CHAPTER 5

Communicating Cynicism: Diogenes’ gangsta rap*

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1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in ancient Cynicism, which has benefited in particular from renewed attention to the notion of rhetorical practice. It was recognised that even though the Cynics never formulated an explicit body of philosophical theories, their life-style could be analysed as the exercise of a philosophical rhetoric, intended to convey a particular set of ethical messages.

In this contribution, I will focus on Cynic strategies of communication, and on problems of the interpretation of Cynicism resulting from their communicative choices. First, I will look at the Cynics’ use of transgressive non-verbal communication with the help of modern socio-linguistic theories of non-verbal communication and impression management. The Cynics scandalise their audience by their conscious use of the body and its processes for philosophical purposes; anthropological ideas about transgression will be helpful here (section 2).

In section 3, I will turn to verbal communication, and investigate the Cynics’ characteristic use of language and literature, regarded as an aspect of their self-fashioning. Here, I argue that Cynic ideas on language correspond to a specific type of folk-linguistics, represented for us by a well-delineated literary tradition of iambos and comedy. I claim that the literary representations of Cynicism that have come down to us cannot be fully understood, unless their intertextual relations with other ancient transgressive genres are explored.¹ The literary representations of the Cynics acquire a fuller

¹ I would like to thank the participants of the Symposium Hellenisticum 2001, particularly Julia Annas, for discussion, and the members of the Amsterdam Hellenist Club and the colleagues of the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, for valuable comments.

¹ Note that I do not use ‘intertextuality’ in the restricted sense of Quellenforschung, but in the wider sense of the term, i.e. to refer in general to the place of a text, regarded as a locus of absorption and transformation, in a network of other texts and genres, and more specifically to the relationship of that text and other specific texts, a relationship of which the partners in the literary communication are aware. Cf. Phister 1985 and Broich 1985: 31.
meaning when they are seen to resonate within a web of comparable texts, notably the tradition of *sambos* and ancient comedy (section 3).

Finally (section 4), I will raise the question of the effectiveness of the consciously self-undermining aspects of Cynic communication, again by comparing them to other transgressive genres like satire and gangsta rap. Throughout, my main focus of attention will be Diogenes, supplemented with some Antisthenes and later Cynics.

My paper rests on the assumption that, since so much of what we know of the Cynics' performance is through the literary shaping of their lives in the form of telling anecdotes and narratives, we should be paying special attention to the essentially literary nature of the representation of Cynicism and particularly of its fountainhead, Diogenes; we must not deny the uncomromisingly literary and artistically contrived nature of our sources. This will be particularly relevant when we consider the impact of Cynicism on its audience: the experience of the primary, original audience, often represented as the internal audience in the narrative, differed considerably from that of the reading or listening external audience of the (semi-) literary versions of Cynicism. The embrace of the Cynics by the literary tradition must have had a thoroughly domesticating effect. The question whether and how far Diogenes himself actually lived his life as if he was 'writing' it as a text (see below, section 4), immediately endangers the value of the ensuing interpretation, because of the circularity it entails. While emphasising the socio-cultural *Sitz im Leben* of the representations of Diogenes, my interpretation does not intend to deny the real impact that Cynicism had especially on other philosophers. The Stoics in particular derived considerable inspiration for their ethics from Diogenes' life, regarded as an authentic attempt to embody a philosophy and distinguishable from fake imitators of its external aspect.

2 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND THE ACTION-CHREIA

In this section, we will study some of the most salient points of Cynic communication: its theatricality, its use of non-verbal communication, its preference for transgressive forms of communication, and its preferred literary form, the *chreia*.

A naïve view of Cynic communication could have it that any conclusions drawn by the general public from observing the Cynic life-style and Cynic behaviour are just an unintended by-product of the Cynic way of life. This would entail that the Cynic has no programme and no didactic intentions, but that their natural life-style is indeed just that, natural, and uncultivated; if this is elevating to anyone, it is an epiphenomenon of the rule of nature. The didactic effect achieved by the Cynic performance is that of a role-model, who embodies a way of life without explaining it, but offers his or herself for imitation. Even a superficial reading of the sources on Cynicism reveals how untrue such a view would be to the representations we have. In spite of the Cynics' self-production as human beings who simply embody certain ideas and convictions without making any conscious attempt at propagating these ideas, their interaction with their environment is more often than not carefully stylized to invite observation and reflection, and to provoke quite specific reactions.

There is an unmistakable didactic stance (cf. *διηγομένος νοετήσας ὑπόθεσαν διαδίκωσιν*). The very theatricality and artificiality of this procedure - the combination of apparent artlessness and simplicity with a sly appeal to public attention - was a source of irritation to Plato, who objected to Diogenes' studied naïveté and the puffed-up arrogance which he perceived underneath.

A Cynic needs an audience. Plato's comparison of Diogenes to an 'out-of-control Socrates' (or a 'Socrates gone mad') may suggest some similarity in the public interaction between both philosophers (i.e., Socrates and Diogenes) and the Athenian audience, while at the same time emphasizing the totally different *modus operandi*. Socrates, Plato and their followers are happy to have one partner in dialogue - or not even that, since the consummate Platonist would be self-sufficient to achieve 'dialectical upward mobility' all by him or herself, in a dialogue with his or her own soul. The Cynic performance would be meaningless, however, without an audience, and consequently, the Cynic consciously chooses to be in the public arena; indeed, it would be hard to imagine a Cynic hermit. It seems worthwhile to analyse this theatrical, self-dramatising didactic stance of the Cynics further.

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1 On their ideal of living according to nature, cf. Hoistad 1948 39
2 For economy's sake, I will not always repeat 'the representation' (of their interaction, etc.) — *separata cura*
3 *SSR* v 168 = *DL* 6 55; see below, as note 38, cf. on the Cynic's missionary intentions, Moles 2000 432. On Cynic pedagogy, Hoistad 1948 15
4 The very emphasis put by Diogenes and the Cynics on the body and its processes seems a provocation to Platonism.
5 Cf. *DL* 6 26 (*SSR* v 55) *τοῦτον εἰτούσαν (= of Plato) πρὸς επείγομενα καθιστικῶν φιλίας παρὰ Διογένεσιν, ἐκφύθετο τὸν Πλάτωνα καὶ θυμοτεύκτον τόσον ὅσα καὶ τοῦ Διογένους, ἀλλὰ χαῖρει αὐτόν μετὰ τοῦ πρῶτου*.
6 *SSR* v 57 (= *DL* 6 41), *SSR* v 60 (Plato's encounter with the Stoics in the context of a political education).
7 *DL* 6 54 et al.
8 *SSR* v 53 (D 6 54).
Classicists have become more aware of the various strategies that are available in the production of self (Goffman 1959: 248–51; cf. Branham 1996: 87), the way we constantly present a 'front' to an audience (Goffman 1959: 24), the different roles we play in different contexts (on stage, backstage), and to different audiences (Goffman 1959: 49), and how we deal in impression management, developed as a form of game theory by Goffman (1970). The initial theory of self-production (Goffman 1959) was based on a large extent on the comparison with the theatre: the dominating metaphor is to see life as a theatrical performance. Now, as I said, the theatricality of the Cynics' public behaviour leaps to the eye, not only because they force themselves on their spectators, but also by their careful self-presentation, e.g. through the use of certain fixed 'props'. Therefore it should be possible to apply some of these insights of socio-linguistics to the analysis of Cynicism as a rhetorical (and didactic) practice.

Since I intend to concentrate on non-verbal elements in Cynic communication, I will also be using modern theories of non-verbal communication. Of course, a well-articulated theory of non-verbal communication was available even in antiquity itself, in the form of the theory of actio/praenuntiationis de /m/órapía, which dealt with the presentation of rhetorical speeches. In modern times, ideas on non-verbal communication go back to the groundbreaking study of Hall, who was one of the first to systematically regard culture as a form of communication, and they have been applied to classical texts by e.g. Donald Lateiner. Concepts that will be particularly useful here are, among the so-called 'primary message systems' distinguished by Hall (1959: 62–81), e.g. the use of food and eating (Hall 1959: 62, 64), clothing and physical attributes to mark e.g. status, and the use of space (territoriality) (Hall 1959: 68, 187–209). In the latter context, it is important to analyse the so-called proxemics of a communicative situation, i.e. the social manipulation of space, and to distinguish between intimate, social and public space. In intimate space, one is very close to the person one is communicating with (a lover, a child, a very close friend), in social space one keeps a certain, moderate distance as from e.g. acquaintances or colleagues, in public space one is 'on stage', and has to raise one's voice to reach a larger group of people. The distance one keeps from other people, or inversely, an invasion of someone's personal space, may be a strategy of submissiveness or domination. It is more normal for a subject to approach a king – and then to keep a respectful distance – than for a king to approach a subject. Yet, the latter is what we constantly see emphasised in the anecdotes about Diogenes and Alexander. It is Alexander who approaches Diogenes, who usually never even gets up from his sitting position. The proxemics of other such stories are given a slightly different twist: when Diogenes was taken prisoner and led before Philip, the direction of movement more in line with what one would expect from their respective status, he claimed to be there to check out what Philip was doing, thereby reversing 'agency' (D.L. 6.43; SSR v 27). And both Perdiccas and Craterus are said to have threatened to kill Diogenes, if he did not come to them (D.L. 6.44; SSR v 50): again, the proxemics of the situation are abnormal. In other stories, it becomes clear that Diogenes refuses to distinguish between the territory reserved for public performance (the market-place) and the private space where one performs intimate tasks like eating or taking care of other biological needs (see below). And what is more, in ignoring this distinction, he forces the people he is interacting with to be 'on stage' with him. Nor does he recognise such a thing as 'sacred space'. In Diogenes' view, one can use any space for any purpose (D.L. 6.72). On the other hand, his posing as a cosmopolite, while

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80 In the context of the Cynics, it is also important to distinguish (with Goffman 1959: 24, 27) between the 'personal front' developed by Diogenes, which turns onto an 'established front' with the (pre) modern reformed Cynics of e.g. the second century BC. See also Katenèr 1995: 255
81 See also Branham 1996: 49
82 For these Gréciques familiaux insignes, the knapsack and walking-stick, see SSR v 3 152–71, April April 21 Other props (used in a non-technical sense) include Diogenes' barrel, or the beards that are one of the hallmarks of the second century BC Cynics. Cf. Maltzah 1996: 49 on the use of these and conduct in Cynic self-definition
83 For the terminology, cf. Latemci 1995: 15 'the wider descriptor, nonverbal behavior, has the virtue of including both intended nonverbal communication and the many unintentional acts or sounds, often out-of-awareness, that reveal so much of us. The term further comprehends tacitness, proxemics, and chronemics (the symbolic use of touch, distance, and time), stereotypes (nonvocal body sounds like chirping and Morse-sirning), and paralinguage (vocal but nonverbal factors beyond lexemes)' See in particular Crc. Lc 9 3 113–25 (25 is not the correct place to transcribe. Quint. Inst Or 11 1 step up and sit to the right, 3 3–21) Of course, another theory is mainly prescriptive, and deals with the delivery of speech. Modern theory has been used here because of its wider scope
84 Hall 1959, 1966; see also Flaman and Trzebinski 1969, less important Rusch and Weldon 1972
85 Hall 1959: 51 The most influential representation of this view is now, of course, Gerard 1975
86 Lateiner 1987, 1995, see also Boegehold 1999, and Brenter and Rockefarber 1991 chs 1 and 2
87 See also Branham 1996: 88 n 23
suggesting that he should be 'at home' everywhere, in fact gives him an opportunity to operate as an 'outsider' everywhere.

Theatricality and conscious self-fashioning can work in any number of stylistic registers, and involve both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Although the Cynics use both, I will be concentrating on the latter. Now, there is nothing particularly remarkable about non-verbal communication and symbolic action as such. We do it all the time. Among the many instances where action takes the place of words, we will just refer to the symbolic advice imparted by Thrasybulus, the tyrant of Miletus, to his young colleague Periander of Corinth, as described by Herodotus (Hist. 5.92–6). In reaction to the verbalised question by a messenger, how Periander could govern his city best and most safely, Thrasybulus took the man for a walk out of town, and while he constantly kept asking why the messenger had come to him, he kept cutting off all the tallest ears of wheat that he could see and throwing them away, until he had destroyed the best and richest part of the crop. The messenger never understood what was going on, but Periander could read this advice perfectly well, and realised that he would have to destroy all potential competition. In fact, without realising it, the messenger is involved in a dialogue, a turn-taking situation like a game, and interestingly the messenger's bafflement is due to the fact that he believes Thrasybulus never takes his turn. As he says to Periander on his return: the man never gave him any advice at all (5.92.3 ὁ δὲ ὁδὸν οἱ ἔρχονται ὁμοίως ἀπὸ τῆς θεοῦ ὑμετερὸν ὑποδείξεται). In fact, of course, at every renewal of the messenger's question, there is a symbolic answer — it is the messenger, rather than Thrasybulus, who never fulfils the next turn of confirming his understanding of his interlocutor's response. These forms of symbolic interaction are common, as are the concomitant risks of misreading what is communicated or even, as here, a failure to see that there is any attempt at communication at all (the messenger does not ask for clarification, he just does not see at all that this is a communicative situation). What is different in Cynicism, as in other forms of transgressive communication, is the conscious attempt to put bodily functions that are usually considered improper in company, to communicative use.

The Cynics' preferred mode of communication is a transgressive one, in that they defy commonly held cultural codes, values and norms, but at the same time they lay claim, implicitly or explicitly, to moral superiority for their behaviour, which can be construed as a return to a state of natural simplicity. In this context belongs the emphasis on bodily processes. It has been pointed out before that the Cynic uses his body as a trope. Instead of being symptoms of a natural and uninhibited laissez-faire, bodily functions are turned into forms of symbolic action, a language either entirely unsupported by words, or, more frequently, a non-verbal medium used to strengthen the effect of language (while at the same time the linguistic utterance serves to reinforce and help interpret the non-verbal sign). Cynic non-verbal communication is incorporated into dialogues with non-Cynics: the non-verbal action often constitutes a regular 'turn' in the turn-taking of dialogue, and out of the whole scala of non-verbal communication available to any language user, there is a clear predilection for the transgressive forms. Stories about Cynics often feature elements like eating, spitting, farting, urinating or defecating, and masturbation or sexual intercourse, and in fact the context of these stories never once allows for an interpretation of the transgressive action as the result of the coincidental and therefore meaningless call of nature. The Cynic clearly exercises his choice to either urinate or not urinate, for instance, as when at a banquet some guests had been treating Diogenes like a real 'Dog' by throwing bones at him, and he proceeded to urinate against them just before he left (D.L. 6.46). This is a clear instance where seemingly 'natural', yet transgressive behaviour is used in a well-considered non-verbal argumentative move. Diogenes himself exploits his nickname not only in a literal (and therefore non-verbal) way, as in the example just discussed, but also metaphorically (i.e. expressed verbally) as when he explained that he wagged his tail at those who gave him barks at the ones who didn't, and bit whoever was bad (D.L. 6.60, SSR v 143).
The conscious use of transgressive non-verbal behaviour rewards further analysis. Take the anecdote about Crates (D.L. 6.94; SSR v 1.1), who comforted Metrocles after an embarrassing incident in the middle of a philosophical training session with Theophrastus: Metrocles had broken wind and was so mortified that he proceeded to lock himself into his house. Crates must have anticipated that words alone would not do the trick — hence the lupins taken well in advance. If he intended to comfort Metrocles, to that end he purposefully ate lupins (θέμοις επιτίθεται βέβαια, which are known to produce gas. D.L. continues the anecdote as follows (= SSR v 1.1):

Ἐπείδή μὲν οὖν καὶ διὰ τῶν λόγων μηδὲν πειθομέναι τέρας γὰρ ἦν γεγοκένα τῇ μὴ καὶ τὰ πνεύματα κατὰ φύσιν ἀπείρησαν. τέλος δὲ καὶ ἐπιστορίων καὶ τοῦ εὐθροσον ἔφεσε οὕτως, ἢρμον φωνῆς τῶν λέγων παραθυροῦσαν. τούτου οὖν ἐκείνου οὖν, καὶ ἐγένετο δὴρ άκως ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ.

He tried to persuade him first by verbal argument that he had done nothing base. For it would have been an abnormal phenomenon if gas was not passed the natural way. Finally, he also broke wind. And that comforted him; a consolation derived from the similarity of their actions. From that time onwards he was his student, and became a competent philosopher.

Crates' breaking wind mirrors that of Metrocles, but it is an entirely contrived action intended to reach a certain effect. The non-verbal communication does not stand by itself but follows on verbal attempts, which were not effective (the imperfect suggests that no result has been reached as yet, or better, that the narrative sequence has not been completed, but that another, and more important step in the narrative is yet to be expected (ἐξερχομένως)). Crates must have anticipated that words alone would not do the trick — hence the lupins taken well in advance. If he intended to produce a situation mirroring the original and embarrassing one, this also necessitated the combination of words and then the farting in the middle of it, cf. the description of what had happened to Metrocles as...植物 produced and interpreted as non-verbal communications is interpreted as meaningful acts.

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30 Cf. Goffman 1959: on the problems created when meaningless elements in non-verbal communication are interpreted as meaningful acts.

31 Although in that case there was always the risk of the fact being construed as meaningful, e.g. as a sign of disrespect, or (only marginally less bad) a sign of self-control and an sign of having indulged in the wrong kinds of food before a lecture. According to Radermacher 1995: 235 that was one of the reasons the Pythagoreans abstained from beans. To the Stoics, farting was theoretically acceptable, but they did not go so far as to make it a part of their philosophical repertory as the Cynics did (Radermacher 1995: 237). Among non-philosophical Greeks, farting could be construed as a sign of being startled, feeling joyous or to convey disrespect (Radermacher 1995: 237)

32 Although consolation and protreptic may be considered separate philosophical genres, the two are fairly close together here: ἐπιφοβικά ἐφαρμάτως refers to the kind of comforting encouragement that is present here. Also present in Ph. R. 392d-416b. The kind of consolation offered here is that of similarity, the same sentiment as in the anecdote.

33 Of the anecdotes about Plato and Diogenes, SSR v 15, and the one involving Anaxandros (सल्वे एव, in an argument to prove that Spho was unaffected and good with ordinary people). Κριτικὴ γὰρ νοῦ τοῦ μνήμητος τρόπον μὲν τὸ ἐφαρμάτωμα παρακολουθεῖται, ἐπισκόποντος δὲ ἑαυτῷ, ἐπὶ τῷ μωσαίῳ διψάντης ἢ δίπλω. Note that Spho takes Crates' non-verbal behaviour as an act of communication. On Diogenes' view of farting as a social comment, equal to outspokenness, see Krueger 1996: 235.

34 Of Diogenes 993 on the need for an audience and the effect of advertising and promoting the Cynic lifestyle.

35 This is also a form of behaviour attributed to Crates; this time capped with irony by Stilpo (D.L. 2.127 = SSR v 1.5): ἔνας ἡλεκτρικός χημεῖος ἐκείνος, ἐπιθυμῶν χημείαν ἐπιθυμῆναι ἤδη σωματών. Note that Stilpo takes Crates' non-verbal behaviour as an act of communication. On Diogenes' view of farting as a social comment, equal to outspokenness, see Krueger 1996: 235.

36 Note, incidentally, that the fact that Crates was undisturbed by his own bodily processes is not commented on in the anecdote.
Someone had invited Diogenes into his luxurious house. This man tried to prevent him from spitting when he had cleared his throat. Diogenes then spat into the man’s face, stating that he couldn’t find a worse place.

This is clearly transgressive behaviour, something that may have begun as a natural urge to clear one’s throat, but that was quickly turned into an action chreia (see below) accompanied by a verbal explanation: Diogenes’ host took better care of his surroundings than of himself. Even here, though, one cannot help but feel suspicion of how natural the action was even at the beginning. Diogenes’ behaviour is a punitive insult, with the verbal chreia thrown in as an exegetical move.

Other examples of Diogenes’ non-verbal communication confirm his consistent use of transgressive behaviour in a self-conscious and theatrical bid for attention,77 as when he was walking around in the Stoa backwards, inviting the mockery of the bystanders, to whom he could then point out that they were living their lives the wrong way around (Stob. 3.4, 83, SSR v 267). Walking backwards in public may not look as offensive as spitting or farting, but it is clearly an inversion of the social code. Sometimes transgressive behaviour is explicitly associated with a didactic intention as in D.L. 6.35 (SSR v 188), where Diogenes is dragging around a wine-jar through the Kerameikos by a piece of string tied around its neck, because he wants to admonish (βούλομαι νουθετήσων someone who had dropped a piece of bread and was ashamed to pick it up again.81 Diogenes’ refusal to distinguish between the accepted social usage of the index and middle finger is a last example of self-consciously transgressive behaviour used to provoke someone to show their true colour: Diogenes pointed out a sophist using his middle finger, and when the man threw a fit, he said: ‘There you have him! I showed him to you!’ Epictetus, who tells the anecdote, explains that you can’t point out a man the way you would a stone or a piece of wood. You have only ‘pointed out’ a man as a real man, when you have shown his ideas – and the sophist’s reaction showed him up for what he was (SSR v 276).82

Branham (1996: 102–3) offers a good analysis of the physical peroration Diogenes adds to his praise of Heracles, as represented in the eighth oration of Dio Chrysostomus: after having ended his speech by referring to Heracles’ cleaning of the stables of Augias, Diogenes sat down and declared (8.36 κολεξιμένος ἐποίη τι τῶν ὄμορφων, note the euphemism). This is a very clear example of his refusal to acknowledge a separate ‘back-stage’ area, where biological needs are supposed to be taken care of.83 For Diogenes, public and private space are collapsed into each other. This action chreia serves as a signature under the speech: it is an allusion to the stable of Augias, a transgressive move mirroring the outrageous comparison between Heracles and the Cynic philosopher, a dramatic enactment of the Cynics’ beliefs and thereby a validation of Diogenes’ role as a Cynic preacher, and an empowering form of self-mockery all at once (thus Branham 1996: 102–3).

The anecdotes, whether involving sayings or actions, that we have studied so far, belong to the most typical form in which the Cynics’ interaction with their environment was stylised in the literary tradition: the chreia, a pithy saying or telling action attributed to some definite person, as the definition in the rhetorical tradition has it.84 There are several issues that should be mentioned in this connection. First of all, the chreia is a literary form, the written reflection of a philosophy that was primarily supposed to be communicated orally.85 The form of the chreia is stylised, but it is supposed to capture the essence of the Cynic life-style in particularly telling moments. This suggests that the chreia should lend itself to ‘thick description’, i.e. ‘an account of the intentions, expectations, circumstances, settings and purposes that give actions their meanings’.86 And, in fact, that is what I have been trying to do with them.

77 Cf Branham 1989 52. ‘The portrait of Diogenes preserved by tradition is of a self-dramatizing iconoclast who lived in the streets and taught anyone who would listen by paradox, subversive wit, and hyperbole.

78 The exact point of the admonishment is not altogether clear, although some points can be made. The text runs (D.L. 6.15 SSR v 188) ἔξπαλατος ἑαυτὸν καὶ κατασχομμένον ἀλαλοῦντα, βούλομαι (αὐτός νουθετήσων) καὶ προσθηκήν ἄριστο ἐκεί τῷ Ἐπικεστίῳ Τών. The story is reminiscent of the several pans used by Diogenes to test whether his would-be followers had sufficiently managed to put aside their sense of misguided shame. He would ask them to follow him while carrying a fish on a piece of cheese (these anecdotes follow immediately on the one discussed here: D.L. 6.36, SSR v 196). Clearly, Diogenes is demonstrating a form of ‘correctness’ according to a lesson, by doing something potentially equally or even more embarrassing.

79 There is a certain sense of climax: quickly picking something up could count as a quick solution to the problem and is nearly as bad as ‘dragging something behind you’ – which takes longer and is more conspicuous. Of course, the Kerameikos must have been littered with pieces of pottery like the keramos, which must have made the action seem more absurd at least for the piece of bread there may have been some true need.

80 Cf DL 6.24 (SSR v 902).

81 Cf Goffman 1959 121, 128, Krieger 1996 227 (no separation between public and private space).


83 Cf Branham 1989 85. Cynicism retained the most orally oriented of all the ancient philosophical traditions: this is not to say that the Cynics did not produce written work. They did, extensively so, but the term chreia (from the noun chreia, ‘useful action’) is used here to denote the most representative form of Cynic writing. The chreia is a pithy saying or telling action, followed by a brief ‘interpretation’. This is not to say that the Cynics did not produce written work. They did, extensively so, but the term chreia (from the noun chreia, ‘useful action’) is used here to denote the most representative form of Cynic writing. Nevertheless, the chreia is a form of narrative, typically involving a dialogue between two or more characters, where the Cynic, as protagonist, is often played by Heracles.

84 Cf DL 6.35 (SSR v 188). The term chreia is derived from Grecian 1973, the quotation comes from Gremblay 1997 16, who emphasized that the ‘thickness’ is not a characteristic inherent in the object, but rather one that belongs to the interpretation. New Historians, for example, have been critical of T. R. Gremblay’s “theorisation of the chreia” (Goffman 1959 121, 128, Krieger 1996 227). The term chreia is derived from Grecian 1973, the quotation comes from Gremblay 1997 16, who emphasized that the ‘thickness’ is not a characteristic inherent in the object, but rather one that belongs to the interpretation. New Historians, for example, have been critical of T. R. Gremblay’s “theorisation of the chreia” (Goffman 1959 121, 128, Krieger 1996 227).
However, not only is the *chreia* the literary stylisation of a way of life, there is also some evidence that the way of life itself is stylised: not everyone believes that these sayings, i.e. the material itself out of which the *chreiai* were formed, were always the happy result of Diogenes' wit combined with the accidents of life. D. L. 5.18 (SSR v b 68) shows a carefully controlled and monitored interaction between Aristotle and Diogenes (incidentally, another illustration of competition between philosophical schools). 44

Διογένης λαβὼν ἀνώτατον [sc. Aristotle] διαποντός νοήσες ὅτι, εἰ μὴ λάβων, χρῆται ἡ μεταλητικός, λαβὼν ἴσως Διογένην μετα τῆς χρείας καὶ τῆς ἱσχίας ἀποθεωκέναι.

When Diogenes offered him [sc. Aristotle] a fig, it occurred to Aristotle that if he didn’t take it, Diogenes would have a *chreia* ready. So he took it and said that on top of the *chreia* Diogenes had lost the fig.

The anecdote is framed in the traditional way: Diogenes creates a dramatic setting (he offers a fig to Aristotle), which can serve as a context for the *chreia* which is to follow. In this particular little story, Aristotle suspects this, i.e. he reads Diogenes' offer as a first move in a turn-taking event. This is an almost perfect demonstration of Goffman’s ideas on impression management in terms of game theory (1970); there is a context of assessment between the participants, and the moves are calculating ones. 45 Like a chess-player, Aristotle anticipates Diogenes’ ultimate intention (to express a certain pre-conceived and well-practised witty thought (*μεταλητικός*)), and also second-guesses what move of his own this *chreia* could be meant to be a reaction to. He suspects he is meant to decline the offer. 46 Instead, he accepts, and thereby robs Diogenes both of the fig and his chance of proffering his *chreia*. In fact, not only does Diogenes lose the opportunity of stating this particular *chreia* of his, he also loses the whole ‘*chreia*-slot’ in the turn-taking event. For it is Aristotle who accompanies his non-verbal move (acceptance of the fig) with verbal wit. If anything, this anecdote reveals the ritual aspects of the *chreia*-scenas, rituals which can be perceived and consciously manipulated by the participants. This also undermines the notion that the Cynic reacts spontaneously and naturally to whatever events cross his path; in this case, it is suggested, the scene is laid quite carefully, and a script had been prepared. 47 Self-dramatisation is therefore part of the literary representation of Diogenes.

It is interesting to note that even in ancient theory there was room for the possibility that a *chreia* would take the form of an action. The standard example, very suitable for the classroom, was Diogenes’ (or Crates’) spotting a poorly behaved boy, and proceeding to strike the boy’s pedagogue. 48 Characteristic for the action *chreia* is that there has to be a context, which would reasonably give rise to an opinion and can be construed as the stimulus. The action can always be replaced by a statement of opinion: as Theon puts it, action *chreia* indicate a certain meaning without using speech (οἱ χαράληγοι λόγου ωφαίνουσιν τιαν νοῦν). The equivalence of the action to a speech act is made clear in Hermogenes’ example of a mixed *chreia*: On seeing a poorly behaved boy, Diogenes struck the pedagogue (action *chreia*), saying (verbal *chreia*): ‘I should strike you for this’. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the anecdote which has it that when Diogenes saw a clumsy archer, he sat down right beside the target saying ‘so that I won’t be hit’ (*ιελευθήρας πάληγω*, D. L. 6.67, SSR v 455). The *είτε*-clause modifies the ‘main clause’ expressed in the action.

Non-verbal communication as a replacement of speech acts is also in evidence in the cases where in the turn-taking of philosophical debate an action fills the slot of one ‘turn’ (D. L. 6.39, about Diogenes): 49

μοιλος καὶ πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα ὅτι κύριος εἶστιν, ἔναστατος παραστέται.

Similarly, in reaction to the man who claimed that there is no movement, he got up and walked around for a while.

Here, the effect derives in part from the relative cultural value of verbal argument and mute ‘natural’ acting. This is not simply a case where empirical

44 Cf. above on Plato and Diogenes, and Theophrastus and Diogenes. The anecdote featuring Aristocles is one of the few in which Diogenes ‘loses’, cf also SSR v b 65 (against Plato) Crates ‘loses’ in a similar modern involving figs against Stilpo, D L. 2.128 (= SSR n 0 6).


46 Why does Aristotle think he is supposed to reject the fig? Because that would be a civilized person’s instinctive reaction to the approach of Diogenes? Because of the sexual connotations of fig?

47 Kindstrand 1986 234, notes the implication of this anecdote that Diogenes was not averse to the ‘conscious fabrication of a cutting reply’.

48 See Quint 1 5, 5 Eros in quartum facit esse chreias quam in Cato, non indicem inventum uindicat. pedagogae cum passuum. Herm. Prog. 6, 9 προτεταλήθη, ἐν αἷς πρεσβίως μονον, διὸν Άδωνις: ἐκ τῶν μελετῶν τοῦ νομοθετούσα τον παραβουλομένον ἔντυσα. Τον Πρ. Προγ. 18, 39-39, 1 προτεταλήθη ἐν αἷς χαράληγοι λόγου ωφαίνουσιν τιαν νοῦν εἰς τας τοις τοίνυν κόσμοις καὶ κύριος τούς κόσμους καταστατοῦ σφαλήν παύς τούτων ὕποκλίματα μην ἔχειν πρὸς αὐτόν, ἐναστάτους δὲ βασιλεύουσα διὰ τῆς ἐνδείγκας αὐτῆς λοιποσ τι εἰς τούς λόγους τοῖσον.
The force of physical éveryγένες is exploited in combination with a verbal utterance in Diogenes' riposte to Plato's proposed definition of 'a human being' as 'a featherless biped creature'. When the proposal met with applause, Diogenes plucked a chicken, brought it with him to the lecture and said: 'here you have Plato's human being'. The turn-taking effect is underlined by the third move, Plato's emendation of the definition by the addition of 'with flat nails' (SSR v 63 = D.L. 6.40). These examples indicate that there are more philosophical genres that can be covered nonverbally: not just consolation and protreptic, but also elenchus.

3 THE CYNICS ON LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE?

Although in the preceding sections I concentrated on the non-verbal aspects of Cynic communication, it is clear that the majority of stories about the Cynics involve their use of language. Cynic rhetoric has been studied and analysed very well by Branham (1989, 1996): it is a 'rhetoric of laughter' (Branham 1989), although it is laughter with a sting; a rhetoric of paradox, subversive wit and hyperbole (Branham 1989: 52), and one, as we have seen, that teaches by example (Branham 1989: 58). It is characterised by improvisation and humour (Hock 1997: 763). The one-liners which we find in the literary version of Cynicism probably did form a preferred mode of communicating a philosophical life-style. Similarly, the choice of genre fits the contents of Cynicism perfectly. Interestingly, Cynic use of language was felt to be characteristic enough to deserve the label κοινικός τρόπος (Dem. On Style 259–61), and Demetrius links it in one breath with the style of comedy (ibid. 259). Throughout, the apparent unconventionality of the Cynics' beliefs also characterises their forms of expression, in accordance with their attempts to 'deface the currency'.

Beside the fact that the Cynics used language in a certain way, did they also theorise about it? Can we distinguish a Cynic philosophy of language? Antisthenes was obviously interested in questions of language and logic, although his status as a logician is a matter of some dispute – however that may be, his work is fairly technical in nature, belongs in the sophistic tradition, and as far as we can tell has no direct link to the main concerns of Cynicism, so I am leaving him out of account here. Both Antisthenes and Diogenes did take an interest in the literary use of language, and produced literature, but again no theory has come down to us, if there was any. Typically, they appear to have been mostly interested in the parodic genres. With good justification, there is no chapter on the Cynics in the section on Logic and Language of the Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy.

However, three points about Diogenes' views on language deserve special mention (for the relationship between Diogenes and literature, see below). First of all, as illustrated by some of the action threat discussed above, there is a clear preference for deeds over words. This attitude is documented e.g. in SSR v 283 (Stob. 2.15, 43), where it is related how Diogenes was praised by the Athenians for a speech he had made about self-control. His reaction was 'May you perish miserably, since you are contradicting me by your deeds.'

50 Branham 1996: 83 speaks of the 'expansion of the domain of literature through the transformation of oral, quondam, and rudimentary forms of discourse'.
51 On 'Defacing the currency', see Branham 1996: 90 n. 30.
52 Some of his works which must have been relevant in this respect are, e.g. (D.L. 6.13), On Names i, v, On the Use of Names a Conventional Work, On Questioning and Answering, Anathemas, which contains the impossibility of contradiction as transmitted through Aristotle. Top 104b20, Met 1024b12–14 is the main source for his view that for any A there is only one oikèic logos. On Anathemas' views on language, see SSR tv, 240–1, 248–9, Decleva Caizzi 1966, e.g. nos 36, 38, 44–49, p. 78 b, Branzeri 1989. Epistemic: remark i (7.12) says: 'no one ever thought, e.g. on destructive ironies' in the Anathematika tradition, Houdard 1998: 175, this is opposed to the anti-metaleptical stance which Houdard 1998: 158 also detects in the Cynic tradition, see D.L. 6.803.
53 Cf. Athens 1999: 442 in their [= the Cynics'] hands, the epic became parody, the Sociatic dialogue, they developed the fable and created all kinds of jokes, anecdotes, romances, they obtained new stories from the ancient units and shouts, wrote biographies of themselves, into which they introduced all these elements, used in the way that interested them.'
54 SSR v 283 (Stob. 2.15, 43) Διογένες λέγον ἐν τῇ δίκῃ παρὰ συνεργέον ὑπῆρχον καὶ ὕπερ ἐπιθυμοῦντας αὐτοὺς Αθηναίοις, ὡς καὶ τοιούτου οὕτως ἀποδείκνυεν.
Of course, this was a widespread idea, but one that gained pregnancy by Diogenes' life-style, which could be seen as an illustration of the principle.

The second point is that the value cherished most by the Cynics was freedom of speech, παραλείπεια. According to Diogenes, it is the best thing there is; for the Cynic Demonax it equals freedom and truth (Lucian, Life of Demonax 3, 31). As we will see, Cynic promotion of παραλείπεια puts the Cynics in the tradition of ancient comedy. It looks as if their licentia included a claim to the right to express themselves non-verbally in the scandalous stylistic register discussed above.

A final point was made by Tony Long (1996 and 1999) and illustrated by among other things D.L. 6.27 (SSR v b 280): 'As where one might see good men in Greece, he said: “Men nowhere, but boys in Sparta”: see good men in Greece, hè said: “Men nowhere, but boys in Sparta”': a scandalous stylistic register discussed above.

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4 DOES SHOCK THERAPY WORK?

There is an inherent problem with transgressive artistic genres that rely for their effect on a sense of scandalised shock in their audiences. As Ralph Rosen has shown (with Donald Marks), biting satire shares with e.g. gangsta rap a combination of cultural sophistication and the suggestion of raw power. The latter is mainly the product of the scandal of transgression, trademark of the genre. The sophistication consists in the conscious allusion and intertextual connectedness to cultural traditions: the self-fashioning of the Aristophanic comic poet evokes a tradition of long-suffering critics of society, who adopt a didactic or quasi-didactic tone, but whose project is inherently self-defeating. They need to be lone rangers, comically isolated in their outraged sense of what needs to be done, without any serious hope of convincing anyone.

Similarly, the gangsta rapper shocks and scandalises completely only those members of his audience who miss or refuse to appreciate the embeddedness of the genre in African-American traditions of doing the dozens (a game of verbal virtuosity and one-upmanship) or the ‘signifying’ monkey (a trickster figure, again singled out by his verbal wit and agility), while those who focus on those tamer (?) aspects of the genre, fail to connect with the raw message that is also contained in it. Although it is still possible to relate to both these aspects, one somehow always fails because of Epigonus over there [in the audience]; I happened to look in his direction and thought I was addressing women... (Ar. Ecd. 165-9).

The passage is hilarious for its utter confusion about the applicability of the labels ‘men’ and ‘women’.

The conclusion must be that the Cynics live a certain rhetoric, but that whatever linguistic ideas are at the basis of that rhetoric (notions about the hierarchy between words and deeds, the ideal of παραλείπεια, ideas about the match between meanings and referents) can be readily paralleled in ‘popular linguistics’, the folk-linguistic counterpart to ‘popular morality’: they are especially prominent in comedy. And that in turn has consequences for the evaluation of the Cynic enterprise as a whole.
part on the double-edged use of space. The very public sexual discomfort this is never really true when one is on stage. The comic effect depends in movements, when he is scared to death by the doorman of the Underworld a shit, or that he will start farting if someone doesn't take his load off him being permitted any of the usual jokes: he can't say that he needs to take bitterly to his master Dionysus that he is carrying heavy luggage without opening of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, comic poet, and the iambic tradition. Transgressive verbal and non-verbal the Cynic owes a major debt to the comic buffoon, the persona of the philosophical enterprise? And did it ever work? So the question arises: is Cynicism an art form? And if so, does that preclude it from being a serious philosophical enterprise? And did it ever work? The Cynic, self-fashioning is definitely righteous, socially minded, but also grumpy and dyspeptic figure with a the iambographic tradition and in Old Comedy is one of a boastful, self- the making of a Cynic. The typical persona projected by the poets in entertain the spectators, one cannot maintain that they are used to convey the use of the same stylistic register for (comic) effect. Obviously, the list of examples can easily be expanded.

Of course, although in all these cases bodily processes are deployed to stem from this same tradition — remember that Demetrius connects the by Sociates, poor and acting against the values of "normal" society — Adiados does not distinguish between the Cynics themselves and literary representations of Cynicism. The Cynic's self-fashioning is definitely in this tradition, and reinforces the idea that the Cynic's stylistic means stem from this same tradition — remember that Demetrius connects the style of comedy and the Cynic style (κοινός τρόπος, *On Style* 259). Note, incidentally, that the didacticism of the comic poet ('I'm doing this all for the common good and in your best interest, even if nobody seems to appreciate it...') ultimately remains powerless and ineffective, and in fact, this is in part why the texts are comic to begin with (see below). Moreover, apart from the choice of stylistic register and the comparable process of self-fashioning, resulting in the projection of the persona of an isolated, buffoon-like, unheard teacher, the ideal of τραπέζιον is also one that is shared by the Cynics with the iambographic and comic traditions. All of this suggests that there is some form of intertextual connection between representations of the Cynics' performance and that of the iambographic tradition and the comic theatre.

However, Cynicism's intertextual background is more complicated than that. Diogenes had relatively well-documented literary interests and felt that his life could be described in the terms of high tragedy. The fact that Diogenes thinks of himself in tragic terms (and turns those labels into claims to pride and happiness) again demonstrates the theatrical aspect of his self-fashioning. He can see himself as a dramatic character, and may have modelled his life partly on examples derived from literature. This was certainly a feature that became part of the Cynic tradition. Later Cynics also appropriated certain literary predecessors, with Odysseus, Thersites, Heracles and Telephus especially prominent in the Cynic imagination. Theoretically, this could be said to add epic and tragic elements to the creation of the Cynic persona, although never in a straightforward way.

In the second sophistic, Thersites, the one buffoon-like figure in the *Iliad*, was praised for his τραπέζιον and made into a Cynic demagogue...
Achilles' spear, suffered from a festering wound, and had been told that king-beggar looked, and apparently that was one of the most striking parodied endlessly by Aristophanes, who focused on the miserable way the king-beggar looked, and apparently that was one of the most striking aspects of the play. Crates from Thebes in particular was so inspired by seeing the tragedy Telephus performed that he sold all his possessions and devoted the rest of his life to philosophy (D.L. 6.87–8; SSR v 14).

One important thing to note about all these tragic and epic heroes, however, is that without exception they lend themselves quite readily and regularly to comic distortions. Heracles can be a figure in comedy as well as in tragedy, Odyssesus features in satyr-plays, Telephus is parodied in the comic theatre, and the presence of Thersites in Homer's Iliad was a reason in antiquity to consider Homer the father of comedy as well as tragedy. The intertextuality and literary imitation that goes into the self-fashioning of the Cynics has a streak of buffoonery throughout. The conscious play with and resonances of the literary tradition make Cynicism definitely at least partly into an art form.

Before dealing with the question of whether this precludes (literary) Cynicism from being a real 'philosophy', and considering its effectiveness, this is probably the place to take issue with a very seductive looking proposition that Plato is somehow considered Cynics and his projects, without resorting to propositions which to construct a life that would breed just the kind of anecdotal tradition to get to the unmediated Diogenes, and his projects, without resorting to propositions which to penetrate the merciless literarity of the tradition to get to the unmediated Diogenes Laertius records (1996: 31). The question is whether we can ever penetrate the merciless literarity of the tradition to get to the unmediated Diogenes and his projects, without resorting to propositions which...
effects on other philosophers. The effects of historical Cynicism are also visible in the distinction made in the (Stoic) tradition between 'authentic', and clearly much appreciated Cynicism, and perverted forms, in which all that remained was the transgressive self-production without there being any 'genuine' content. What I am not arguing, therefore, is that literary analysis is the only valid approach to the whole phenomenon of Cynicism, and that philosophy plays a minor part, if any, in our study of it. However, the philosophical arguments have to be made in a fairly indirect way, precisely because of the form the literary tradition on Diogenes takes. And whereas the Stoic reactions to Cynicism may confirm that the literary tradition was based on some historical reality, this does not mean that the literary tradition should not constitute an object of research in its own right. In fact, the approach advocated here, where the stories about Diogenes are considered to form part of a web of texts and references, shows how unlikely it is that we can use them as straightforward historical evidence.

So, although there are some indications that historical Cynicism influenced the philosophical tradition, this does not settle the question about the status or reliability of our literary tradition. And in fact, if we look at the societal effects, i.e. the reception of Cynicism, there are several indications that the performance of the Cynics was viewed in much the same light as that of the comic poets or the satirists. And it is worth noting explicitly that the transgressive aspects of these genres had been so encapsulated in a 'safe' and confined space - e.g. the performance in the theatre - that they had effectively been turned into 'appropriate' behaviour, since it was expected and even required from the genre and the occasion. In the case of the Cynics, we see that the *chreia* was rapidly turned into one of the subject-matters of choice for primary education - which would be certain to remove any serious stinging effect it might have had. Choice bits of Diogenes were incorporated in the curriculum of the grammarian and were rehearsed to death in all the various communations of grammatical form, cases and syntactical embedding that the school teachers could think of. The content of the *chreia* was felt to be both entertaining and moralising.

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79 Cf. in particular Epictetus *diatès* 3.22. On Cynics: Cynicism 'without god' will easily turn into nothing but public displays of indecency (3.22.2), being a true Cynic is not just a matter of getting the right props (3.22.10). An authentic Cynic must have *authentic* (3.22.11), in fact, the true Cynic turns out to be something of a super-Stoic (3.22.10) - this is the ideal, but reality often falls far short of it (3.22.50). Not only that there is some tension between the notion of authenticity and the artificiality of some of the communicative strategies attributed to Diogenes by the literary tradition.

80 What is socially peripheral is often symbolically central. The symbolic role of the transgressive Cynic in the public imagination is far greater than any actual social importance they may have had, while the nature of that role seems to be the domesticated reinforcement of a fairly moderate, not to say trivial, public morality.

In fact, there is at least one story in Diogenes Laertius which suggests that the Athenians had managed to integrate the eccentric Diogenes into their image of their society to such an extent, that no serious sense of scandal could still attach to him; rather, they were apparently fondly regarding him enough to help shape the minds of future citizens - surely not future Cynics. As Krueger remarks (1996: 238): 'The meaning of the stories of Cynics was not the same as the acts they described.' And while several anecdotes featuring Diogenes registered the scandalised shock of the audience, we should remember that the reaction of the internal audience of the narrative does not necessarily constitute an accurate reflection or prediction of that of its external audience, i.e. of the people who would hear or read the anecdote in question. Indeed, the external audience's relish at the story may well have been considerably increased by their sense of superiority to those actually or allegedly present at Diogenes' performance. In this sense, the supposedly transgressive Cynics were used to preserve and strengthen the establishment by their incorporation into educational practice. Their transgression is bridled and in a sense robbed of its effect by being turned into a 'licensed release' of carnivalesque expressions. We should also take into consideration that the actual presence of the Cynic philosophers must at best have been minor and marginal most of the time, in most of the places of the Greco-Roman world. However, in this case as in so many others, what is socially peripheral is often symbolically central. The symbolic role of the transgressive Cynic in the public imagination is far greater than any actual social importance they may have had, while the nature of that role seems to be the domesticated reinforcement of a fairly moderate, not to say trivial, public morality.

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81 Babcock 1978 32, cf Stallybrass and White 1986 20

82 Cf. Babcock 1978 32. The carnival, the circus, the gypsy, the lumpenproletariat, play a symbolic role in bourgeois culture out of all proportion to their actual social importance. However antagonistic this may sound, it is an insightful illustration of the role of the 'other' as a foil for one's own sense of identity (cf 'imaginative association', cf Stallybrass and White 1986 21)
as their pet eccentric. For when some boys had harrassed Diogenes and
damaged his barrel, the Athenians punished the boys, and gave Diogenes
a new barrel. A new barrel. They did not offer him a house, or any other
kind of 'normal' shelter, but simply accepted the fact that Diogenes would
need a new barrel, without coming to the conclusion that they should all
abandon their houses and follow Diogenes' example. In that sense, they
showed themselves quicker students than Plato, who, according to several
anecdotes, on more than one occasion sent to Diogenes as a gift much more
than he needed or had requested.\(^{54}\)

5 CONCLUSION

So what, on balance, is the effect of Diogenes' apparently consciously self-
undermining rhetorical and performative strategies?\(^{55}\) In the literary repre-
sentations we have, he seems to be happy to align himself with the 'warners'
whose fate it is that they are not listened to seriously, who, in fact, cannot
be listened to seriously without losing their status. He contented himself
with the status of a marginal figure, who needs a society with a clearly
recognisable nucleus, or he would lose his footing and orientation. Cynic
behaviour is essentially parasitic on a society with rules and norms. The
preferred stylistic register is a transgressive one, both when communication
is verbal and non-verbal. In the latter case, it fully exploits the commu-
nicative possibility of the philosopher's body. The Cynic's role goes with a
strongly self-fashioning attitude, with conscious role-playing and constant
performance, with turning life itself into an intertextually readable form of
art. The Cynic belongs in the literary tradition of iambos and comedy, he
embodies the didactic but ever unheeded voice of the comic poet, while
the polis is the theatre in which he performs. The Cynic engages in a form
of impression management that turns what for anyone else would be the
calm and relaxation of 'back-stage' into the spot-lit stage itself, by refusing
to separate the private and public realms. The undeniable theatricality of
the Cynics' performance is reinforced by their literary representation as

\(^{54}\) Cf SSR v n 55 (D L 6 28 etc ) Diogenes' reaction that Plato is sending him too much stuff, just
as he never replies to the actual question asked, may be a criticism of Plato's long-windedness
(apophthegms are a lot shorter than dialogues), but it also reflects the approach constantly made
by Socrates to his sophistic interlocutors.

\(^{55}\) Philosophers may 'not succeed' (ie not persuade, not convert) for any number of reasons the
audience may be unwilling to receive the message (perhaps the norm) and any message may be
copied by the dominant culture and be trivialised. The question raised here is whether the Cynic
strategy is inherently self-deluding (even though there may be success stories even here of the
anecdote about Metrocles). I owe these observations to James Allen and Julie Antill.