträts in der Kaiserzeit," pp. 184–85.

42. On comic masks of this time in general, see Thomas B. L. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*, (London, 1978), pp. 29–66, and John R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (New York, 1994), pp. 34–37. On the presence and roles of satyrs in comedies, see Luigi Battezzato, "La fatica dei canti: tragedia, commedia e dramma satiresco nel frammento adespoto 646a TrGF," in *Komotragedia: Intersezioni del tragico e del comico nel teatro del V sec. a.C.*, ed. E. Medda, M. S. Mirto and M. P. Pattoni (Pisa, 2006), pp. 19–68, and Paolo Cipolla, "Sugli anapesti di *Trag. Adesp.* F 646 Sn.-K.," *Lexis* 29 (2011): 131–72.



rates and his fellows sets them in sharp contrast with both the character and the physical appearance of satyrs. Finally, based on the description of Socrates and his fellows found in *Clouds*, we can conclude that the mask worn by the actor playing Socrates was very similar to the masks of his fellows and was not conceived as an individual caricature. The focus seems to have been on the construction of a collective physiognomy, on mocking the group as a whole.

From this general silence on Socrates's appearance and from Aristophanes's silence in particular, it seems fair to conclude that the living Socrates was not considered to have a conspicuous appearance. His physiognomy emerged as a subject a long time after his death, when Plato and Xenophon wrote their symposium dialogues and when the group of Socrates's disciples decided to dedicate a portrait statue to the memory of their master.

## 6

Before we return to the question of the genesis of Socrates's representation as a satyr, let us look at what associations the figure of a satyr would actually evoke in the minds of an Athenian audience. First, of course, the physiognomy of a satyr stands in a drastic opposition to the then-current ideal of male beauty; satyrs are as ugly as they are funny. The same holds true for their behaviour; satyrs generally *mis*behave. Images of satyrs on vases stress the insatiable appetites such creatures have for wine and sex. Satyrs always drink their wine pure rather than mixed with water, as civilized humans do. Drinking makes them more and more excited, but it does not interfere with their remarkable acrobatic capacities. On a wine-cooling vessel, we see one satyr in the middle of a group of revelling companions; he is leaning backward, supporting himself on the tips of his fingers and his toes, while balancing on the top of his erected penis a drinking vessel that a companion is filling with wine (fig. 10).<sup>43</sup> On a drinking cup, we see an excited satyr assaulting a fleeing Maenad close to an altar—in other words, in a sacred place where a particularly restrained behaviour would be required (fig. 11).<sup>44</sup> Finally, on a *pelike*, we see a satyr who seems to have just knocked over a herm and is now attacking it with a huge hammer.<sup>45</sup> Such behaviour is not just inappropriate (*átopon*) but sacrilegious

43. See Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2:446.262; Catoni, *Bere vino puro*, pp. 231 fig. 6, 275 fig. 40; François Lissarrague, *La Cité des satyres: Une Anthropologie ludique (Athènes, VIe-Ve siècle avant J.-C.)* (Paris, 2013), pp. 146–47 figs. 122–23.

44. See Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2:393.37; Lissarrague, *La Cité des satyres*, p. 197 fig. 167.

45. See Claude Bérard, "Le satyre casseur," *Métis* 5 (1990): 75–91; Waterfield, *Why Socrates Died*, pp. 91–93; Lissarrague, *La cité des satyres*, fig 173 p. 201, fig. 173.



FIGURE 10. Attic psykter. Ca. 480 BC. London, British Museum, E768. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

(*asebés*). Satyrs, as represented on pots, do not obey the laws and rituals of the polis.<sup>46</sup> It is worth recalling that one of the formal charges against Socrates was precisely his claimed *asébeia*—impiety—and one of the informal ones was his *atopía*, a trait repeatedly attributed to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* (as we have seen).

46. See Lissarrague, *La cité des satyres*, with earlier literature; and Catoni, *Bere vino puro*.



FIGURE 11. Attic cup. Ca. 480–470 BC. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 307. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

More can be learned about satyrs from myth. Not many traditional tales involve a satyr as a main character, but three of them are particularly telling. The first is the tale of Midas, king of Phrygia, who ordered his servants to catch a satyr named Silenus, who lived outside of the polis, in the

wild.<sup>47</sup> Once the satyr had been caught thanks to the trick of a fountain pouring wine instead of water, Midas was able to ask him what he thought to be the best thing for a man. “Not to be born,” answered Silenus, “but once born, the best would be to die as soon as possible.”<sup>48</sup> Silenus’s gloomy answer need not concern us here. What matters is that Silenus, a creature of the wild, nonetheless holds some kind of wisdom that goes beyond the knowledge of ordinary men. The second story again involves Silenus and his relation to the infant Dionysus. The baby was born out of the thigh of his father Zeus and immediately entrusted to the care of the nymphs and Silenus, who served as his educator.<sup>49</sup>

The most important myth in our context, though, is the third one: the story of the satyr Marsyas, a virtuoso player of the double flute.<sup>50</sup> In Plato’s *Symposium*, Alcibiades compares Socrates to Marsyas. After pointing out that Socrates is strange (*átopos*) and evoking his physical similarity to Marsyas, Alcibiades introduces a new level of analogy between the two; they are alike, he says, in “every other respect.” Alcibiades opens this new level of comparison by saying that Socrates is, like Marsyas, insolent (*hybristés*). He adds that Marsyas was able to fascinate his audience with his instrument, whereas Socrates needs no instrument whatsoever, as the fascination comes from his speech. Alcibiades does not explicitly mention the dark conclusion of Marsyas’s story (with which any contemporary audience would be familiar). The satyr went so far as to challenge Apollo in a music contest. The winner, it was agreed, would have the right to treat the defeated any way he wanted. Acting as judges, the Muses assigned the victory to Apollo, whereupon the god decided to have Marsyas flayed alive to punish him for his insolence (*hýbris*). This is one of the very few stories in Greek mythology in which someone is not simply killed but also sentenced to death after something like a regular trial (even though, of course, one might doubt that the Muses were actually qualified, unbiased judges).<sup>51</sup> The analogy between Socrates’s and Marsyas’s stories is obvious. Alcibiades’s mention of *hybris*

47. See Margaret C. Miller, “Midas,” in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, 9 vols. (Zurich, 1981–97), 8:846–51.

48. Quoted in Malcolm Davies, “Aristotle fr. 44 Rose: Midas and Silenus,” *Mnemosyne* 57 (Nov. 2004): 682–97.

49. See Alina Veneri and Carlo Gasparri, “Dionysos,” in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, 3:480.

50. See Anne Weis, “Marsyas I,” in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, 6:369.

51. Another example of a mythological figure executed after a trial is Palamedes, who is in fact evoked together with Ajax, by Socrates in Plato’s *Apology*: “I could meet Palamedes and Aias, Telemón’s son, and any others of olden times who died as a result of an unjust judgment, and compare my experiences with theirs” (Plato, *Apology*, in *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*, trans. Chris Emlin-Jones and William Preddy [Cambridge, Mass., 2017], p. 191). Neither Palamedes nor Ajax, though, would present such distinctive physiognomic

at the very outset of the analogy “under every other respect” points precisely to the part of Marsyas’s affair that is not explicitly narrated. It is also worthwhile to underline that in the entire *Symposium* Plato uses the term *hybristés* only for Marsyas and Socrates. In both cases, their *hybris* led them to death. In the *Symposium*, this facet of the analogy is not explicitly drawn because at the date of the narrated drinking party Socrates was still alive. But any reader of the text, who obviously knew of Socrates’ death, could not miss the analogy between Marsyas’s and Socrates’s trial and death.

## 7

Sometime between 387 and 360 BC, then, a group of Socrates’s disciples decided to erect a portrait statue of the master in the Academy, also inscribing their names on its base, which Philocorus describes as “inscribed with many names.” Philodemus’s papyrus does not give us the list of their names, but if we had the list, we should not be surprised to find Plato’s name. The decision to dedicate a statue implied the need to tell the sculptor *how* Socrates should be depicted, what concrete appearance he should be given. The answer to this question was by no means obvious. Had there been no trial and no death sentence, the most likely solution would have been to depict Socrates as a *kaloskagathós*, a gentleman fulfilling all ethical and aesthetic norms. He would have looked like any one of the Athenians we find depicted on the grave reliefs of the time. Exactly these Athenians, though, had condemned Socrates to death. This circumstance ruled out any possibility of representing Socrates as complying with the standard type. What was needed, then, was an alternative type.<sup>52</sup> Finding a solution to this problem must have involved lengthy negotiations. According to our hypothesis, the surprising physiognomic reflections we find in Plato’s and Xenophon’s literary symposia could provide us with an echo of such negotiations.

Finally, the decision was made to depict the master with the traits of a satyr. Let us imagine for a moment the reaction of some ordinary Athenian, in the second quarter of the fourth century BC, coming to the sanctuary of the Muses in the Academy and discovering there the statue of somebody who, one generation earlier, had been tried and put to death: a portrait of a public criminal. This criminal is now given an appearance

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features as Marsyas (see Susan Woodford and Ingrid Krauskopf, “Marsyas I,” in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, 7:145–49).

52. Compare: “The deliberate visualization of ugliness represented, in the Athens of the early fourth century, a clash with the standards of *kalokagathia*. That is, a portrait like this questioned one of the fundamental values of the Classical polis” (Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, p. 38).

that conspicuously deviates from the way respectable citizens are (and like to be) represented on contemporary grave reliefs; he bears the unmistakable traits of a satyr. Our ordinary Athenian, relying on the current standards, would perceive these traits as ugly and funny at the same time. Such a perception, however, was in blatant contradiction with the function of a portrait statue, which always praised—and never mocked—the person depicted. Thinking further, our Athenian might conclude that the point of this provocative image was exactly to call his own standards into question. Shifting his point of view, the beholder might discover other facets of meaning that go beyond the first impression; he might come to suspect that the person portrayed in such a way is entitled to claim semidivine capacities and insights reaching far beyond those of any ordinary human.

## 8

The portrait statue of Socrates was at the same time deeply provocative and markedly apologetic. This apologetic character is even clearer in the two literary symposia, which stage something like a reverse trial of Socrates in order to refute the claims brought against him before, during, and after the trial and to argue in favour of his innocence. The reference to the trial is, of course, never made explicit, but carried out through a subtle use of allusions. Let's recall that both Plato's and Xenophon's symposium dialogues describe events that happened long before the trial (in Plato's *Symposium* the action is set specifically in 416 BC). Nevertheless, in both texts hints at the trial and the accusations against Socrates are pervasive.

One macroscopic element of this kind is the presence of Socrates's accusers among the participants in both Plato's and Xenophon's drinking parties. Aristophanes, one of the older accusers, is among the protagonists of Plato's *Symposium*; in Xenophon's *Symposium*, it is Lycon, one of the three formal prosecutors in the trial of 399 BCE, who is personally present. At the moment of leaving the company, he pronounces an explicit acquittal of the accused by defining Socrates a *kalós ge kagathós ánthropos* (see XS, 4.43, p. 612). To the same category of hints belong the frequent allusions and intertextual references to Plato's *Apology* to be found in his *Symposium*.<sup>53</sup>

A further type of hint is provided by specific lexical choices that allude to a judicial context. In Xenophon's *Symposium*, for example, the vote in fa-

53. On the textual references to Plato's *Apology* in his *Symposium*, see Luigi M. Segoloni, *Socrate a banchetto: Il "Simposio" di Platone e i "Banchettanti" di Aristofane* (Rome, 1994); Stanley Rosen, *Plato's "Symposium"* (New Haven, Conn., 1987); and Danzig, "Apologetic elements in Xenophon's *Symposium*."

avour of Critobulus at the end of the beauty contest leads Socrates to comment that Critobulus' beauty "has the power to corrupt, whether jurymen or judges" (XS, 5.10, p. 631). Jurymen are totally appropriate in a beauty contest, while the presence of judges is of course relegated to a proper trial. In the same vein in Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades, having accused Socrates of *hýbris* (insolence), threatens to produce witnesses, clearly evoking a judicial practice (see PS, 215b, p. 218). The hypothesis of a reverse trial becomes particularly evident in the last part of Alcibiades's speech in praise of Socrates, which, however, ironically takes the form of a prosecution.

As already mentioned, Alcibiades bases the analogy between Socrates and Marsyas on their insolence (*hýbris*). Later in his speech, he goes into detail, denouncing Socrates's insolence for having resisted his, Alcibiades's, erotic advances.<sup>54</sup> Here the reversal is particularly evident. Alcibiades portrays himself, not Socrates, as severely misbehaving. With his insistent attempts at seducing Socrates, Alcibiades would have overturned the codified set of norms that, in the context of male homoerotic courtship, reserved the active role to the older lover (*erastés*), prescribing to the younger beloved (*erómenos*) a passive and self-restrained behaviour. Alcibiades's "accusation" of Socrates, then, is ironic. Its function is, rather, to defend Socrates from any charge of having ruined young men with his teaching.

Here too, Socrates, you are unable to give me the lie. When I had done all this [the seduction attempt], he showed such superiority and contempt, laughing my youthful charms to scorn, and flouting [*hýbrise*] the very thing on which I prided myself, oh gentlemen of the jury [*ô ándres dikastáí*!—for yes! you in fact act here as judges of Socrates's lofty disdain—you may be sure, by gods and goddesses, that when I arose I had in no more particular sense slept a night with Socrates than if it had been with my father or my elder brother.  
[PS, 219c–d, p. 231, trans. mod.]

Particularly telling, in this passionate accusation, is the use of the formula *ándres dikastáí* (gentlemen of the jury). This is actually a technical formula used in court to address the judges, certainly not one's companions during a symposium. "Gentlemen of the jury" is here totally out of place. The friction produced by such a staged slip, moreover, is even increased by the fact that Alcibiades repeats it, pretending to justify a pretended mistake: "for

54. Alcibiades extends his case, in regard to the results of his attempt at seducing Socrates, to other young men with whom the same reversal of the codified code of courtship would have taken place; see PS, 222a–b, pp. 238–40.

yes! you in fact act here as judges of Socrates's lofty disdain." The allusion to the trial of 399 BC is unmistakable.

Alcibiades also defends Socrates against the accusation of having been his own, Alcibiades's, master. In a crescendo of pathos he narrates how unbearable Socrates's teaching was for him, notwithstanding his overwhelming fascination.

the influence of our Marsyas here has often thrown me into such a state that I thought my life not worth living on these terms. . . . And there is one experience I have in presence of this man alone, such as nobody would expect in me—to be made to feel ashamed by anyone; he alone can make me feel it. For he brings home to me that I cannot disown the duty of doing what he bids me, but that as soon as I turn from his company I fall a victim to the favors of the crowd. So I take a runaway's leave of him and flee away; when I see him again I think of those former admissions, and am ashamed. Often I wish he had vanished from this world; yet again, should this befall, I am sure I should be more distressed than ever; so I cannot tell what to do with the fellow at all. [*PS*, 216a–c, pp. 221–23]

Alcibiades (the living person, not the character in the Platonic *Symposium*) had been widely attacked for his arrogant, mean, and sometimes violent personal and political behaviour. As we learn from Alcibiades himself in Plato's *Symposium*, all this could definitely not be blamed on Socrates as some had claimed. Socrates, rather, had had the effect of restraining Alcibiades's intemperance and may be the only human being able to induce Alcibiades to be ashamed of himself. At the end of the passage just quoted, the allusion to Socrates's death ("I wish he had vanished from this world") is particularly powerful.

The analogy between Socrates and Marsyas and with the satyrs in general brings a further advantage, which Alcibiades makes explicit at the end of his speech:

There are many more quite wonderful things that one could find to praise in Socrates: but although there would probably be as much to say about any other one of his habits, I select his unlikeness to anybody else, whether in the ancient or in the modern world, as calling for our greatest wonder. You may take the character of Achilles and see his parallel in Brasidas or others; you may couple Nestor, Antenor, or others I might mention, with Pericles; and in the same order you may liken most great men; but with the odd qualities of this person, both in himself and in his conversation, you would not



come anywhere near finding a comparison if you searched either among men of our day or among those of the past, unless perhaps you borrowed my words and matched him, not with any human being, but with the Silenuses and satyrs, in his person and his speech.  
[PS, 221c–d, pp. 237–39]

Socrates can be compared to no human, to no hero of the past, but only to semidivine beings: the satyrs. On the other hand, Socrates (“our Marsyas here”) is not only being compared to the satyrs; he is actually turned into one. Were we allowed to forge an ad hoc expression to synthetically describe this process, we could say that it is a process of *aposatyrosis*, that is, a special (and lighter) inflection of *apotheosis*.

The physiognomy of a satyr conjures up the image of a semihuman, semidivine being that stands in opposition to the laws of the polis, whose behaviour is generally *átopon* and at times even *asebés*, and whose wisdom could nonetheless be more than human. The figure of the satyr, in its different and contradictory facets, seemed therefore to offer a perfect mythical image for Socrates. Socrates’s resemblance to a satyr, then, does not reflect the appearance of a living individual whom we could have met in the streets of Athens; it is the product of a careful posthumous construction. Such a construction allowed Socrates’s disciples and friends not only to solve the problem of what physiognomy to give the master but also to find a face able to visualize, in a kind of high-density form, Socrates’s intellectual legacy, including the master’s teaching, trial, and death.

In the long run, the construction has been enormously successful, as the portrait of Socrates commissioned after the rehabilitation testifies. Lysippus couldn’t avoid following the physiognomic choices made in the first portrait and used the same typology, albeit slightly mitigated. Apparently, there was no possibility to reverse those initial choices and transform Socrates back into a *kaloskagathós*. The ultimate success of the image of Socrates as a satyr, however, lies in its power to make both the beholders of the statue and the readers of Plato’s *Symposium* and Xenophon’s *Symposium* forget about its being an artful construction, convincingly proposing itself as a truthful and lasting likeness of the historical Socrates.