

**SOCRATES THE ATHENIAN SAGE AND KHOR THE RUSSIAN PEASANT:
THE CHARACTER THROUGH THE EYES OF THE NARRATOR
OF ONE OF I. S. TURGENEV'S SHORT STORIES**

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ABSTRACT. In Ivan S. Turgenev's *Khor and Kalinych* (1846), which opens the collection of stories *A Sportsman's Sketches*, the narrator compares the Athenian sage to one of the main characters of the sketch, Khor. This old man, whose family has long moved away from the rest of the private peasants, resembles Socrates in appearance. Turgenev's character resembles Socrates in more ways than one: his manner of speaking – "a simple, wise discourse of a Russian peasant". The narrator highlights his "philosophical" traits that liken him to Socrates: he is referred to as "an old sceptic", "a positive man", "a rationalist"; he is a clever old man who "speaks ingeniously". These two characters (Socrates of Athens is known to us as a hero in the writings of his disciples – Xenophon and Plato) are akin in their propensity to ask questions, ironic as they might be. The narrator speaks about Khor's contempt for women and his own old wife, who was "cross, <...> and incessantly grumbled and scolded". Which immediately evokes Socrates' old woman – perhaps, one of the best-known women of Antiquity and, surely, the best-known wife of philosophers of all times. It is crossness that made Socrates' spouse notorious. Khor and Socrates are brought close even in their care of themselves and their homestead. The comparison of the peasant Khor with the ancient sage Socrates testifies to the tradition of perceiving in our national culture a simple, peasant-like, wise, original, our Russian Socrates.

KEYWORDS: I. S. Turgenev, *Khor and Kalinych*, Socrates and Khor, Russian peasant, Athenian sage, Xanthippe, reception of ancient culture.

As is well-known, Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev (1818–1883) never wrote anything about Socrates, sophists, Plato, Aristotle or any other ancient philosophers, nor did he ever touch upon the topics of the Greek-Roman history and culture. But Socrates happens to be mentioned in some of his works. While gleaning information about the legendary sage from Athens in I. S. Turgenev's works, I came across a recent article written by Prof. V. V. Maroshi, where Socrates is classed among the most established – "archetypical", "intertextual" – characters and subject matters in the works of the Russian writer. This article written by a philologist at Novosibirsk Pedagogical University examines the "archetype of the giant" in the works of

Ivan S. Turgenev and Ivan A. Bunin; the article opens with a range of characterological aspects in Turgenev's works, which prompts the searcher to conclude that

the national literary scholars have identified a special "literary" archetypical characterization of their heroes modelled upon intercontextual and intratextual pattern-cards, supra-types that, as a rule, are explicated by the writer himself (Socrates, Ling Lear, Faust, Hamlet and Don Quixote, Tatiana Larina, etc.) or singled out by him ("the superfluous man") and his critics (the Turgenev damsels)¹.

In I. S. Turgenev's prose, Socrates is mentioned for the first time in the story *Khor and Kalinych*, written in 1846 and published in the January issue of the *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*) magazine (in 1847). This story begins the cycle named *A Sportsman's Sketches* to finally contain twenty five episode-pictures of Russia, Russian people and Russian culture – poignant sketches on the contemporary peasant Russia.

This collection has nothing from the ancient history. Though some stories allude to reminiscences from Attic culture, but such innuendoes are infrequent, and all of them are, as it were, indirect: "something like a *Greek fountain*"² (à *l'antique*, of course), a Greek portico in the picture *Two old men eating a watermelon* by an unknown painter is mentioned in the story *The Estate Office*, two sketches mention the Greek nose, and *The Live Relic* compares a young girl's face to an image of a Greek statue. Speaking with a humorous undertone about an utterly nice, kind-hearted man, the author classes him among the type of sickly-sweet person who would say: "Ah, Vanya, Vanya" or: 'Ah, Sasha, Sasha', they say to each other with emotion: 'We ought to be off to the South, to the South... *you and I are Greeks at heart, ancient Greeks*"³.

A Sportsman's Sketches is interspersed with names from the ancient mythology. Venus occurs twice; *The End of Chertopkhanov* has the sculpture of Flora, a goddess, with her leg graciously lifted; *The Singers* compares one of the characters to Hercules, and in the same story, the author addresses one of the characters by the name of the legendary Hellenic fable-writer: "Look, Aesop⁴ the feather-bedded". *The Lebedyan* mentions Aeneas (also *cum grano salis*), and in *The Bailiff* a character "calls himself a worshipper of Epicurus, though his general opinion of philosophy is poor, and he

¹ Maroshi 2019, 172.

² Hereinafter all italics in quotations are mine.

³ Turgenev 1915, 212.

⁴ In the original, this is a distorted ancient name, "Езоп".

describes it as the ‘cloudy sustenance of the Teutonic mind’, or sometimes, simply, as ‘twaddle’⁵.

All these examples, with their scanty references to the antiquity, are transient, given *à propos*, most of them are related to the ancient Greek culture, ironical and indulgent as the author may have been.

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And in *Khor and Kalinych*, one of the characters is compared to the Ancient Greek philosopher. Khor is a strange name to call a man. This main hero appears only close to the second third of the story, but in the rest two thirds the narrator concentrates on him. From the very start, the author emphasizes his visual alikeness to Socrates. Here is the description of the character through the eyes of the hunter who sees him for the first time:

I went off hunting alone and towards evening I dropped in on Khor. An old man – bald, short in stature, broad-shouldered and thickset – met me on the threshold of his house. It was Khor himself. I scrutinized this Khor with interest. *Facially he reminded one of Socrates*: the same high, uneven forehead, the same small eyes, the same snub nose. We went into his house together⁶.

So, Khor is a *Socratic personality*: snub-nosed, bald, bulbous, stocky (thick-set) old man with small eyes. The name of Socrates occurs just once in *Khor and Kalinych* (a *hapax* in *A Sportsman’s Sketches*), but then the writer adds new touches to the portrait of his hero, making him look like the very same sage. Khor sports a curly beard and long moustache: “an occasional chuckle came from under *his long moustache*”⁷; “Khor would dissolve into laughter, in the course of which his little eyes would disappear completely”⁸.

In Xenophon’s account (*Symp.* 5.5–7), Socrates speaking to his interlocutor, Critobulus, about his wall-eyes, a broad nose with upturned nostrils and an ugly thick-lipped mouth says (clearly chuckling under his long moustaches):

SOCRATES. “Do you know the reason why we need eyes?”

CRITOBULUS. “Obviously to see with”.

⁵ Turgenev 1915, 138.

⁶ Turgenev 2024, 8.

⁷ Turgenev 2024, 8.

⁸ Turgenev 2024, 15.

SOCRATES. "In that ease, it would appear without further ado that my eyes are finer ones than yours".

CRITOBULUS. "How so?"

SOCRATES. "Because, while yours see only straight ahead, mine, by bulging out as they do, see also to the sides".

CRITOBULUS. "Do you mean to say that a crab is better equipped visually than any other creature?"

SOCRATES. "Absolutely; for its eyes are also better set to insure strength".

CRITOBULUS. "Well, let that pass; but whose nose is finer, yours or mine?"

SOCRATES. "Mine, I consider, granting that Providence made us noses to smell with. For your nostrils look down toward the ground, but mine are wide open and turned outward so that I can catch scents from all about".

CRITOBULUS. "But how do you make a snub nose handsomer than a straight one?"

SOCRATES. "For the reason that it does not put a barricade between the eyes but allows them unobstructed vision of whatever they desire to see; whereas a high nose, as if in despite, has walled the eyes off one from the other".

"As for the mouth", said Critobulus, "I concede that point. For if it is created for the purpose of biting off food, you could bite off a far bigger mouthful than I could. And don't you think that your kiss is also the more tender because you have thick lips?"

SOCRATES. "According to your argument, it would seem that I have a mouth more ugly even than an ass's. 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 Seileni, who resemble me more closely than they do you?"⁹

The passage is indicative, needless to say, he imagines the wise Socrates as a common and non-kalokagathian (mildly speaking) man – a most funny ugly man with zoomorphic features. In the Antiquity he was compared now to lusty Marsyas (Plat. *Symp.* 215e)¹⁰, now to a sea-devil, now to a shellfish (eyes like those of a crab) or an equine (the mouth of a donkey)¹¹.

⁹ Trans. by O. J. Todd from the edition: Xenophon 1997b, 601, 603.

¹⁰ The ancient culture had a comical version of Socrates resembling Silenus and Priapus; Cedric Littlewood in his *Socrates in Roman Satire* collected interesting evidence of the Marsyan and Priapean traits in the Athenian sage (Littlewood 2019, 378 ff., 385 ff.)

¹¹ On zoomorphic elements in the image of Socrates-Silene and the Satyr mask in ancient physiognomy see Belfiore 1980; Scheibler 1989; Bonelli 1991; Meulder 1994; Zanker 1995; Giuliani 1997; Bowie 1998; Lapatin 2006; McLean 2007; Charalabopoulos 2012, 159–178; Compton-Engle 2015; Capra 2016 (earlier literature); Svetlov 2017b; Stavru 2018a (thorough comparative analysis of Socrates's physiognomy in Plato and Xenophon); Capra 2018, 68–74, 78 f.; Erler 2018 (with relevant literature); Sinitzyn, Svetlov 2019, 443 ff., 446 ff.; Littlewood 2019, 378 f., 385–387.

Philosopher Roman V. Svetlov begins his sketch *Socrates in the Space of Ancient Fancy* with a remark: “It is common knowledge that Socrates did not stand up to the ideal of neither aristocratic ‘kalokagathia’ nor the canonic image the sage-‘humanitarian’ must have according to the later ancient concepts”¹². Then the scholar adduces and comments on various evidence of the appearance of the Athenian sage¹³. “There was nothing aristocratic in either Socrates’s appearance or his behaviour”, writes Alexey F. Losev¹⁴; cf. his observations about Socrates in other papers: “There is an absurd, yet profound, naiveté, akin to *his ugly appearance*”¹⁵; “The Silenus scheme’ can also be encountered in describing Socrates’s appearance (Conv. 216d)”¹⁶; Socrates “resembled a theatrical comic mask”¹⁷. Indeed, written sources and a rather vast iconography show Socrates as a nondescript, non-athletic (contrary, by the way, to his disciple, Plato), even a monstrous person.

In his book published in a popular science series “The Lives of Remarkable People”, Igor E. Surikov, when speaking about Socrates’s appearance, says that one of his *paradoxes* was that he had “nothing of aristocracy about him”, that he was “egregiously non-classical”, nothing but “a freak of nature”: “he was, mildly speaking, *hardly up to the classical ideals of beauty*. <...> Socrates is *egregiously non-classical*. According to the standards of his time, he is *nothing but an ugly man*. The Greeks, with their sharp eye, could not help noticing it. His appearance was conspicuous, he did stand out from the crowd; he would have been easily recognized even from a distance. Sure enough, the philosopher was well aware of his appearance”¹⁸.

There are many ancient sources that testify to the physiognomy and bodily defects of the Athenian sage, and “a monstrosity *per defectum*”¹⁹, if to use Friedrich Nietzsche’s characteristic of Socrates²⁰, made him look ludicrous, ridiculous; he would often become an object of jests and acted as a $\beta\omega\mu\lambda\delta\chi\varsigma$, a laughing stock²¹. Socrates did seem to be an “aberration of nature”, there is hardly ever such an eccentric man (in various senses) to be found! So quite frequently he acted as

¹² Svetlov 2017b, 127.

¹³ See Svetlov 2017b, 128 ff.

¹⁴ Losev 1990, 12.

¹⁵ Losev 2000, 57.

¹⁶ Losev 2000, 633.

¹⁷ Losev, Takho-Godi 2005, 17.

¹⁸ Surikov, 2011, 11.

¹⁹ Nietzsche 1993, 66.

²⁰ On F. Nietzsche through the eyes of Socrates, see Galanin 2024; on the Nietzsche’s re-evaluation of Socrates and the Socratic: Raymond 2019 (with bibliography).

²¹ See Erler 2018; Sinitsyn, Svetlov 2019, both articles with literature.

κωμῳδούμενος of the ancient comedy²². Werner Jäger, a German scholar, speaks about Aristophanes' choice of Socrates as a hero of the comedy *The Clouds*:

He was known throughout the city and could easily be recognized on the stage. Nature herself in a fit of humour had made him a perfect comic mask, in the shape of a Silenus-face with a snub nose, protruding lips, and goggling eyes. All that was necessary was to exaggerate his character a little. Aristophanes decked his victim out with all the characteristics of the tribe to which he obviously belonged...²³

I. S. Turgenev frequently uses the pronouns “same as” [those of Socrates] while comparing Khor's appearance to the εἰκών of the ancient sage. He calls his hero “an old man”, but the collective memory has Socrates not in his acme (when he in the 420s BC started his philosophical dialogues in Athens), but in his late years, that is, when he was an elderly man of about 70 years old.

As the Russian writer shows, there is a lot of common in the plain, famous philosopher and the peasant serf from Kaluga. But the ancient *komoidoumenos* and *bomolochos* looks even more hideous than the sturdy peasant in Turgenev's story. But, the same as it is with Socrates, behind the rough and indecent appearance there was spiritual beauty, and the Socratic image of Khor was in sharp contrast to that of his inner world.

Khor's Socratic appearance was translated into paintings: short and bald, bull-headed, with moustache and heavy eyebrows, large bulbous nose, donning the Russian peasant attire: a shirt encircled with a girdle below his belly and pants tucked into his high boots. This is how Old peasant Khor is always depicted in the illustrations for I. S. Turgenev's story *Khor and Kalinych*, created by artists Elisabeth M. Bohm, Valerian V. Knyazev, Pyotr P. Sokolov, Iosif A. Days, Vyacheslav V. Tokarev, Anatoly I. Belyukin, Vadim V. Solodkiy, and many others (see Appendices)²⁴.

²² See Peter Brown's work *The Comic Socrates*: Brown 2007. From recent works, see also: Bromberg 2018; Capra 2018 (both with vast bibliographies supplementing each other; on the whole, see the new large collections *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue*: Stavru, Moore 2018). From earlier literature: A. Patzer's article *Socrates in the fragments of the Attic Comedy* (Patzer 1994), also: Neumann 1966; Neumann 1969; Nussbaum 1980; Ambrose 1983; Zanker 1995; Bowie 1998; Newell 1999; Carey 2000; Noël 2000; Brown 2004; Edmunds 2006; Edmunds 2007; Capra 2007; Kyriakidi 2007; Jedrkiewicz 2011; Konstan 2011; Marshall 2012; Svetlov 2017a; Stavru 2018a, 209–211; Bromberg 2019 (on *Ancient Greek tragedy and the Socratic tradition*); Sinitsyn, Svetlov 2019, 431–449; Borukhovich 2019.

²³ Jäger 1945, 371.

²⁴ See also the biobibliographical guide *Artists and Illustrators of I. S. Turgenev's books*: Abolmazova, 2019.

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As it becomes clear, the Kaluga eccentric recluse is similar to Socrates not only in his appearance but also in his manner of speaking: his speech is “the plain, intelligent speech of the Russian peasant”²⁵, and after the very first conversation with Khor, the narrator makes a mental note: “A canny fellow who doesn’t give much away”, I thought²⁶. Also, he detects some “philosophical” traits which, again, bond them together with Socrates: “the old sceptic”²⁷, “a positive”, “a rationalist”, “was closer <...> to people and society”, “a clever type”.

These two personages (we know Socrates as a hero of Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and the works of his gifted disciples – Xenophon and Plato) are akin also because they like to ask questions²⁸. Turgenev’s narrator frequently notes the Socratic trait in his hero:

But Khor did not do all the talking; he asked many questions of me. When he learnt that I’d been abroad, his curiosity was roused... Kalinych displayed no less curiosity, but was more touched by descriptions of nature, mountains, waterfalls, cities and unusual buildings. Khor was interested in questions of government and administration. He went over everything, one after the other: “Are things there the same as here, or different? Well, sir, what do you say?” <...> Khor would remain silent, knitting his bushy eyebrows and just occasionally remarking: “They say that wouldn’t work here, but that other thing would be all right. That’s the proper order of things”. I can’t convey all his queries, and there’s no point in doing so...²⁹

It shows the sheer contrast between Khor and his friend Kalinych: the latter favours the foreign exotics while Khor is interested in matters of governance and the state system. Turgenev frequently speaks of his hero’s Russian spirit, highlighting the traits inherent in his “Russian Socrates” – his confidence, common sense, propensity to laugh at foreign (German) practicality and mercantilism, but also openness to accept the foreign if there is something to learn from:

... from our conversations I derived one conviction, which my readers probably will not expect at all: the conviction that Peter the Great was first and foremost a Russian, and, specifically, a Russian in his reforms. Russians are so certain of their strength and energy that they are not averse to sweating blood. *They are very little interested in the past, and look boldly forward. Whatever is good they like, whatever is sensible is fine by them,*

²⁵ Turgenev 2024, 13.

²⁶ Turgenev 2024, 9.

²⁷ Turgenev 2024, 11.

²⁸ For Turgenev and Aristophanes see Volkov 2023; Volkov, Zhilyakova 2023.

²⁹ Turgenev 2024, 12–13.

*but they couldn't care less where it comes from. Their common sense will gladly make fun of etiolated German rationalism. However, the Germans were, according to Khor, a "surprising lot", and he was ready to learn from them*³⁰.

It is also noteworthy that both Khor and Socrates have a streak of irony. Turgenev's narrator says that "Khor had even attained an ironical perspective on life"³¹; "chuckle to himself and keep his own counsel"³². The educated narrator, a hunter, admits that his interlocutor is sophisticated and he himself has learned a lot from the conversations with Khor: "He had seen a great deal, knew a great deal and taught me a great deal"³³.

And this is more than just Khor's life-like portrait resembling Socrates whose portrait-sculpture Turgenev was familiar with³⁴.

There is much unusual in old Khor: his family has long lived separately from the other private peasants of the village, this Khor knows what is what, he is fully aware of "his exceptional situation", "his de facto independence"³⁵. Diogenes Laërtius describes Socrates in a similar way: "He was independent and dignified (Αὐτάρκης τε ἦν καὶ σεμνός)" (*Diog. Laert. Vit. Soph.* II. 24).

The juxtaposition of the Athenian sage and the Kaluga peasant demonstrates that the writer was familiar with many details typical of the literary Socrates. For instance, Khor, like Socrates, did not hold literacy in high regard. Khor is said to be illiterate as he was never taught to read and write: "His knowledge was, by his own lights, considerable, but he couldn't read...", while Kalinych was literate, and Khor says: "That ne'er-do-well got to read and write"³⁶.

As for the Athenian eccentric philosopher, though he did not write anything, he was a great expert in language, lexicology, etymology, and semantics. Take Plato's *Cratylus*, for instance, where Socrates learnedly speaks about the correctness of names appropriate to each thing and he admits that "there is a vast knowledge of

³⁰ Turgenev 2024, 13.

³¹ Turgenev 2024, 11.

³² Turgenev 2024, 11.

³³ Turgenev 2024, 11.

³⁴ We find the confirmation in his satirical poem *A Country Gentleman* written in 1845 (a year before *Khor and Kalinych*), where there is a mention of the copy of an ancient portrait-sculpture (XI. 166–172): "Noseless and bearded / A portrait sculpture of the sage shows white <...> this molten image may... / Aeschylus, Socrates, Aristophanes..." (Turgenev 1978, 158; translation of a fragment of I. S. Turgenev's poem into English by the author of the article).

³⁵ Turgenev 2024, 13.

³⁶ Turgenev 2024, 13.

the names" (Plat. *Crat.* 384b) and claims that "a true proposition says that which is, and a false proposition says that which is not?" (ibid. 385b). In *Cratylus*, the philosopher examines the origin of names and language, and is it possible to understand the essence of a thing if its name is known. Having shown himself an outstanding philologist, he claims that "one should examine things instead of names, but not that one should refrain from using names when investigating" (ibid. 439b)³⁷.

When asked by the narrator why he and his sons are illiterate, Khor gives no answer and immediately changes the subject. But this is Turgenev's invention. It is well-known that Khor was a real person, a peasant serf at one time separated from the commune; he lived at a farmstead in the forest, managed it so well that later it became a sizable settlement, as one of Turgenev's biographers said; "In Ulyanovsk District, Kaluga Oblast, there is a village Khorevka. As legend has it, it is an out-growth of Khor's farmstead"³⁸. Afanasy A. Fet, who in the early 1860s visited Khor at his farmstead, left his memoirs: "Khor was in his 80s, but age hadn't taken its toll on his colossal build and Herculean stature"³⁹. And this Khor was literate, he could read, according to I. A. Batalin, who made acquaintance with Khor when he was already old, but still "powerful, clever, tall and very hospitable. As he was literate, Turgenev sent him his story; and the old man read it proudly to all his guests"⁴⁰. Surely, Turgenev knew that the real Khor could read, but he deprives his character of this skill, in all likelihood, to enhance the contrast: an illiterate Russian muzhik who is endowed with natural mundane wisdom.

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There is another parallel between Socrates and the Kaluga eccentric peasant that should be noted. Turgenev's narrator speaks about Khor's disdain of women and his old wife.

However, *intelligent though he was*, he had *many prejudices and preconceptions*. For example, he despised women from the bottom of his heart, and, when in a cheerful mood, amused himself by making fun of them. His wife, an *old and cantankerous woman*, stayed on the stove all day, *grumbling and scolding incessantly*. Her sons paid no attention to her, but she put the fear of God into her daughters-in-law⁴¹.

³⁷ The citations trans. by H. N. Fowler in the edition Plato 1926.

³⁸ See Turgenev 1979, 448.

³⁹ Turgenev 1979, 448.

⁴⁰ Turgenev 1979, 448.

⁴¹ Turgenev 2024, 13–14.

When reading the lines of Khor's "prejudices and preconceptions", one immediately recalls the shrew and truculent Xanthippe, Socrates's notorious spouse, one of the most well-known women of the Antiquity and surely the most arrant wife of greatest philosophers ever⁴². This accursed Athenian woman (as described by ancient writers) achieved notoriety through her vituperation and propensity for scandals. The anecdotes on that score have come down to us, and it is of no consequence that they (or most of them) may have been made up after Socrates's death, but all of them — like all anecdotes — reflect the established tradition of perception of conjugal *happiness* of the Athenian philosopher. I won't be wrong to say that contemporary mass culture seems to know Socrates through these funny yarns about him and his shrew and flighty spouse.

When in *Khor and Kalinych* the narrator, on his first day at Khor's, wished to stay the night at the hay loft, the host ordered that his daughters-in-law should make a bed for him and urged his son to see to it (he calls the women in vernacular: "baby"): "Come here, girls! You go with them, Fedya. These women are a stupid lot"⁴³. Of interest is old father's conversation with his son, which elucidates the Khors' attitude (that of Khor and his sons') toward the womenfolk:

"Why should I get married?" — Fedya retorted. — "I'm happy as I am. What do I need a wife for? To have rows with her, or what?"

"Get away with you. I know you! <...> I know you — you never get your hands dirty".

"What good is there in a woman?"

"A woman is a worker", — Khor observed solemnly. — "Woman is the servant of man"⁴⁴.

Did Socrates think his wife stupid? Most stories about Xanthippe show her as an impetuous, rowdy, quarrelsome woman, who ranted and raved; but these qualities may well be exaggerated against Socrates's quiet and reserved behaviour. All the extant stories about Xanthippe and Socrates prove that our philosopher was not, so to speak, a hen-pecked man.

⁴² On Socrates and Xantippe, see Lönborg 1949; Dörrie 1967; Fitton 1970; Woodbury 1973; Bicknell 1974; Kessidi 1988, 18–20; Nersesyan 1996, 142–150; Saxonhouse 1998; Nails 2002, 299 f.; de Grant 2017; Spinelli 2017; Stavru 2018b, 648–655; Saxonhouse 2018; Nails 2019, 217–219; Holford-Strevens 2019, 420–422; Prince 2019, 492 f., 499 f.; Guimarães Tavares da Silva, Anjos 2024; Johnson, 2024, 143 f.; Tanner 2024, 151–159.

⁴³ Turgenev 2024, 9.

⁴⁴ Turgenev 2024, 10.

Xanthippe not only “grumbled and scolded incessantly”, she could also pour pot-washing on her good-for-nothing husband, who spent days in empty conversations and ignored household chores. Socratic sources claim that “the ancient she-Khor” amused herself by jesting at expense of her husband. Socrates took such escapades philosophically: “Did I not say”, — chuckled the sage, dripping with foul water, — “that Xanthippe’s thunder would end in rain?” (Diog. Laert. *Vit. Soph.* II. 36)⁴⁵. All this may well be yarns and gossip, and Diogenes Laërtius retells half a dozen funny anecdotes about wise Socrates and his wife⁴⁶, here are a couple of such:

When Alcibiades declared that the scolding of Xanthippe was intolerable, “Nay, I have got used to it”, — said he, — “as to the continued rattle of a windlass. And you do not mind the cackle of geese”. — “No”, — replied Alcibiades, — “but they furnish me with eggs and goslings”. — “And Xanthippe”, — said Socrates, — “is the mother of my children”.

When she tore his coat off his back in the market-place and his acquaintances advised him to hit back, “Yes, by Zeus”, — said he, — “in order that while we are sparring each of you may join in with ‘Go it, Socrates!’ — ‘Well done, Xanthippe!’” (Diog. Laert. *Vit. Soph.* II. 37)⁴⁷.

Xanthippe is pictured as a woman of harsh disposition, sharp-tongued; in fact, she was a match to her loquacious husband, who, according to the literary tradition, each time he met a new acquaintance (an Athenian or a passer-through) he got engaged into a conversation that would turn into a true *agon*.

Yet, Socrates’s wife, as far as we can judge, was not old and did not spend her days lying on a stove, as Khor’s spouse did – indeed, there were no Russian stoves in ancient Greece (*sic!*).

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Such a mundane detail as taking care of himself and his home places Khor in close quarters with Socrates. That Socrates did not do any housework was the cause of his quarrels with Xanthippe, their family tantrums (most anecdotes are about that). But the philosopher was not very particular about the way he looked; and both Plato and Xenophon point out that clean-washed Socrates donned in a clean cloak and with his shoes on was a rare sight to be strongly remembered by

⁴⁵ Trans. by R. D. Hicks from the edition: Diogenes 1959, 167.

⁴⁶ See Diog. Laert. *Vit. Soph.* II. 34, 37, 60.

⁴⁷ Trans. by R. D. Hicks from the edition: Diogenes 1959, 167.

the Athenians (see Plat. *Symp.* 174; *Phdr.* 229a⁴⁸; Xen. *Mem.* 1. 6. 2; Diog. Laert. *Vit. Soph.* II. 35 sq., 41 and others). This is noted by different characters in Plato and Xenophon.

Apollodorus, the narrator in Plato's *Symposium* (174a), recalls that once (i.e., a rare occasion!) Aristodemus ran into Socrates, "fresh from the bath and wearing his best pair of slippers – quite rare events with him"⁴⁹. It turned out that the philosopher "had rigged himself out" (that is, washed up and dressed up) because he was going to the dinner party held by his friend, the tragedian Agathon. In Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1. 6. 2) Antiphon puts Socrates to shame because he never takes care of himself and always wore old garments:

Socrates, I supposed that philosophy must add to one's store of happiness. But the fruits you have reaped from philosophy are apparently very different. For example, you are living a life that would drive even a slave to desert his master. Your meat and drink are of the poorest: the cloak you wear is not only a poor thing, but is never changed summer or winter; and you never wear shoes or tunic⁵⁰.

It is curious to note that at the end of the story *Khor and Kalinych*, the narrator marks out this "Socratic taint" in Khor: "He did not, however, insist on a very high degree of cleanliness..." The author never specifies but it is clear that he points to the domestic life: "and when I commented on this... on one occasion", enlarges the narrator on Khor's grubbiness, "he replied: 'They say a house should smell lived-in'"⁵¹. Since Socrates "did not insist on a very high degree of cleanliness", either, and would show up unwashed in public (cf. in Aristophanes' *The Birds*): ἀλούτος Σωκράτης — "unwashed Socrates", Aristoph. *Av.* 1554 sq.), we may well assume how bad the smell was. Thus, though Khor is shown as a solid and sturdy peasant with a large family, and all the members of his household are never idle, and though he manages on his own and pays off his dues to the landlord, the author distinguishes such a trait (a negative one since the narrator does not approve of Khor's ἀλούτος) as indifference about cleanliness. Likewise Socrates, he does not care about comfort, cleanliness, and his living conditions, which is in line with his "mundane philosophy".

⁴⁸ "By the way, I am barefooted now. You are always like that", — says Phaedrus to Socrates in the same-name dialogue (Plat. *Phdr.* 229a). Cf. Aristph. *Nub.* 103: ἀνυπόδητοι — "The barefooted" as the Pheidippides in the comedy *The Clouds* calls his neighbours – "the Socratic rabble".

⁴⁹ Trans. by W. R. M. Lamb from the edition: Plato 1996, 87.

⁵⁰ Trans. by E. C. Marchant from the edition: Xenophon 1997a, 67.

⁵¹ Turgenev 2024, 15.

Indeed, the two characters are apparently different: Khor is said to have a “practical, administrative mind”, which cannot be applied to Socrates. As the narrator says, “He seemed to agree with me about everything, but afterwards I felt awkward, feeling that I’d said the wrong thing, that it had come out rather oddly”⁵². Our sources portray Socrates as too loquacious; he is always engaged in conversations while his interlocutors only go along with his talk.

* * *

The above-mentioned instances of affinity between Khor and Socrates testify for I. S. Turgenev’s knowledge of the literature on the Athenian philosopher. Yet, which is especially notable, the writer follows the tradition of perceiving Socrates as a common, public, one-of-us person, the tradition that must have been established in the first part of the 19th century.

Here is an example from Feyodor N. Glinka’s poem *Karelia, or The Imprisonment of Marfa Ioanovna Romanova*, published in 1830. It describes the events of the first part of the 17th century, and the author characterizes one of his heroes as follows: “Our Nikanor, unwavering in his designs, / Had icy intelligence and a good head / And the Socratic brow (*И сократическим челом*)”⁵³. And he also notes: “Residents of Olonets Oblast are distinguished with their peculiar, cold and judicious, mind; and the *Socratic brow* (as Socrates’s portrait-sculpture has it) *can often be found under the peasant’s hat, which is a mark of sound intelligence*”⁵⁴. The characteristic of Nikanor (the man with “the Socratic brow”) and the author’s explications of this peculiarity of the character are of great interest in continuing the talk about the Russian peasant Socrates.

But it is, as it were, yet another challenge for researchers.

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⁵² Turgenev 2024, 8.

⁵³ Glinka 1957, 349 (translation of a fragment of F. N. Glinka’s poem into English by the author of the article).

⁵⁴ Glinka 1957, 399, note 12.

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APPENDICES

(Khor as Socrates in the illustrations of Ivan S. Turgenev's story
by Russian artists)



Ill. 1. Khor (left) as Socrates and Kalinych. Illustration by the artist E. M. Bohm for I. S. Turgenev's story *Khor and Kalinych*. Lithography, 1883 (fragment)⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Illustration from the edition: Turgenev 2023, 13.



Ill. 2. Old Khor-Socrates sits on a bench. Illustration by the artist V. V. Knyazev for I. S. Turgenev's story *Khor and Kalinych*



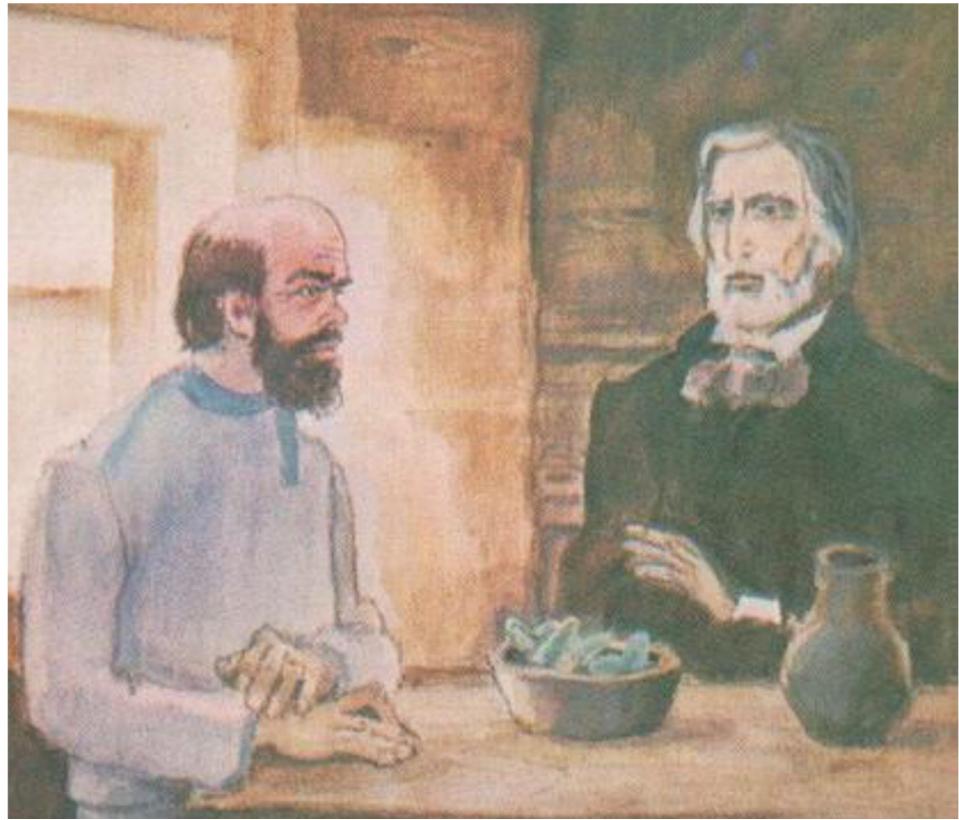
Ill. 3. Khor (left) as Socrates and Kalinych near a House. Drawing by the artist P. P. Sokolov on the front cover of the I. S. Turgenev's book *Khor and Kalinych. Bikyuk*. 1941 (fragment)⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Illustration from the edition: Turgenev 1941; in series "Schoolboy's Library" ("Библиотека школьника"), State Publishing House of Children's Literature, Narkompros RSFSR.



Ill. 4. Khor (right) as Socrates and Kalinych sit at a table. Illustration by the artist V. V. Tokarev for I. S. Turgenev's story *Khor and Kalinych* (fragment)⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Illustration from the edition: Turgenev 2019, 207, at the foot of the page, right.



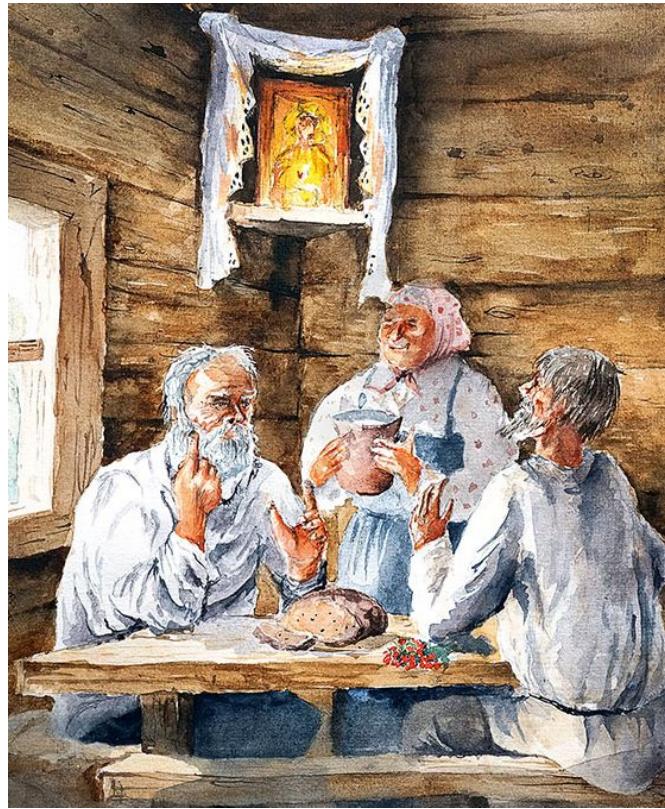
Ill. 5. Khor (left) as Socrates and the narrator as Ivan Turgenev. Illustration by the artist A. I. Belyukin for I. S. Turgenev's book *A Sportsman's Sketches*. 1984 (fragment)⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Illustration from the edition: Turgenev 1988, 11.



Ill. 6. Khor (right) as Socrates and Kalinych. Illustration by the artist I. A. Dayts for I. S. Turgenev's story *Khor and Kalinych* (fragment)⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Illustration from the edition: Turgenev 2019, 291.



Ill. 7. Khor (left) as Socrates (and also like Plato in Raphael's fresco "The School of Athens" / "La Scuola d'Atene") and Kalinych conversing at the table, and Khor's wife (*baba*) as pseudo-Xanthippe with a jug in her hands. Illustration by the artist V. V. Solodkiy for I. S. Turgenev's book *A Sportsman's Sketches* (fragment)⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Illustration from the edition: Turgenev 2025, 10.