



Cynicism, a philosophy to live by?

1. defacing the currency (an anecdotal philosophy)
2. a life according to nature
3. an embodied philosophy, a broken mirror
4. significance?

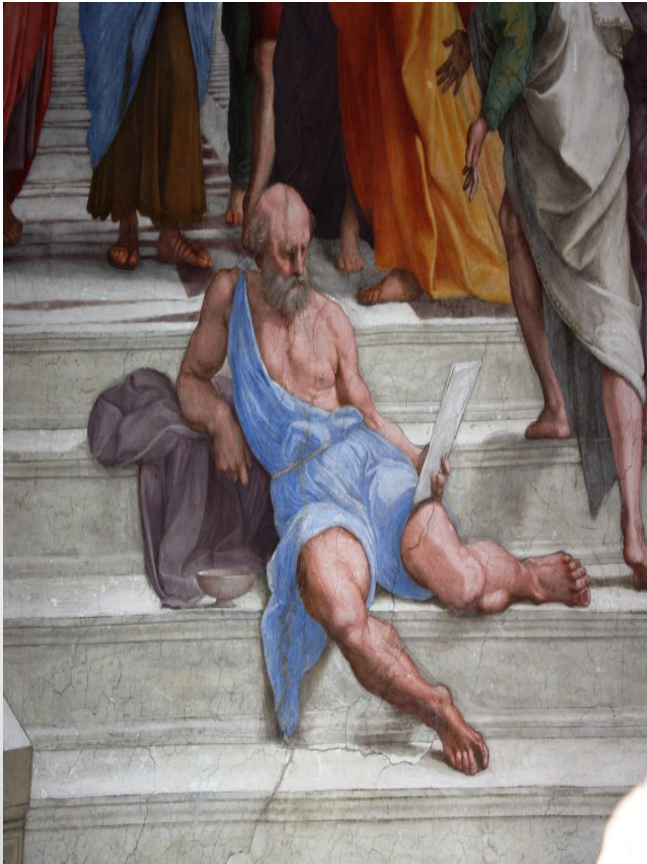
“Cynicism plays in a sense the role of broken mirror for ancient philosophy. A broken mirror in which every philosopher can and must recognize himself, in which he can and must recognize the very image of philosophy, the reflection of what it is and of what it should be; the reflection of what he is and of what he himself would like to be. And at the same time, in this mirror, he perceives a grimace, an ugly, violent, and disgraceful distortion in which he can neither recognize himself nor recognize philosophy ...” Michel Foucault

The great King



- Alexander the Great, conqueror of Greece, then all the known world East of Athens ultimately to India had heard reports of a particular philosopher who professed a strange wisdom.
- Owning little more than the clothes he wore, this man lived in the open in cities such as Athens and Corinth in a large *pithos*: wine jug: with a dog.
- At night he slept rough, or in porticoes or the entrances of temples, while during the day he wandered about, passing remarks about the people he met and the foolish things he saw them doing.
- He was an exile from his native city of Sinope on the Black Sea, but he did not care, he said. His home was the whole earth (he was a “cosmo-politan”), and he could live anywhere he liked.
- Alexander the Great came and stood by him, and said, "I am Alexander, the great king." "And I," said he, "am Diogenes the dog (*o kynos*, whence “cynicism”).“
- ... while he was sitting in the sun in the Craneum, Alexander was standing by, and said to him, "Ask any favour you choose of me." And he replied, "Cease to shade me from the sun.“
- Alexander is said to have once opined: “I would be Diogenes, if I were not Alexander”. Diogenes’ reply was supposedly that one Alexander was enough!

Cynicism, a philosophy by anecdotes



- Diogenes the founding, most famous of Cynics: "arguably the most original and influential branch of the Socratic tradition in antiquity" (Bracht Branhan & Goulet-Caze 1996: 1).
- "one of the most challenging intellectual phenomena in the history of the Western world" (Navia 1996: 1)
- Associated with names like Diogenes, Crates, Hipparchia, Onesicritus, Bion, Menippus, Meleager, Demonax, Peregrinus
- Marie-Odile Goulet-Caze. one of the foremost scholars of Cynicism. has compiled a "Comprehensive Catalogue of Known Cynic Philosophers": at least 100 are known to us.
- Diogenes was the first to be called "dog" in the fourth century BCE; the last known Cynic, Sallustius, lived in the late-fifth century CE.
- **A philosophy known not by writings (although some wrote, and some extracts remain, as we'll see), but by anecdote.**
- According to one estimate, there are over one thousand anecdotes (chreiai) that involve Diogenes, more than for any other philosopher.

“defacing the currency (*to nomisma*)”

- Diogenes and father expelled from Sinope for defacing coins.
- Diogenes goes to Delphi, asks how he can win renown: is told to “deface the currency” (*nomisma*, related to *nomos*, conventions).
- From Diogenes to the time of Julian the Apostate, last pagan Emperor of the Roman East, the Cynic was easily recognizable:



- The staff (*baktron*) for walking and travelling, for self-defence, for offence
- the common *tribon*. The word is derived from *tribein*, “to rub away”
- Double-sided: They would turn it around, rather than wash either side
- Barefooted, like Socrates, lower classes.
- the Cynic *pera* or travelling bag “wallet” in older translations) was a knapsack in which the Cynic put his few possessions.
- “The philosopher’s beard”; unkempt hair

Scorn for clothing as instruments either of vainglory or social distinction



- when Diogenes sees a man who had "done himself up", asked him to pull up his cloak to show him whether he was a man or a woman (DL 6.46).
- When he sees a young man "beautifying himself", he says that for men to do this is unfortunate, and for women unjust (6.54).
- As for clothes as markers of distinction, like "royal purple", the Cynic Demonax quipped that one could wear purple wool—
- but the sheep before wore the same wool. and remained nothing but a sheep (Luc. Demon. 41).

Dietetics: lentils, eat in or take away



- wild, uncultivated plants: figs, lupin beans, lentils, olives, lettuces, garlic, thyme, mint and other herbs, barley bread, wheat loaves.
- Crates: "A quart of lupin-beans, and you worry about nothing!" (Stob. 4.33.31)
- one of Crates' play-pieces (*paignia*) was an "Encomium of Lentil Soup".
- in the Cynics' Symposium of one Parmeniscus, Nothing but lentils, and the main interlocutor, the "dog-leader" Carneius shares his amazing erudition about the lentil ...
- Didn't abide by cooking meat: an ostentation
- Unconventionally, Diogenes ate (took "the works of Demeter") outside: "Why not eat in the agora? I was hungry there too" (6.58).
- Diogenes "saw nothing wrong in . . . eating any animal; and nothing unholy even in eating human flesh, as is obvious from the customs of other peoples" (6.73)

Open sexuality, flatulence ...



- Diogenes boasted of being willing to use any space for any natural purpose (DL 6.22), and this might include sex.
- Masturbation: he only wished hunger could be satisfied simply by rubbing the belly.
- Dio Crysostom: “That for which people have the most problems, spend the most money - for which many cities are destroyed and many nations miserably ruined - this Diogenes thought was the least labour-intensive and the least expensive. For he didn't need to go anywhere for sex, but joked that Aphrodite was present for him everywhere. and for free ...”
- Once while declaiming, Metrodes farted audibly and was so ashamed that he shut himself away from public view and thought of starving himself to death.
- Crates visited him, fed him with lupin-beans, and advanced various arguments to convince him that his action was not wrong or unnatural. **Then Crates capped his exhortation with a great fart of his own.**
- **"From that day on Metrocles started to listen to Crates' discourses and became a capable man in philosophy" (DL 6.94).**

No marriage



- Cynic should not marry
- Diogenes called the mistresses of kings "kingesses", because they "make the kings do their bidding" (DL 6.63).
- exception proving the rule is the famous "dog-marriage" (kynogamia) of Crates and Hipparchia, which bore a "pup" in Pasicles and perhaps also a daughter (DL 6.88, 93)
- A Cynic can perhaps only marry a Cynic.
- Critical anecdotes suggest that the Cynics kept easy company with prostitutes.
- And, of course, canines!

Anti-slavery: Manes and Diogenes



- Diogenes is said at one point to have had a slave. Manes. But Manes ran away
- Diogenes did not bother trying to catch him, saying: "if Manes can live without Diogenes, then Diogenes can live without Manes" (DL 6.55)."
- Some masters are "evil" (DL 6.39), and when they are gluttons, slaves are justified in stealing from them (6.28)
- Pseudo-Lucian's Cynic berates his interlocutor for treating slaves like wagons and beasts of burden, and considering this to be happiness (ps.-Luc. Cyn. 10).
- The Cynic Demonax was instrumental in Athens never having gladiatorial games: stepping forward and preaching against it as a pitiless custom (Luc. *Demon.* 57; cf. D. Chr. 3 1 . 1 22; Philostr. V A 4.22)

A war on wealth & property



- The love of money Diogenes declared to be the mother-city of all evils" (DL 6.50)
- To inoculate themselves against the destructive mania for wealth, the Cynics made it almost a rite of passage to renounce all one's possessions.
- As we saw, Diogenes tells Alexander to stand out of the sunshine, and refuses his gifts
- When sees a child drinking from his hands, Diogenes casts away his bowl as clearly unnecessary for eating and drinking.
- For the Cynics, the labours of Heracles / Hercules as part of the perennial Cynic war on wealth: Heracles wandered the world, half-naked and hungry, toppling arrogant lords such as Diomedes (rich in horses) and Geryon (rich in cattle), and gladly giving the apples of the Hesperides to the tyrant Eurystheus. (Dio Chrys. 8.29)
- Lucian's satire of Menippus in Hades, the rich are punished on many counts "including violence, ostentation, pride, injustice" (19-20): to return to live as donkeys, to bear the burdens of the poor for twenty-five myriads of years (Le. 250,000 years).

Question begging



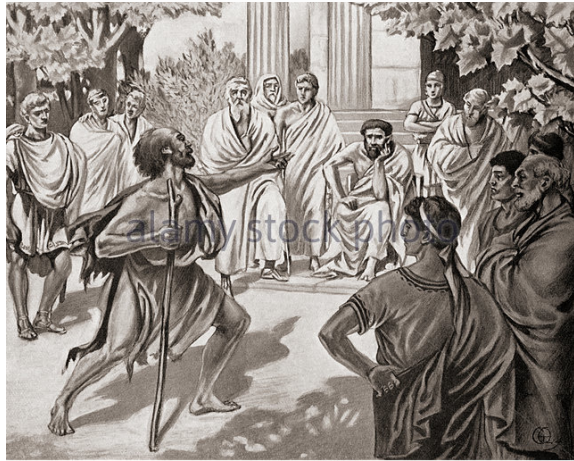
- Cynics begged (*aitein*) from strangers and friends. Or, as Diogenes preferred to put it, they only asked their due (*apaitein*)
- They took "gifts", or permanently "borrowed" items such as cloaks (e.g. DL 6.45, 6.49, 6.56, 6.62, 6.66).
- all things belong to the gods (Diogenes said), the wise are friends to the gods, but friends hold all things in common, so therefore all things belong to the wise (DL 6.37).“

Scorn for athletic heroism



- Antisthenes went to the Isthmian games to praise and criticize the Greeks, but didn't bother when he saw the size of the crowd: "one could do nothing with that mob" (DL 6.2).
- Diogenes called athletes sheep-like and wrestlers stupid (6.49, 6.61).
- Demonax mocked the effeminate clothing of one athlete, who responded by beating him on the head until he bled (Luc. Demon. 16, 39)

Scorn for political passion



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- Diogenes told Plato **not to visit the tyrants in Sicily, because he could eat olives just as well in Attica!**
- When Plato told him that he would not need to wash his own lettuces, if he sat at the feet of a tyrant, **Diogenes told him that if Plato washed his own lettuces, he would not need to flatter tyrants like Dionysius (6.25, 6.58).**
- Antisthenes scorns the Athenian pride in being autochthonous, the only people to be born from the soil on which they lived; **in this, he said, they are no more noble than snails and locusts (DL 6.1).**
- Diogenes: **exile made me a philosopher** (DL 6.49; cf. Plu. De tranq. animo 467c).
- Other Cynics also renounced their citizenship, took to the open road and became "citizens of the cosmos"; some spoke or wrote works "about exile" (e.g. Bion, Teles, Dio Chrysostom).

Scorn for war



- all Corinth was in uproar preparing for an attack by Alexander.
- So as not to be the only one doing nothing, Diogenes started rolling his pithos up and down a hill, a pointless, Sisyphean task underscoring the stupidity going on around him (Luc. Hist. conser. 3)
- Held that war is unnatural, for what other animals dress themselves in metal and line up to kill each other, with no benefit to anyone?
- Crates compares generals with mule-drivers: in Greek, the word "general", strategos, means literally "army-driver", and so Crates pictures them like Homer's "shepherds of the people", herdsmen who drive their men forwards like so many senseless brutes (DL 6.92).

Scorn for intellectual humbug



- Diogenes did not care about "music and geometry and astronomy and all those useless, unnecessary things" (6.73).
- when Zeno "proves" that motion is impossible, Diogenes "refutes" them by touching his head, or walking about (6.39)
- when Plato defined man as "a featherless biped", Diogenes rushes in with a plucked chicken shouting, "Here is Plato's human being" (6.40).
- anti-intellectual attitude was general until the end of the tradition. Thus, Julian can only deplore contemporary Cynics' ignorance of the philosophical tradition (Or. 7.22Sb; Or. 6)
- When a longwinded lecturer was winding up and pointed to the blank space at the end of the roll, Diogenes perked up and called out to the other listeners: "Courage, lads! There's land in sight" (DL 6.38).

Religious rebels



- When showed offerings at a Temple to Poseidon of all those who had travelled safely by sea (as proof of beneficence of the God) “Diogenes replied that it would be stranger if the drowned had made offerings there (DL 6.59).”
- Sacrifices do not denote piety: for even a prostitute can offer golden statues to Apollo (6.60)
- parents should pray not for the birth of a son. but for the birth of a good son (DL 6.63). Unfortunately. people tend to pray for things that seem good. but are not really so (6.42).
- Lucian's Demonax does not sacrifice to Athena because she needs nothing from him: it would be impious to offer sacrifices to the Gods. for that either implies the gods are not self-sufficient. or they can be controlled. as by magic (Lue. Demon. 1 1).

Revering the dead?



- Traditional Greek custom: the corpse to be washed, dressed, mourned and buried, often with a coin in the mouth: to pay Charon [ferryman in Hades] to be ferried across the river Styx in to the underworld.
- If the body were unburied, then the shade of the dead person would wander on this side of the Styx, miserably; Hades and Persephone would be displeased, deprived of a subject who by rights belonged in their "cold halls'.
- So customs surrounded, as still today, by great sanctions and gravitas.
- For the Cynics, once you are dead, it doesn't matter what happens to your body.
- Diogenes is said to have ordered his body to be thrown into the Ilissus River, or left unburied for animals to eat, or at most thrown into a pit with a little dust scattered over (6.79).
- Demonax laughs at Admetus the poet, first for believing the soul immortal, and then for writing bad poetry on the theme (Lue. Demon. 43, 44).
- Lucian sets several of his Cynic-inflected dramas in the underworld, like Aristophanes making it a setting for comedy.

What is the meaning of this?



- The force of a very famous anecdote now clear: **Diogenes walking through Athens in daylight looking for an honest man, or simply an *Anthropos*.**
- The ancient punks, or situationists.
- But three questions we can approach:
 - i. Is there any philosophical thinking behind the sensationalism, and if so, what?
 - ii. What idea of philosophy is operating here? —a **“broken mirror” held up to philosophy and wider society.**
 - iii. What do we make of these Cynics


Here's my thesis: Foucault's broken mirror: Cynicism is classical philosophy taken to its literal extreme



“Cynicism plays in a sense the role of broken mirror for ancient philosophy. A broken mirror in which every philosopher can and must recognize himself, in which he can and must recognize the very image of philosophy, the reflection of what it is and of what it should be; the reflection of what he is and of what he himself would like to be. And at the same time, in this mirror, he perceives a grimace, an ugly, violent, and disgraceful distortion in which he can neither recognize himself nor recognize philosophy ...”

- Core ideas of Cynicism radicalise ideas found in Socrates, Stoicism, Epicureanism: one source of Diogenes' hostility to Plato is rivalry.

Modern cynicism – inheritor ancient?



jaded,
bitter
& cynical

1. someone who has a low opinion of other human beings.
- In the cynic's perspective, people are greedy, materialistic, manipulative and hypocritical. They act only out of self-interest. If they claim otherwise, they are lying.
- Diogenes at times used “human” as a derogatory term: called corrupt polys “thrice-human”; at other times, as with the lamp, he implied that no humans were properly “human.” (so tick, so far)

But:

2. for the modern cynic there is no public good or universal standard of morality.

George Bernard Shaw: “a man who thinks everybody is as nasty as himself, and hates them for it”.

Ancient cynicism: an **optimistic** core



- At base, “by nature”, humans are as good as can be.
- There are norms for conduct which should make us happy and virtuous.
- These norms transcend culture: they are rooted in human and wider nature—the kinds of creatures that we are.
- Hence, opposition to shame about sex, flatulence: **if the desire is natural, fulfilling it is equally natural.**
- They can be rediscovered, and reactivated in individuals’ lives in each generation, anywhere there are human beings.
- For such individuals, life is lived as a festival, wherever they find themselves.

Compare these 7 principles of Demetrius the Cynic, first Century CE

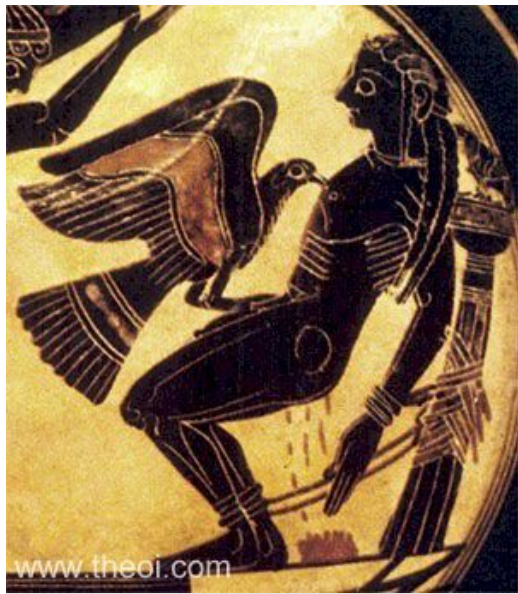


1. there is nothing [by nature] which is hard to discover except those things by which we gain nothing beyond the credit of having discovered them; **whatever things tend to make us better or happier are either obvious or easily discovered.**
2. Your mind can rise superior to the accidents of life, if:
 - i. **it does not greedily covet boundless wealth, but has learned to seek for riches within itself; if**
 - ii. **it ... has learned that it has not much to fear from man, and nothing to fear from God; if**
 - iii. **... the mind can soar to such a height as to see clearly that death cannot be the beginning of any trouble, though it is the end of many; if**
 - iv. **it can dedicate itself to justice and think any path easy which leads to it; if**
 - v. **being a gregarious creature, and born for the common good, it regards the world as the universal home, if**
 - vi. **it keeps its conscience clear towards God and lives always as though in public, fearing itself more than other men ..."**

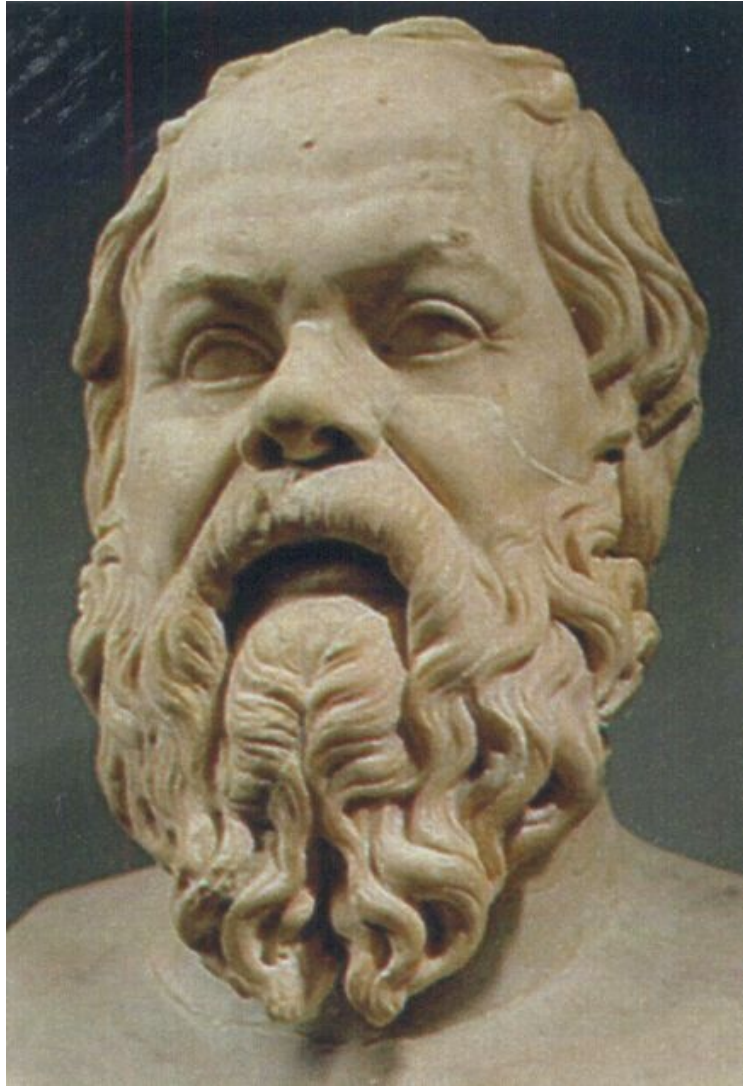
• **A compendium of Epicurean, Stoic, Socratic principles ...**

What's the problem?

A Promethean fall: *into* corrupting civilization



“[N]o creature is born in any region where it cannot live. For otherwise, how could the first human beings have survived, since then there was no fire, houses, clothing, or any other food except what grew wild? **But later generations' meddling ambition. their contriving and plotting have not helped their lives at all. For they do not use their intelligence to promote courage or justice but to procure pleasure only. But though they pursue the pleasant everywhere, they in fact live less pleasantly and with more pains; and though they think they are providing for themselves, they are in fact ruining themselves through their vast fastidiousness.** It was for this reason that Prometheus was rightly said to have been bound to the rock. with his liver torn by the eagle.” (D. Chr. 6.28-30)



That virtue (inner strength and tranquillity) is the only good

- Socrates' key claim, as in the *Euthydemus*
 1. *Goods* can be either internal to us (admirable character traits) or external (money, sex, power, fame ...)
 2. The external goods can be possessed by people who do not know how to enjoy them: many people can be ruined by them: i.e.;
 3. Even the external "goods" do not become good for us, unless we exercise wisdom and virtues (courage, temperance, justice) in possessing or enjoying them;
 4. **The only true goods, always beneficial for us—requiring nothing else, but enabling us to enjoy everything else—are wisdom and virtue.**

That the good, godlike life is maximally self-sufficient; and the sage a godlike man



- The Gods, if they exist, would be maximally happy, needing nothing, content in themselves.
- The most godlike men cultivate wisdom and virtue, and minimise their dependencies on things not within their power (Stoicism) or desires for unnecessary things (Epicureanism).
- The most godlike life will therefore be simpler, requiring less of the things others crave, kill and die for.
- The sage will not fear anything except the loss of virtue, and will not trade his integrity for bodily goods, fame, power ...: he cannot be bought.
- He will thus depend less on fortune: things he cannot control but that depend on others or chance, fate, the gods ...

The cynics' radicalisation of classical ascetic ethics

- Like comedic satire: one characteristic or more of a person is exaggerated out of all proportion.
 - Cynics take core of Stoic and Epicurean opinions and “take them at their word”:
1. **Custom is scorned, not accommodated, since it is merely conventional fiction;**
 2. **Riches are eschewed, since true riches are internal (Stoic)**
 3. **Food is simple, clothes sparing, for everything we need nature has given us readily; everything difficult to achieve is unnatural (Epicurean idea)**
 4. **Athletes should not be admired, since they train the body: philosophers train the soul (Stoic, Epicurean).**
 5. **The wise man should not own slaves, as we should not marry, since they make us more, not less dependant on others;**
 6. **Kings should not be admired (think Alexander), since they rule over conventions, not nature.**
 7. **Religious conventions should not be followed, since true Gods do not require our prayers, or our gifts (sacrifices), since they can need nothing.**
 8. **in death, either the soul leaves the body (Stoic, Platonic) or dissolves with it (Epicurean), hence it doesn't matter how the body is treated.**

So, radicalisation of philosophical “internalisation” of archaic ideals

- At the same time, as the other schools had done, the Cynics take further the idea that philosophy, as the path to wisdom and virtue, is alone truly worthy of admiration older Greeks afforded to heroes, athletes, Kings and gods.
- **The sage is the true King, since he constantly has everything he needs (readily answering his desires) in order to be happy; Diogenes is said to have died on the same day as Alexander; and the other reply was “if I was not Diogenes, I would wish to be Diogenes!”**
- **The sage is the true God, since he is the most self-sufficient of beings;**
- **The sage trains the soul, as the athlete the body, so he should be given the Olympic crown: Diogenes is said to have crowned himself at various times with pine leaves.**
- **The sage alone is the true hero, since he conquers desire and convention—which make people unhappy—as against merely external monsters that most people never encounter.**

3. The philosophy just *is* the life

- For Stoicism and Epicureanism, philosophy to be authentic must be lived: **to speak and think the truth, one must live a certain way, or at least attempt / desire / love (*philia*) to live wisely.**
- Cynicism here as elsewhere takes things farthest: Foucault again:

“It seems to me that in Cynicism, in Cynic practice, the imperative of a particular form of life, ... with clearly articulated rules and conditions is strongly tied to the principle of truth-telling, of truth-telling without shame and without fear, of an unlimited and courageous truth-telling. . . . [There is] a fundamental link, essential to Cynicism, between *living in a certain manner and devoting oneself to speaking the truth ...*”

A living proof, an embodied philosophy (O'Shea, *Cynic Enlightenment*)

“speaking the truth, the Cynic risks his own by embodying it. **His life becomes, in Foucault's words... the very form of truth.** In other words, the manner in which he shapes his existence (his ascetic practices, his rigorous exercises in independence and physical endurance) constitutes an integral part of his quest for, and articulation of, truth. **Truth literally takes shape in the Cynic's body; it does not exist as an abstract category, but only as a lived praxis, what Foucault will call “true life.”**”

“he must not only give a proof to the vulgar, by the constancy of his mind, that it is possible to be a man of weight and merit without those things that strike them with admiration; but he must show, too, **by his body, that a simple and frugal diet, under the open air, does no injury to the constitution.** **“See, I and my body bear witness to this.”** As Diogenes did; for he went about in hale condition, and gained the attention of the many by his mere physical aspect.” (Epictetus, *Disc.* III 22)

Anaideia: Heracleean task indeed



- Heracles' labours were often denoted his *ponoi*, and Plat's Socrates is one of the first philosophers to liken his own philosophical "work" to Heracles' (Pl. Ap. 22a6- 8).
- Many of the anecdotes involve Cynics' ascetic "labours" (*ponoi*) to break yoke of convention and reduce dependency on external things.
- These *ponoi* involve physical pain:
 - rolling in the hot sand,
 - embracing freezing statues in winter,
 - walking barefoot on snow
 - enduring hard beds and little food.
- exercises in disappointment and psychological pain: Diogenes is said to have begged money from statues, **so as to get used to rejection**
- many Cynics-in-training shaved half their heads (DL 6.33), and carried tuna fish, pots of tentils and other embarrassing objects across a crowded space **so as to get used to the whistles and jeering ...**

3 functions of these Cynical ascetic exercises

- First, the Cynic's commitment to poverty constitutes the condition of possibility of his access to truth. **It is because he has given up all social duties and expectations that the Cynic can devote himself fully to the pursuit of truth (hence, no wife, kids, etc).**
- Second, the Cynic's reduction of life to the simplest of principles (those founded in nature and in reason) and his defiant disregard for **social norms function as a critique of conventions**. His life reveals the superfluity of most obligations and duties.
- Third, then, the Cynic's reduction of life to its basic needs becomes a test of what is truly essential to life: **"this way of life makes life appear as it simply is, and hence as it should be, in its independence and fundamental liberty"**. (cf. Foucault)

A hedonistic, ascetic critique of luxurious living

- There will always be pain, and so rather than escape it, or try to control uncontrollable fortune, one should grasp the serpent by the neck (Stob. 3.1.98),
- we should welcome pains as inevitable, love them, or at least accept them as *ponoi*, preparing one for the pleasures of the satisfaction that will come.
- *Ponos*, as both "pain" and "labour"; becomes the Cynics' means for maximizing his pleasure.
- ***Hedonistic critique of life of luxury:*** the person shielded from *ponos* will end up unable to endure any pain, and not able to feel any pleasure, not even the most intense ... (3.83-5)
- This is why the Cynics are so often laughing, content, living life as if it were a festival to be always enjoyed.

And a missionary, political, militant dimension

- most ancient philosophical sects, including Socrates, sought only to teach select people who approached them, or whom they specifically sought out, the path to a good life: Cynicism reached out to all.
- The Epicureans withdrew from the city; the Cynics remain in order to target its irrational conventions.
- Socrates endured poverty with equanimity; the Cynic *seeks it out* in order to show what is possible.
- the Cynic targets social convention as well as individual desires shaped by them: whether the other schools make socio-political accommodations.
- Diogenes moves beyond irony of Socrates; and the humorous one-liners attributed to him.
- He harangues, he seeks out strangers, he risks retaliation in his “truth-speaking”, he actively violates conventions.

“the Cynic is, in a sense, a benefactor, but a benefactor who is essentially, fundamentally, constantly aggressive. An aggressive benefactor, whose principal instrument is, of course, the famous diatribe. . . . You see, then, that the Cynic serves [mankind] not simply by the example of his life or the advice he might give. He is useful because he *fights*, he is useful because he *bites*, he is useful because he *attacks*.”
Foucault

4. Significances?

- Not for the faint-hearted: Epictetus *Discourses* II 22 dissuades young man who “wants to become a Cynic”:

“Let us examine it, he said, at our leisure. But thus much I can tell you now, that he who attempts so great an affair without divine guidance is an object of divine wrath, and would only bring public dishonour upon himself.”

- A total unremitting commitment

Yet, echoes down through history ...

- Heroes to early modern philosophers
- Heroes to enlightenment philosophers, for their commitment to truth-telling, their independence of mind, their defiance of convention, their faith in a common cosmopolitan humanity, their humour and living satire of the foibles and stupidities of men.
- More important than ever in what can be called the age of “corporate correctness”: where concern about how we appear, or how our “brand” appears on social media is leading to a progressive shutting down of public debate.
- Cynics never had positions, or wanted to work, so it would not have worried them, but if—as a regular intellectual property clause at today’s Universities puts, we should refrain from any comments “**that are or could be perceived to be obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful**”, then we see clearly distant this is from cynical “parrhesia”/truth-telling.
- Kings had fools to speak truths to them no one else could; and it is good the Cynics are there, within a generation of Socrates, the fools in the philosophical canon.

A divine mission to show what is possible...

... he is a messenger sent from Zeus to men, concerning good and evil; to show them that they are mistaken, and seek the essence of good and evil where it is not, but do not observe it where it is...

For, in effect, a Cynic is a spy to discover what things are friendly, what hostile, to man; and he must, after making an accurate observation, come and tell them the truth ...