

L'Ascèse Cynique. Un commentaire de Diogène Laërce, VI 70-71 (Histoire des doctrines de l'antiquité classique, 10) by Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1986. ISBN 2-7116-0913-8.

This first half of this volume is devoted to recreating the ethical programme of Diogenes of Sinope from the many late sources that exist. Curiously however, the author does not refer to the *Testimonia* (Giannantoni, *Socraticorum reliquiae*, Volume 2). The Cynics, as the Epicureans and Stoics, gradually developed a sense of the individual in his singularity. As a consequence, the necessity of cultivating a private life came to the fore. Here the subject was able to focus on himself and take care of himself. It is in this context that Foucault described the care of oneself (*epimeleia heautou*) - particularly as we find it in Plato (Ap. 29D-30B; Alc. 119A; 128A) - as the general form of spirituality in antiquity. This self-conscious concern for one's own subjectivity, if we may call it that, was focused not just on the body but also the soul (*psuchē*), and was made concrete in the form of spiritual exercises, sometimes referred to in Greek as *askēsis*. Foucault's treatment of the *epimeleia heautou* has been much discussed. Nussbaum argued with force that Foucault's reading was fundamentally wrong because he followed Pierre Hadot who misread philosophy in antiquity by emphasising the role of *askēsis* at the expense of *logos* (reasoning), thus conflating it with religious practice. Though she adds in a footnote that Hadot gave a different account of Stoicism from Foucault, she insists that the latter's emphasis too often obscures reason. 'What sets philosophy apart from popular religion, dream-interpretation, and astrology is its commitment to rational argument' (*The Therapy of Desire*, Princeton, 1994: 353). Sellers in *The Art of Living* (Duckworth, 2009) concurs that Hadot's view is mistaken but does not think that it was a position shared by Foucault. In fact, to confuse matters further, while Foucault said he was indebted to Hadot, the latter said he did not recognise Foucault's reading of the sources. But Hadot did acknowledge Goulet-Cazé's study and concluded that it was the Cynics that first developed the idea of *askēsis*.

Cynicism appeared in the second half of the fourth century B.C. and continued to develop, through a number of different stages to the end of the Roman empire. Dudley's earlier, excellent study, *A History of Cynicism* (Methuen, 1937) shows its breadth and complexity and makes it clear that it would be a mistake to imagine it was limited to the vagrant ascetic form associated with Diogenes of Sinope, one of the founders of Cynicism. He behaved in a somewhat eccentric manner, farting, defecating and masturbating in public (DL VI. 2 *passim*). Plato famously described him as "a Socrates gone mad (*mainomenos*)" (DL VI. 54). Fundamental to Cynicism was the idea that philosophical doctrine should not be separated from ethics. It was not enough to criticise social conventions and established values, the philosopher had to express this in the way he lived. Because of this focus on ethics rather than logic and physics, some thought Cynicism not really a philosophy at all, but merely a way of life (*enstasin biou*) (DL VI. 103).

In the second half of the book the author gives the text of DL VI, 70-71 together with a translation and commentary. There is clearly a Stoic influence on the first part of the doxography. But both parts refer to physical exercise and only by analogy to a moral perfection.

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