CYNICS

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WHAT WAS A CYNIC?

We know what a cynic is. A cynic is quick to find fault, and especially to impute selfish motives. Or as a cynic would say, a cynic "sees things as they are, not as they ought to be" (Bierce [1906] 2000: 47). But that does not answer my question. The word 'cynic'—like 'epicure', 'stoic', and 'skeptic'—comes from an ancient Greek label for a certain sort of philosopher. What kind of a philosopher was the capital-C Cynic?

The answer to this question lurks in a spotty historical record. We do not possess the writings of any early Cynics, and the later writings by or about Cynics are clouded by motives other than historical truth. As a result, it is not entirely clear who the Cynics were, including even who the first Cynic was, and it is not entirely clear what the content of Cynic philosophy was, including even whether Cynicism was a philosophy. So we have work to do to identify the Cynic. It will take five steps, starting with an overview of the historical record.

THE EVIDENCE

Several ancient texts portray a Cynic or Cynicism at some length. These fuller sources give us a toehold. Since they identify figures and themes as Cynic, we can then expand our search and find these same figures and themes in a range of other, sometimes glancing, references. Unfortunately, the fuller sources do not provide undistorted and direct portraits of Cynics or Cynicism. They postdate the fourth-century BCE origins of Cynicism by centuries, and their authors, not one of them unambiguously a Cynic, manifest a variety of motives.

The fullest source is Diogenes Laërtius' Lives of Eminent Philosophers, probably from the third century CE. Book Six presents swarms of anecdotes about individual Cynics, including especially Diogenes of Sinope (DL 6.1-102), and it gives only a few lines directly to Cynic doctrines (DL 6.103-105; cf. 6.70-73). Those lines about Cynic doctrines also raise questions. Diogenes Laërtius presents the Cynics as heirs of Socrates, through his pupil Antisthenes, and as teachers of Stoics, and the more doctrinal passages in Book Six (esp. 103-105) overlap considerably with Stoic doctrine reported in Book Seven. This raises questions about the extent to which Diogenes has "Stoicized" the Cynics (Fritz 1926, Mansfeld 1986).

Stoicism also potentially infects the Cynicism presented by two students of the Stoic Musonius Rufus (1st-2nd centuries CE). Dio Cocceianus, also called Dio Chrysostom, wrote several orations (4, 6, 8-10) that describe the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope as an ideal philosopher and model for kingship, and two discourses (3.22 and 4.8) of the Stoic Epictetus contrast those who pretend to be Cynics by wearing a uniform characteristic of Cynics and those who really are Cynics, who closely resemble Stoics.

Other portraits of the Cynic make him look like not the Stoic merely but like the paradigmatic philosopher more generally. Maximus of Tyre (2nd c. CE) presents Diogenes the Cynic as the one person in a corrupt age whose life resembles those of the Golden Age (Or. 36). And in two orations (6 and 7) that contrast the true Cynic with mere posers, the emperor Julian "the Apostate," (331-363 CE) says that the true Cynic manifests the one set of pious commitments that all genuine philosophers share.

Two other extended sources do not show as much Stoicism or idealization, but their authors are unknown. One is the satirical drama The Cynic, which has been transmitted together with the works of second-century (CE) comedic author Lucian of Samosata. Most scholars think that Lucian did not write The Cynic, but whoever the author was, "Pseudo-Lucian" offers a rich portrait and, unusually, some arguments for Cynic commitments.

Even more intriguing is a set of letters that purport to have been written by the Cynics Diogenes of Sinope and Crates. These accompany other letters that also sound Cynic themes though they purport to have been written by famous non-Cynics, including Anacharsis, Socrates, and some of Socrates' followers. All these letters, it is universally agreed, are unlikely to have been written by their purported authors. Each purported author’s set of letters shows a diversity of styles, and strong connections between the letters in distinct sets suggest common authorship of letters attributed to distinct authors. Based on the style of the letters, scholars speculate that some might have been written in the third century BCE, others as late as the second century CE, but it would be a mistake to give much credence to these speculations, especially about the earlier dates, since later

authors can imitate earlier styles. Still, although the actual authors of the letters are unknown, we might presume that they were written to spread Cynic advice, and so written by people sympathetic to Cynicism. So we might take the letters by "Pseudo-Diogenes" and "Pseudo-Crates" to record some ancient thoughts about the Cynic's commitments.

Despite the difficulties of these sources, some consistent names, stories, and themes do emerge for a reckoning of Cynicism. Then, if we seek for these names and stories, we can find much more evidence, including Plutarch (including his Life of Alexander), Stobaeus, and other anthologies. If we broaden a bit more and look for Cynic characters and tropes, we can find them in a wide range of literature, from the edifying to the comedic. Lucian, for instance, regularly plays Cynics for laughs.

Once we have a mass of evidence, we then face the difficult task of determining which is reliable and which not. This is a frustrating task, as many of the anecdotes, quotations, and paraphrases represent a Cynic as a paradigmatic philosopher or as something very close to a Stoic. Indeed, some of the anecdotes are told, almost verbatim, about other philosophers, too. We can be especially skeptical about Epictetus, Julian, and the parts of Diogenes Laërtius that report near-Stoic Cynic doctrine. But this may not be skepticism enough, for even our sources that are not obviously trying to Stoicize or idealize Cynicism might borrow from other reports that did. On the other hand, we run the risk of being too skeptical. After all, it should not be surprising if the Cynics had some paradigmatically philosophical commitments or if they did in fact resemble Stoics in certain ways.

WHO WERE THE CYNICS?

The evidence for Cynicism does not tell of any formal school, such as Plato's Academy or Epicurus' Garden. But it does reveal a host of figures, some historical and some fictional but all of them linked somehow as Cynics.

The central link, according to all the evidence, was Diogenes of Sinope (roughly 405-322 BCE). His life is shrouded in overlapping legends, but we can choose to embrace the legends as the portrait of the prototypical Cynic (see esp. DL 6.20-69 and 73-79). The legendary Diogenes was exiled with his father from Sinope for adulterating the currency, and he spent the rest of his life as a wanderer who embraced physical hardship and poverty, seeking shelter in a tub, wearing a a simple cloak folded double, and carrying a staff and a small wallet. He gained fame for his wit, which could be scathing and crude, and for his shamelessness, his willingness to urinate, expectorate, and masturbate without regard to the usual proprieties. He also showed bold independence, standing up to Alexander the Great and living his life as a man without a city. But Diogenes was not merely a strange character; he also wrote several philosophical works and tragedies (DL 6.80). Unfortunately, none of these survive, though the Epicurean Philodemus discusses Diogenes' Republic in his On the Stoics.

Given his centrality to all the accounts, it is natural to suppose that Diogenes was the first Cynic, the one who first attracted or claimed the label of "Dog-like" for his shameless ways (cf. DL 6.61). But some ancients disputed this (DL 6.13), and Diogenes

Laërtius actually gives the honor to Antisthenes of Athens, an associate of Socrates (DL 1.19, 6.2). In recent decades, Antisthenes' claim has been widely doubted. While there is no reason to doubt that Antisthenes anticipated elements of Cynicism and indirectly influenced Diogenes, there are reasons to doubt that Antisthenes was called a Cynic and that he directly taught Diogenes. Moreover, the evidence for these claims is weak and well explained by their authors' desire to craft a connection between Socrates and the Stoics, through Antisthenes and Diogenes (Dudley 1937: 1-16 and Giannantoni 1990: 4:223-233; but see also Goulet-Cazé 1996, Döring 1995, and McKirahan 1994).

Other Cynics appeared in the century after Diogenes. Some were more or less directly his followers. The most famous, Crates of Thebes, is remarkable as one half of a philosophical marriage. He allegedly presented himself to Hipparchia by dropping his cloak and announcing, "This is your bridegroom, this his possessions; choose accordingly" (DL 6.96). Crates is also credited with converting Hipparchia's brother Metrocles of Maroneia to Cynicism by some well-timed flatulence (DL 6.94). In addition, several literary lights of the third century BCE also show the influence of Cynicism and especially Cynic wit. The court philosopher Bion of Borysthenes's Cynic-influenced work inspired the tradition of diatribes and satire; the Cynic Menippus of Gadara wrote satires in a combination of prose and verse; and Cercidas of Megalopolis metrically and lexically innovative poetry displayed Cynic themes.

There was another flowering of Cynics in the first and second century CE, a period (sometimes called the "Second Sophistic") of revived interest in rhetoric and especially declamations. Dio Cocceianus, Epictetus, and Maximus of Tyre, among others,

identified with a Cynicism of strong independence, and portrayed Diogenes the Cynic as the model of self-sufficient, kingly existence.

All of these people seem to be defined as Cynics or as close to Cynicism by some relation to Diogenes of Sinope. By the time of the Roman empire, that relation is merely resemblance, as Epictetus and Julian contrast those who merely seem to be like Diogenes with those who are really like Diogenes. But Epictetus and Julian suggest that being really like Diogenes requires being really like a Stoic or really like being every other true philosopher. If Cynicism is a distinctive philosophy and Diogenes is the paradigmatic Cynic, what does it take to be really like Diogenes?

THE CYNIC'S WAY OF LIFE

The evidence gives us very little in the way of philosophical theorizing or argument that might constitute the core of Cynicism. The evidence is instead dominated by anecdotes and apothegms. This suggests that one becomes like Diogenes not so much by grasping some theses and reasons as by behaving like Diogenes. There is no school with texts to study or special intellectual skills to master. There is practical training to take up, and advice to follow.

It is tempting, then, to say that Cynicism is not a philosophy, but merely a way of life (DL 6.103). This is not quite right, however. First, <u>any</u> way of life manifests commitments fit for examination, and any consciously adopted approach to living is, in at least one sense, a philosophy, because it represents a take on how at least practical

matters fit together. Additionally, some philosophies in this sense are worth examining because some people have developed their way of life with care and intelligence. There should be no doubting Diogenes the Cynic's care and intelligence. He plainly gave much thought about how to live, and his Cynicism earns recognition as a philosophy (e.g., DL 6.58, 64, 65). Thus, more than superficial imitation of Diogenes requires grappling with the commitments central to his Cynic way of life.

This sets the interpretive task. We can examine the anecdotes to find the commitments they reveal, and then we can consider how these commitments relate to each other, to reconstruct the careful thought that Diogenes might have used but that the historical record does not much preserve.

As it turns out, the various commitments manifested by the anecdotes can all be linked to three central theses. First, success in life depends on the virtue or excellence of one's soul; second, this success is a special achievement, requiring hard work; and third, virtue and success require a deprecation of mainstream values, such as wealth, fame, and ordinary political power. The Cynic shares the first two commitments with Socrates and all the other philosophers in Socrates' wake. The third is shared by most Socratics, but not all; just think of Aristotle.

So understood, the central commitments of Cynicism are widely shared among Greek philosophers. Still, the anecdotes portray the Cynic as a distinctive kind of philosopher. Cynicism's distinctiveness can be understood as a series of wrinkles on its three central commitments. First, it adopts an especially austere conception of virtue or excellence of the soul for a distinctive view of success; second, it encourages an

especially ascetic and unintellectual training program; and third, it manifests an especially extreme opposition to conventional values.

First, then, the Cynic seeks virtue characterized by endurance (karteria, karterikon) and self-mastery (enkrateia) (Ps-Crates, Ep. 15). Frequently, Cynic self-mastery is so complete as to be characterized as the absence of passions (apatheia) (Ps-Diog. Ep. 5, 12, 21, 29, 47, 50; Dio Chr. 9.12; Epict. 3.22.13; Julian, Or. 6.192a). While these characterizations might be conflating the Cynics with the Stoics, it is not hard to think that Diogenes genuinely favored freedom from passions, since Cynics are so often represented loudly deprecating erotic love, fear of death, and pleasure. Socrates, too, can be associated with endurance and self-mastery (esp. Xen. Mem. 4.5 with Dorion 2003) or even "apathy" (DL 6.2). But the stories make the Cynics relentless in their attack on passions and especially pleasure.

The difference between Socrates and Diogenes on this score is not entirely of degree, either, since the anecdotes fill out the austerity of Cynic virtue by the way in which they characterize why and how one should pursue virtue.

Some texts characterize the ultimate Cynic goal as general success or happiness (eudaimonia) (Ps-Crates, Ep. 6, 13, 31; Ps-Diog., Ep. 34.3, 37.4, 37.6; Julian, Or. 6.193d, 194e), but freedom (eleutheria) and independence (autarkeia) are the more characteristically Cynic payoffs of virtue (DL 6.71; Max. Tyr. 36.5-6; Julian, Or. 6.195c-197a). Both freedom and independence can be characterized as freedom from need, and perhaps the most secure way of freeing oneself from need is to reduce one's needs to a bare minimum (Ps-Crates, Ep. 7; Ps-Lucian, Cynicus 12). For the Cynic, then,

philosophy prepares for every happenstance (DL 6.63) and has few needs (Ps-Diog., Ep. 48), and by living this philosophy, the Cynic is maximally free. Indeed, Dio Cocceianus says that only Diogenes the Cynic is free (Dio Chr. 6.34).

To earn austere virtue and the freedom and independence it brings, the Cynic commits to hard training (askēsis) (DL 6.70; Ps-Crates, Ep. 12), not just of the mind but also of the body (DL 6.70; Ps-Crates, Ep. 20; Ps-Diog., Ep. 15). Indeed, as noted above and as we will consider again below, the Cynic goes without school-based intellectual training. But Cynics insist that the mind must grow used to harsh conditions to be free from soft desires and fear. Only by labor (ponos) that avoids ordinary pleasures can the Cynic experience stable, free pleasure and freedom from experiencing labor (DL 6.71; Ps-Diog., Ep. 37.6; Ps-Crates, Ep. 9; cf. Dio Chr. 8.11-16, 9.11-12). To avoid pleasure and embrace hard work and training, the Cynics welcome poverty. That is why the Cynic is associated so strongly with the "uniform" of a double-cloak and a few possessions easily carried (the staff, the wallet) (e.g., DL 6.22-23, Ps-Lucian, Cynicus), and with the simple shelter of a tub. It is why Crates is supposed to have said to Hipparchia that he owned only his body. According to another common anecdote repeated in slightly different ways, when he saw a child drinking from his hands, Diogenes discarded his cup, to simplify his life still further (DL VI 37; Ps-Diog., Ep. 6, 13). Indeed, the Cynic commitment to simple poverty goes so far as to embrace begging for sustenance (Ps-Diog., Ep. 10, 11, 33.2-3, 34; Ps-Crates, Ep. 22, 36).

In antiquity, the Cynic's training regimen, to cultivate austere virtue and to achieve freedom and independence, was called the "short road" to philosophy and

success, contrasted with the longer road that involves more intellectual training (DL 6.104). The distinction was probably first drawn to differentiate the Cynic's training from the Stoic's. But Cynics appear to have embraced it, since several of the Cynic letters call for following the shorter road (Ps-Crates, Ep. 6, 13, 21; Ps-Diog., Ep. 30, 37.4). Indeed, these same letters insist that the short road is steep and rugged, even more difficult to travel than the longer road.

The third way in which Cynics distill Socratic virtue in their own particular way is by strengthening the Socratic opposition to ordinary values. Obviously, the Cynic's pursuit of austere virtue and freedom requires a rejection of wealth and fame and conventional political power. But the Cynic understands this by the Sophists' distinction between nature and convention. The ordinary values Cynics reject are supposed to be merely conventional, and the simple, difficult life they embrace is supposed to be natural (DL 6.38, 71; Ps-Diog., Ep. 6, 10, 25). But when this way of distinguishing between the ordinary life to be rejected and the virtuous, successful life to be cultivated joins some awareness of cultural variation, it encourages some sweeping rejections of local cultural practices. Some Cynics adopted "adulterating the currency" as a slogan to capture the their widespread opposition to conventional values and practices (e.g., Julian, Or. 6.188a), and according to many of our sources, but not all—Epictetus and Julian are the most conspicuous exceptions—the Cynics take this to shameless extremes.

Consider food and sex, which can prompt considerable shame in most people. It is conventionally shameful to eat in certain places, including, for the Greeks, the agora, but Diogenes ate in the agora (DL 6.58, 61). It is conventionally shameful to eat certain

foods, such as human flesh, but Diogenes found sanction to do this in cultural variation (DL 6.73). Similarly, it is conventionally shameful to masturbate publicly, but Diogenes reportedly did so (DL 6.46, 69; Ps-Diog., Ep. 35.2-3; Dio Chr. 6.17-20) and even justified himself by saying, "Would that I could also relieve my hunger by rubbing my belly" (DL 6.46).

This "antinomianism" is arguably the most distinctive wrinkle in Cynicism, as it entirely transforms their conception of virtue. After all, virtue, and especially social virtue, is ordinarily associated with a range of behaviors that are articulated in culturally specific terms and that favor contingent connections. The Cynics reject these behaviors as merely conventionally valuable, and so reject a range of duties conventionally associated with virtue. Diogenes, for instance, rejects the citizen's duties to his city by embracing his life as a man without a city (DL 6.38) and by characterizing himself as a "citizen of the world" (DL 6.63). The Cynics also generally oppose the common duty to marry and produce children (DL 6.29, 54; Epictetus 3.22.69-76; Ps-Diog., Ep. 47; Max. Tyr. 36.5; with Schofield 1991: 119-127). (Diogenes apparently endorsed communal marriage and families in his Republic (DL 6.72), but this is presumably limited to the ideal city of the wise, perhaps because there would be no need for Cynicizing rejection of marriage there (Epictetus 3.22.67-68).) Cynics even reject expressions of gratitude toward parents (Ps-Diog., Ep. 21). Indeed, Crates says that from philosophy he got "a day's supply of lupins and to care for no one" (DL 6.86).

Nor should one suppose that the Cynic's apostasy from common sense is limited to the "positive duties" of helping others. The Cynic is ready to rethink the wrongness of

theft, including theft from temples (DL 6.73), and ready to spit in another's face (DL 6.32), urinate on others (DL 6.46), or strike someone just to make a point (Ps-Diog. Ep. 38.2).

The antinomianism of Cynic virtue seems to reinforce freedom and independence, by freeing the Cynic from relations of interdependence with others and from the community's strictures. So Crates compared his wallet to a city: everything a political community would provide he carries around with him, all by himself (DL 6.85). And so Lucian has Diogenes insist that one should not welcome either friend or stranger (Vit. auct. 9.22). It might seem that the Cynic enjoys a solitary existence (Desmond 2008: 177).

But other evidence suggests that the Cynics do not entirely reject connections with other human beings. First, they advise others to consider the influence of their associates (Ps-Diog., Ep. 29) and to learn from the wise (Ps-Crates, Ep. 31; Ps-Diog., Ep. 6). This shows the importance of others to one's development as a Cynic, but it also shows that those who have already developed as Cynics still attend to others, by advising them. Epictetus' Cynics are especially committed teachers (esp. 3.22.17-18, with 3.22.24-25; cf. Dio Chr. 9.2, 101), and of course the Cynicism that produced or at least inspired the Epistles includes strong commitments to help others. But the anecdotes concerning Diogenes are perfectly consistent with this, for Diogenes's scornful wit and theatrical behavior might be seen as an attempt to redirect others' attention from ordinary values to some careful thought about what excellence and success require (cf. DL 6.35).

Second, successfully teaching another makes him or her into a Cynic, which makes possible the friendship of two like-minded people (cf. Epictetus 3.22.63). Friendship is a thicker social relation that Diogenes seems to have embraced (DL 6.29, 68). Indeed, a syllogism about friends is attributed to him:

> All things belong to the gods. The wise are friends of the gods, and friends hold things in common. Therefore all things belong to the wise. (DL 6.37, 72; Ps-Crates, Ep. 26, 27; Ps-Diog., Ep. 10)

One Cynic Epistle (Ps-Diog., Ep. 10) appeals to this syllogism to justify begging, and others say that one should not beg from just anyone (Ps-Crates, Ep. 22, 36; Ps-Diog., Ep. 38.3) but only from fellow Cynics and friends (Ps-Crates, Ep. 2; cf. DL 6.46). It is not clear how seriously one can take this evidence: surely begging from fellow beggars is bad strategy. But perhaps Cynics do recognize a special relationship with each other, and see some special connection to those whom they can ask for support.

The Cynic concern to teach others and, perhaps, to form special friendships might be connected to Diogenes's famous "cosmopolitanism." Perhaps Diogenes sees himself as a citizen of the world not merely in the negative sense that he is not a citizen bound to any particular city but also in the positive sense that he is connected to all human beings (Epictetus 3.24.64) and recognizes the proper community as something universal (DL 6.72) (Moles 1995, 1996, 2000). But it is also possible that Epictetus and DL 6.72 Stoicize Diogenes (Goulet-Cazé 1982; Schofield 1991: 141-145), so that his cosmopolitanism is merely negative. What it is clear from the Cynics' concern to teach

and to form friendships, however, is that the antinomianism of Cynic virtue and the Cynic pursuit of freedom and independence have their limits.

THINKING CYNICISM THROUGH

The Cynic's way of life manifests a set of commitments that fit together and so embodies one sense of philosophy. But Diogenes and the Cynics reject the longer road of intellectual training, and this raises questions about how far Diogenes and the Cynics think their philosophy through. Why did the Cynics adopt their particular understanding of training, virtue, and success rather than other Socratic possibilities? How did they support their conception of virtue and success? And how far did they think through their commitments in the other direction, from general commitments to particular proposals and actions? Did they have an account of nature and convention to help guide them?

The Cynics seem not to have supported their ethics by appealing to logic. Epictetus argues that the Stoics rightly put logic first (1.17): even if it bears no fruit, it has the power to discriminate and examine other things (1.17.10). He cites not only the Stoics Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus but also Socrates and Antisthenes (1.17.11-12). But not Diogenes. To judge from the anecdotes, dialectic is not Diogenes's favored mode of examining others, and he showed little patience for logical puzzles such as the reasoning that might suggest that motion is impossible. Diogenes refuted such arguments as Johnson refuted Berkeley, with simple behavior that defied the arguments (DL

6.38-39). Even the syllogisms that do appear in Diogenes Laërtius's account of Diogenes sound as though they might have been originally put to mocking use (DL 6.72). The evidence wholly supports Diogenes Laërtius's conclusion that the Cynics, like Ariston of Chios, ignore logic (and physics) (DL 6.103).

This is not to say that Cynics pay no attention to engaging other possible views and supporting their own. Their special antipathy to pleasure and luxury might be seen as an attack on other Socratics, especially the Cyrenaics, and their insistence that luxurious pleasures leave us less free and more vulnerable to fortune might suggest arguments to the effect that the hedonist's values are unstable. Pseudo-Lucian's Cynicus even develops a few such arguments. So it is possible that Diogenes saw his way of life as the most consistent embodiment of a basic Socratic approach, just as Socrates, especially in Plato's Gorgias, justifies his way of life in terms of the most consistent answers to life's most important questions.

Still, whereas Socrates offers step-by-step arguments to lay bare the contradictions in his opponents' views, Diogenes scorns, jokes, and gestures. Perhaps his opposition to discursive argument and his embrace of alternative means of persuasion are grounded in a deeper suspicion of our words and arguments. Aristotle associates Antisthenes with the thoughts that "it is impossible to contradict" and "it is impossible to define the essence" (Metaph. 1024b32-34 and 1043b23-28). Antisthenes appears to have reasoned that although there is a name for each concept and a reference for each name, it is not possible to identify a concept except by its name—which rules out definition—and it is not possible to invoke a name without successfully referring—which rules out

contradiction. Perhaps Diogenes inherited his opposition to dialectic and logic from Antisthenes, directly or indirectly (Prince 2006).

The Cynics spurn physics just as surely as they do logic, this time in agreement with Socrates (Xen., Mem. 1.1.11-15). So they do not have a systematic account of the natural world to which to turn to make sense of what is natural as opposed to conventional. But they are not entirely without resources. Occasionally, there is the suggestion that living naturally requires living more like an animal (Dio Chr., Or. 6), but this would seem unhelpful, since there are many different kinds of animals living in many different kinds of ways. Pseudo-Lucian's Cynicus makes a better suggestion. Its Cynic argues that his uniform must be in accordance with nature because if it were not, then his body would be in bad condition and thus unable to perform its functions, such as walking (4). This associates the natural with some functions, and identifies behaviors as in accordance with nature by supporting, or at least not undermining, the natural functions. So understood, the Cynic engages in a simple investigation of how the human body works and how other behaviors and things interact with what the body does (cf. Ps-Diog., Ep. 42). So, for instance, Diogenes tests whether it natural to eat meat by seeing how his body reacts to eating minimally prepared meat (Julian, Or. 6.191c-d).

This will not seem to get the Cynic very far in assessing the nature of, say, human social life, and we have seen that there are special difficulties in determining how far entangled in social relationships the Cynics want to be. But Diogenes might offer the whole of his existence as an experiment of sorts. Perhaps would-be Cynics are supposed to consider how strongly and independently Diogenes functions, to consider how weakly

and dependently other human beings function, and to choose accordingly. Even if Diogenes does embrace some social relationships, he surely embraces them on terms that are supposed to enhance and not undermine his strong, clear functioning.

If this is how the Cynics thought through their Cynicism—with some attention to consistent commitments and some to robust physiological functioning—then we can understand why there was an ancient controversy about whether Cynicism is really a philosophy (DL 6.103). A philosopher is a lover of wisdom. There is a sense of wisdom that is manifest in one who lives well and not by luck. The philosophy embodied in a carefully chosen way of life is the pursuit of this wisdom. But there is another sense of wisdom that requires apprehending truths and attaining knowledge. The Cynic way of life shows little enthusiasm for pursuing wisdom of this second sort.

THE EXTENDED APPEAL OF CYNICISM

But if Cynicism is a way of life embodying austere virtue in pursuit of freedom and independence, with the confidence to flout conventional norms so as to be true to one's nature, it was around before Diogenes of Sinope. This is what makes it easy to identify Socrates and Antisthenes as precursors of Cynicism. What Diogenes did was to concentrate some existing ideals (of hardiness and freedom), to set them in high relief against other, competing ideals (luxury and social respect), and to give his way of life particularly memorable voice.

Of course, Cynicism as a way of life has also persisted in people who do not identify themselves as Cynics. Almost immediately, there were those who adopted the Cynic way of life, but replaced the short, rough road of Cynicism with the longer, intellectual road of training in logic and physics. These Stoics secured the lasting influence of Cynicism.

But Socrates, Antisthenes, and Stoicism do not fully capture Cynicism's double appeal. First, the Cynics offer an ideal of a rough, ascetic hero. They transform Socratic virtue from an intellectual ideal to something that suits Heracles (Ps-Diog., Ep. 26; Epictetus, 3.22.57). Julian reports that some people even say that Heracles invented the Cynic way of life (Or. 6.187c), and Dio Cocceianus complains that people ignore Diogenes as they ignore Heracles (8.26-27). Wherever there are lives of hard poverty or warriors, this ideal will find traction.

The Cynics also offer wit and theatricality. It seems unsurprising that the Cynic tradition spawned literary innovation, and especially that combined moral teaching with humorous scorn. There is some of this in Old Comedy, and some of it in Plato's Socrates. But Diogenes combines moral criticism with ingenious wit in unprecedented ways, and a long tradition of critics works in his shadow.

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FURTHER READING

The evidence is collected in Giannantoni 1990: 2:135-589.

For a fuller introduction, see Dudley 1937 or Desmond 2008.

Scholarly essays can be found in Billerbeck 1991 and in Branham and Goulet-Cazé 1996.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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