

PAUL AND CYNICISM IN PHILIPPIANS 3.2

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Philippians 3.2, “beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilation” has traditionally been interpreted to warn non-Jewish Christians against what many scholars call Judaizers.¹ However, interpreters have often failed to account for both Paul’s explicit Jewishness, as well as the Hellenistic culture from which he draws. This anachronism has led many scholars to situate Paul in terms of a Jewish and Hellenistic divide. Ample evidence exists, however, to show that Paul was drawing on common Hellenistic themes that are not incompatible with his message, more specifically, that the caveats in 3.2 refer to ordinary and well-known ways of life that were incompatible with his theology. Moreover, it is entirely conceivable, if not likely, that Paul draws on a well-known stereotype describing Cynicism that was used during the Greco-Roman period to describe the “other,” that is, Gentiles.²

Many see the warning of Philippians 3.2 against dogs, evil workers, and the mutilation as a reference to those Judaizers who are generally shown in a negative light.³ Even in well-known translations, such as the NRSV, the third clause of Philippians 3.2 reads, “beware of those who mutilate the flesh!”⁴ The conclusion that Paul is supporting those Judaizers is inconceivable to

¹ Judaizers are generally regarded as Christian Jews. For common uses of “dogs” see Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters: Continuity in the Catholic-Jewish Encounter* (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 2006), 8; James D. G. Dunn, et al., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1399; Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 147-148.

² This theory was first put forward by Mark Nanos, “Paul’s Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles ‘Dogs’ (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?,” *Biblical Interpretation* 17, no. 4 (2009).

³ See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 193.

⁴ Note 3.1b-3 of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* reads, “A Digression about those who preach the necessity of circumcision, requiring Christians to observe the laws of Judaism. They were Paul’s bitter opponents elsewhere, especially in Galatia, and are introduced here as a negative example (cf. Gal 5.1-12). 3: *The flesh*, emphasis on physical rituals.” See Michael D.

many exegetes following traditional Pauline interpretation.⁵ Furthermore, *The HarperCollins Study Bible* makes mention that the Greek literally says “the mutilation,” but includes a footnote that, “Those who mutilate the flesh is a harsh rejection of literal circumcision of Christians.”⁶ We can see, then, that even today anti-Jewish polemic has been implemented into commonly used biblical resources on Paul.

This paper aims to contribute to the discussion of Cynic influence in Philippians 3.2 first suggested by Mark Nanos.⁷ It will situate Paul amidst the Cynics, whose influence seems to have been significant. His style, language, and ideas have frequently been juxtaposed against others in order to show his engagement with Greco-Roman culture. Yet less research has been done to see Paul addressing the Cynics through well-known nomenclature. Further, since Paul seems to have many striking similarities to Cynicism, which has been noted by numerous scholars, he may have thought it necessary to condemn those “dogs,” who some in the Philippian community identified with Cynicism, perhaps because he was unintentionally being identified a Cynic by his audience. Finally, Philippians 3.2, as well as those verses that describe Paul’s opponents in Philippians, will be seen no longer describing those Judaizers, but directed against outsiders, which may have

Coogan and Marc Z. Brettler, et al. eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2064.

⁵ Even more surprising is *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* which notes that those Judaizers were “either Jewish-Christians (or Gentile-Christians partial to the law, or conceivably even Jewish agitators bent on wining back Gentile god-fearers)...Paul sarcastically terms them “mutilators.” See Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, et al. eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 359.

⁶ Wayne A. Meeks and Ronald F. Hock, et al. eds., *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 2207.

⁷ Ibid.; cf. John Reuman, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Yale Anchor Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 471; *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 359.

included Cynics. Attention will be given to the beginnings of Cynicism and its use of familiar language to those living in the Greco-Roman world, of which resonance will be found in Paul's letters.

Paul v. Judaizers

Many scholars have understood the reference to dogs in Philippians 3:2a to be a common slur from Jews against Gentiles.⁸ They see Paul as reversing this abusive language, taking what had been an anti-Gentile slur and turning it against the Jews he now opposes.⁹ Further, the slur has traditionally been associated with those "shameless" opponents in 3.19 (cf. 1.15, 17, 28; 2.15).¹⁰ It has been seen as not abusive, but ironic and specifically religious, exhorted "to those outside the covenant who were ritually unclean, and Paul is thus making the surprising point that it is the Judaizers who are to be regarded as Gentiles."¹¹

⁸ Robert Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 790.

⁹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 219; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 345-364; Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 145-146; Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, New Century Bible Commentary, ed. Matthew Black (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 124-125; Fred B. Craddock, *Philippians*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, ed. James Luther (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 56-60; Bonnie B. Thurston, *Philippians and Philemon*, Sacra Pagina Series, Vol. 10, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), 112-113; Silva, 147.

¹⁰ O'Brien, 11.

¹¹ O'Brien, 14; Hansen, 218-219.

However, the slur seems out of place. Paul makes little mention of any opponents throughout the letter, briefly speaking of rivals in 1.28, and if we regard it pertinent, those referred to in 1.15, 1.17 and 2.15. If we consider the slur being directed from Jews to Gentiles, and then Paul using it against those Judaizers as the tradition favors, then the warning in 3.2 seems quite severe from what Paul had mentioned previously. Exegetes often interpret Paul's warning in 3.2 as addressing the same opponents mentioned in 3.18, "enemies of the cross," and those of 3.19, described, "Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things." Although none are named specifically, commentators often transpose the traditional slur onto 3.18-19.¹²

Still, the opponents are ambiguous. The nouns in 3.19, end (τέλος), God (θεός), and glory (δόξα), are often paired with destruction (ἀπώλεια), belly (κοιλία), and shame (αἰσχύνη), with the verse ending that their minds are on earthly things (τὰ ἐπίγεια). Peter O'Brien believes their end (τέλος) as destruction (ἀπώλεια) is clearly evidence of pointing toward a sort of eschatological judgment from Paul.¹³ He also argues the "belly" (κοιλία) mentioned refers explicitly to Paul's opponents' distraction of food laws.¹⁴ Their glory (δόξα), or "pride" or "boast" is shameless (αἰσχύνη) because of immoral practices, namely, sexual acts.¹⁵ And their minds are set (φρονοῦντες) on earthly things (τὰ ἐπίγεια) is described as an ethical attack from Paul, which O'Brien sees as "descriptive of the sphere of sin and therefore

¹² O'Brien, 454; Hansen, 264; Craddock, 65.

¹³ O'Brien, 455.

¹⁴ Ibid., 455-456. Though he does mention other sources' theories concerning metaphorical uses such as "bodily desires"; cf. Hansen, 266.

¹⁵ O'Brien, 456-457. Circumcision is also listed as a possibility for shamelessness; cf. Hansen, 266; Martin, 145; Silva, 180.

corresponding to Paul's negative use of σάρξ."¹⁶ Still, exegetes often attribute these descriptors to those Judaizers based solely on tradition.¹⁷

Alternative interpretations have been offered with less support. Moisés Silva, for instance, argues the κοιλία mentioned literally means the lower cavity of the body, which can signify the anus, thus defecation.¹⁸ And while ἀσχύνη is commonly thought to refer to sexual practices, thus indirectly said to reference circumcision, Silva argues this attack on the "boast" of circumcision has no evidence.¹⁹ Moreover the last clause, their minds are set (φρονόουντες) on earthly things (τὰ ἐπίγεια), is not in itself indicative of an attack against those Judaizers.²⁰

What then could the author of Philippians be referring to if not a slur against Judaizers? Because of the letter's content it can be assumed that those caveats in 3.2 represent those same opponents throughout the letter. Still, one must admit the lack of evidence. Surely Paul and the Philippian community knew to whom he was referring. But what we are left with is mostly speculation based on what little Paul gives us in the text. However, by examining Paul's mention of those dogs (τοὺς κύνας) in 3.2 we can attempt to reconstruct one of his possible opponents.

Recently Mark Nanos has noted several fascinating similarities with the dogs in 3.2 and the Cynics. Nanos believes the traditional argument that Paul is using a sort of reversal against those Judaizers has no support, relying on the lack of extant documents before Paul describing Gentiles as dogs. Thus, in order for this reversal to be plausible, and the overall traditional

¹⁶ Quoted in O'Brien, 458. For Cynic similarities see Reumann, 574.

¹⁷ O'Brien, 454; Thurston, 113.

¹⁸ Silva, 181.

¹⁹ Ibid., 181-182.

²⁰ Ibid., 182.

argument, Nanos argues there needs to be sufficient evidence that Jews called Gentiles dogs prior to Paul's letter.²¹

Instead, exegetes often point to later commentators such as John Chrysostom, who spearheaded anti-Jewish polemic, saying, "There were at this place some of those, whom he hints at in all his Epistles, base and contemptible Jews, greedy of vile lucre and fond of power...for that the Gentiles were once called 'dogs,' hear what the Canaanitish woman says, Yeah, Lord: for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matt. 15.27).²² Modern commentators have also used the Gospels to interpret Philippians 3.2, such as Matthew 15.21-28 and Mark 7.24-30, while others have focused on the dogs in the Tanakh.²³ What is interesting is that there seems to be no mention of Jews calling Gentiles dogs before it was attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. Nor in the rabbinic tradition does there seem support for calling Gentiles dogs.²⁴

Nanos admits the signification of 3.2's "dogs" has a variety of possibilities. To name a few, Nanos points to the goddesses Silvanus and Diana who were frequently shown accompanied by dogs in the hills overlooking Philippi.²⁵ Another goddess Hekate, who decided the success or failure of child-bearing, was often accompanied by dogs, portrayed as a dog herself, and was granted offerings of dog-meat by her followers. The cult of Cybele is of particular interest

²¹ Nanos, 2.

²² Cited from Nanos, 2-3. Cf. Chrysostom, John, *Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, vol. 13 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff et al. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 230.

²³ Nanos, 10-11.

²⁴ Additionally, the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha does not support the slur. See Nanos 1-3, 9, 11-12; cf. Reumann, 461.

²⁵ Peter F. Dorsey, "The Cult of Silvanus: A Study in Roman Folk Religion," *Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition* 20 (June 1992): 67, 91.

because of its connection to dogs and with the three caveats in Philippians 3.2. The cult was well-known for its orgiastic rituals, which included the mutilation of its initiates and engagement in shameful behavior.²⁶ Philo describes the ambiguity of the term:

For instance, the name of dog is beyond all question a homonymy, inasmuch as it comprehends many dissimilar things which are signified by that appellation. For there is a terrestrial barking animal called a dog; there is also a marine monster with the same name: there is also the star in heaven, which the poets calls the autumnal star, because it rises at the beginning of autumn, for the sake of ripening the fruits and bringing them to perfection. Moreover, there were the philosophers who came from the cynic school. Aristippus and Diogenes; and other too who chose to practice the same mode of life, an incalculable number of men.²⁷

The term “dog” or “dogs” in antiquity had various meanings. The term can be positive, referring to watch-dogs, shepherd-dogs, hunting hounds, companions, and the faithful or watchful servants of the gods.²⁸ Nanos describes this usage specifically referring to loyalty, which can function metaphorically to guardians.²⁹ This is seen in Philo who positively describes the special usage of a properly trained dog, writing, “for as it is said that those dogs which are calculated for hunting can by exerting their faculty of smell, find out the lurking places of their game at a great distance, being by nature rendered wonderfully acute as to the outward sense of smell.”³⁰

²⁶ Nanos, 22; cf. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* also notes a connection to the cult, 359.

²⁷ Ibid., 22. See Philo, *Concerning Noah's Work as a Planter*, 1.151.

²⁸ Ibid., 6. See Henry George Liddell, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* 9th ed. (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1996), 1015.

²⁹ Nanos, 6.

³⁰ Philo, *Dreams*, 6.69; Philo does not use κύων used in Philippians, but σκύλαξ, which is simply defined as a young dog, whelp, or puppy. It is possible that Philo is intentionally using another word to escape a well-known abusive term applied to Gentiles, but there is no evidence to suggest he was aware of such usage; Liddell, 641.

Dogs and dog-like traits are also seen negatively.³¹ They are often used in polemic to describe reproach, explicit shamelessness or audacity in women, rashness, and, of course, to reference the Cynics.³² Proverbs 26.11, using κύων in the LXX, portrays dogs as gluttonous fools who cannot control their urges. Further, an ancient Hittite text describes dogs defiling holy places.³³ Ultimately, dogs are negatively seen as the stereotypical aggressors. Thus, calling someone a dog might refer to their arbitrary actions, immodesty, or impious behavior, but the term seems to be multifaceted, taking on a positive or negative meaning depending on the context of usage.³⁴ Even if the “dogs” cannot be associated with any specific group, it seems clear that Paul’s language was meant to diminish the significance of any other option outside of his Christ-believing Judaism, not against Gentiles as a whole, nor against those Judaizers which the traditional argument favors.³⁵

Paul knew the importance of broadening his message for his Gentile listeners. The communities with which he interacts are almost exclusively pagan (Gal. 4.8) and are described as turning from idols to God (1 Thess. 1.9). It seems reasonable, then, to begin by admitting Paul’s competence in speaking to Gentiles who, more than likely, had not heard a comprehensive and intricate detailing of Judaism. Thus, Paul uses common Hellenistic language in order to reach out to a broader audience that was intimately familiar with Greco-Roman philosophies, even if only superficially able to identify them. If we are to see Paul speaking against those Cynics, as Nanos has suggested, a brief exploration of the beginnings of Cynicism is necessary.

³¹ Reumann, 460; cf. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 359.

³² *Ibid.*, 401.

³³ David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature*, Dissertation Series Society of Biblical Literature 101 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 105-6.

³⁴ Nanos, 7-8, 16.

³⁵ See Nanos’ article for a lengthy discussion.

Cynicism's Roots

Contrary to common conceptions of modern cynicism, or what could easily be referred to as nihilism, the ancient Cynics were not defined by their destructiveness or pessimism.³⁶ Rather, ancient Cynics were surprisingly hopeful of humanity. Their philosophy is often characterized by a radical freedom that included giving up one's possessions, wandering or drifting, preaching on the streets, and at times being exposed naked. The ancient Cynic's life was led by a philosophy of action; through detachment, the Cynic hoped to eventually obtain happiness by the process of a rough, ascetic life that was often seen as a shameless disregard of decorum.³⁷

Traditionally, nineteenth-century scholarship deemphasized the importance of Cynicism in antiquity. Recently, a number of scholars have explored its influence more seriously, and some have even argued Cynicism was not merely a minor outgrowth of the Socratic school, but a substantial lifestyle that may have rivaled the later schools of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.³⁸ Cynics, just as any other philosophical school or lifestyle in antiquity, were immensely variegated. The group began to form a recognizable identity with Diogenes in the fourth century BCE, ending with Sallustius in the fifth century CE.³⁹ Thus, some nine hundred years produced such a large variety of writings that, at times, they appear to not be of the same tradition. Because of this, it has become common to divide the sources into two categories, ascetic and

³⁶ For the purposes of distinction, the ancient Cynics, for which this paper is targeted, will be referred to as Cynicism, while the modern variety will be addressed as cynicism.

³⁷ William Desmond, *Cynics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 3.

³⁸ R. Bracht Branham, introduction to *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy*, ed. R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1; cf. Desmond, 4.

³⁹ Desmond, 12.

hedonistic.⁴⁰ The purest Cynics, seen as “hard” or “ascetic,” are often depicted as drifters, usually wearing a cloak and carrying only a staff and satchel. The ascetic Cynics are defined by their abstemious lifestyle, preaching a message of frugality. The hedonistic type, however, is portrayed as merely praising those ascetics from a distance while not adopting the ascetic lifestyle themselves.⁴¹

Part of the difficulty in the study of ancient Cynicism is its profound diversity. Much of what we know of the group is found in a plethora of secondary sources, which are often riddled with reports and anecdotes.⁴² Thus, a certain amount of caution should be employed in approaching these texts, for historicity is never easily established beyond doubt. However, reconstructing Cynicism is not a hopeless endeavor. Diogenes Laertius, who gives the fullest account of Cynicism, can lend some assurance of historicity.⁴³ Still, though Laertius gives us seemingly accurate and detailed accounts, some of which have been corroborated in other ancient sources, their reliability should be accepted with prudence.

Because the Cynics fundamentally established themselves as a philosophy of action, they are not seen as a formal philosophical school. Rather, following the definition of Charles J. Stewart, the Cynics should be regarded as a social movement, whose goal was to lewdly flaunt their freedom by living distasteful lives.⁴⁴ This was accomplished through what Kristen Kennedy identifies as *parrêsia* and *diatribe*, two rhetorical devices that were a means of expressing their

⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁴¹ Ibid., 5-7.

⁴² Luis E. Navia, *Classical Cynicism: A Critical Study* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 11.

⁴³ For a more detailed account on the reliability of Cynic documents, see H. W. Attridge, *First Century Cynicism in the Epistles of Heraclitus* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

⁴⁴ Charles J. Stewart, Craig Allen Smith, and Robert E. Denton, JR, *Persuasion and Social Movements*, 2nd ed (Prospect Heights: Waveland, 1989), 87.

feeling of exile.⁴⁵ Underlying this is an ethical imperative where the Cynic attempts to lie on the outside of the *polis* as an exile while simultaneously speaking against those insiders.

What, then, is a Cynic? There are two accounts of how the philosophical group, known as the Cynics, derived their name. Detailed by Diogenes Laertius, the group was developed by Antisthenes of Athens and Diogenes of Sinope. They and their subsequent followers were nicknamed *kunikos*, or “dog-like.” The first account comes from Laertius, which describes *kunikos* deriving its name from *Kunosarges*, a gymnasium reserved for foreigners and Athenians of illegitimate birth. Here, Cynicism is thought to have its origins, whereby Antisthenes, an illegitimate Athenian, taught philosophy to other outcasts and underprivileged wanderers.⁴⁶ Etymologically, the name *Kunosarges* has often been translated “white dog,” “swift dog,” or “dog’s meat,” although many admit the name cannot be fully explained.⁴⁷ A second, and perhaps more convincing option argues that there is no etymological similarity between *Kunosarges* and *kunikos*, and only coincidentally appear kindred. Rather, Antisthenes and Diogenes were ascribed the name *kuon* polemically. Thus, the Cynics were labeled “dog-like” by their opponents in order to debase their way of life.⁴⁸

Diogenes Laertius, in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, succinctly notes of Diogenes of Sinope, “A homeless exile, to his country dead. A wanderer who begs his daily bread” (6.38). Raised and exiled in Sinope, Diogenes (404-323 BCE) remains the most striking Cynic in

⁴⁵ Kristen Kennedy, “Cynic Rhetoric: The Ethics and Tactics of Resistance,” *Rhetoric Review* 18, no. 1 (1999): 27.

⁴⁶ The Cynosarges is reportedly only for *nomoi*, or bastards. For a fuller discussion, see Branham, 3.

⁴⁷ C. D. Yonge, trans., and Keith Seddon, ed., *An Outline of Cynic Philosophy: Antisthenes of Athens and Diogenes of Sinope in Diogenes Laertius Book Six* (Constantia: Keith Seddon, 2008), 22.

⁴⁸ Branham, 4.

antiquity.⁴⁹ The depth Laertius gives to Diogenes aids much to contemporary scholarship in dissecting ancient Cynicism. After exile, Diogenes migrated to Athens and became the pupil of Antisthenes (ca. 445), a student of the Socratic school and founder of Cynicism and Stoicism (DL 6.19). Antisthenes, nicknamed a “hound pure and simple,” (κυνικῆν) was also the first, according to Diocles and Neanthes, to wear what would become the paradigmatic Cynic garb, the doubled cloak, a staff and a wallet (DL 6:13). Once arriving in Greece, Diogenes begins to develop the main tenet of Cynicism: life governed by the pursuit of hardship. Wandering aimlessly, the intrepid pupil forced himself to adapt to the hardships of living frugally, eating only what was available and living inside of a “tub” (DL 6.23).

The early Cynics are most well-known for deriding physicians, diviners, and competing philosophies. Laertius paints a picture of the early Cynics attracting onlookers in the *agora* to hear their message. Frequently Diogenes vehemently condemns others for living hypocritical lives, accusing humanity, who he often refers to as “slaves” for desiring those things which seem good, rather than those things which are good (DL 6.27-30; 42-43). At times, Diogenes was not well received for his message, often being rebuked by Plato (DL 6.25-28) and beaten for his shamelessness (DL 6.33). At other times Diogenes is protected, even loved, by the citizens of Athens. So much so that when a rabble-rouser would destroy his “tub” the mob would quickly flog the offender and replace his home (DL 6.43-44). Throughout the Roman Empire, reactions to Diogenes were mixed. Later, both Christians and Pagans lauded and condemned him for his voluntary deprivation and shamelessness.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* is believed by many to be the most reliable and authoritative document recounting Cynicism.

⁵⁰ Derek Krueger, “The Bawdy and Society: The Shamelessness of Diogenes in Roman Imperial Culture,” in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy*, ed. R. Bracht

Although our sources often contain contradictory aphorisms, R. Bracht Branham offers five main points to be drawn from Diogenes' philosophical significance, which may reasonably extend to Cynicism as a whole: (1) there is an ethical norm in nature seen in animals; (2) ancient society's values are hostile to nature; (3) humanity can only truly be happy through rigorous discipline (ἀσκησις); (4) rigorous discipline (ἀσκησις) leads toward freedom and self-sufficiency, both of which are inseparable from true happiness; (5) Cynic freedom is active, that is, it is manifested in uncovering untruth, by parody and satire, through inflammatory and condemnatory speech, often used against authority figures.⁵¹

Branham's research reveals several key points that coincide with Paul's. Of course, these five theses are rather broad and have been shown by many scholars to be similar with other antique philosophies.⁵² Based on what textual evidence Paul leaves us it will prove beneficial to limit the discussion to those close similarities that occur in Philippians and the Cynic corpus, namely, Paul's use of the moniker "dog" in Philippians 3.2 and his condemnation of those opponents' "shame" in 3.19.⁵³ Attention will also be given to early Christian literature whose use is similar. But first, we must address those similarities found between early Christianity and Cynicism, a complication that needs to be undertaken if we are to see Paul opposing Cynicism.

Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 225. On Diogenes' poverty, see Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 6.6-16; Plutarch, *Mor.* 499b, 604c; Origen, *Cels.* 2.41, 6.28; Basil of Caesarea, *Leg. Lib. Gent.* 9.3, 4, 20; John Chrysostom, *Ad. Op. Vit. Monast.* 2.4, 5. On Diogenes' condemnation, see Tatian, *Orat.* 25; John Chrysostom, *De S. Babyla* 9.

⁵¹ Branham, 9

⁵² F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches: Cynics and Christian Origins II* (New York: Routledge Press, 1998), 33.

⁵³ For the possibility of Cynic opponents in Colossians, see Troy W. Martin, "By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 118 (1996): 58-105.

Paul the Cynic?

The hallmark of research between Paul and Cynicism is found in F. Gerald Downing's book *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches*. My following conclusions are largely drawn from his monumental work in which he argues traces of Cynicism can be found in Paul through his explicit exhortations to Christ-believing churches. Paul's advice to abandon social markers such as festivals, dietary and purity rules, codes of social rank, race, gender, and rules of civic life, in the view of Downing, are indications that Paul would have been seen by his contemporaries a Cynic Jew.⁵⁴ Downing concludes that Paul drew on Cynic language because of its availability and resonance with his conception of Christ-believing Judaism.⁵⁵ Still, Downing follows traditional views concerning Paul's opposition against those Judaizers.⁵⁶ Despite this, Downing's book offers important reasons onlookers may have thought Paul a Cynic.

Why then, would Paul have been considered a Cynic? Should we take Paul's saying in 1 Corinthians 4:11 "To this present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless" as Cynic? But if we consider Paul emulating the life of Christ (Gal 2.20) then it seems far removed from the convictions of popular Cynics such as Diogenes. While Paul is often portrayed as living in a sort of Cynic poverty such as Diogenes', he tells us he does this for "Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor 4:11b).

Still, the sphere with which Pauline Christianity grew was in many ways similar to Cynicism. Both groups can account for some of their members having good education, social standing, and influence. Yet, most of their adherents were typical townsfolk. Both Paul and several popular Cynics are well-documented travelers, both wandering to places such as Rome,

⁵⁴ Downing., *Paul*, 71-72.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁶ Nor are the "dogs" in Philippians said to reference Cynics; Ibid., 74.

Athens, Corinth, Cilicia, Tarsus, Cyprus, Gadara, and Syria.⁵⁷ What is more striking is the similarity with which the Cynics believed to be able to jump immediately into a “natural” life-style, an often vague, yet quick shortcut believed to grant a “natural” perfection or end. This practical shortcut (σύντομος ὁδός), while not appearing as such in Paul’s letters, is a central theme throughout, seen in Paul’s invitation toward a quick new life-style not dominated by Hellenism.⁵⁸

Paul’s audience, it seems, believed they had already achieved quick access to the Kingdom (1 Cor 4.8). Epictetus, condemning the Cynics, similarly writes of the Cynics’ rash belief of quick access, saying, “But, as it is, being merely moved towards philosophy, like dyspeptics who are moved to some paltry foods, which they are bound in a short while to loathe, immediately these men are off to the scepter, to the kingdom” (4.8.34). Likewise, once joining Christ-faith the Galatians are now said to be free by Paul.⁵⁹ And in Corinth, Paul’s discussion of diet, cult, and sexual relations sound much like Epictetus’ query concerning Crates:⁶⁰

See to what straits we are reducing our Cynic, how we are taking away his kingdom from him – Yes, but Crates married – You are mentioning a particular instance which arose out of passionate love, and you are assuming a wife who is herself another Crates. But our inquiry is concerned with ordinary marriage apart from special circumstances, and from this point of view we do not find that marriage, under present conditions, is a matter of prime importance for the Cynic (3.22.76).

There are also similarities on issues of law. We are told by Antisthenes (DL 6.11) that local laws are extraneous in favor of what he describes as virtuous. Diogenes, also, discards laws in favor of living according to nature, seeing “no impropriety either in stealing anything from a temple or in eating the flesh of any animal” and that all is the common property by those living

⁵⁷ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 42; cf. 1 Cor. 4.8.

⁵⁹ Gal. 3.28.

⁶⁰ Downing, *Paul*, 43.

naturally (DL 6.73).⁶¹ Further, the tradition tells us that other common laws (written and customary) were rejected by Cynicism, such as sexual relations, food, and those dedicated items. These and others were not theoretically declined, but pragmatic and central to Cynicism's identity. Quite frequently, Laertius shows Diogenes publicly dismissing societal laws and customs.⁶² Lucian's *Demonax* also says the laws are useless (59). And in Plutarch's *Alexander* the laws are said to be too highly regarded (65.3). Likewise, Dio Chrysostom, in his *The Eightieth Discourse*, states that the lawgivers had no claim to independence, creating slavery and preventing any sort of freedom (80.4). Further, Dio says:

Yet not only did these men of old profess to be enduring all things in defense of the laws, but even now men say that justice resides in whatever laws they themselves, luckless creatures that they are, may frame or else inherit from others like themselves. But the law which is true and binding and plain to behold they neither see nor make a guide for their life. So at noon, as it were, beneath the blazing sun, they go about with torches and flambeaux in their hands, ignoring the light of heaven but following smoke if it shows even a slight glint of fire. Thus, while the law of nature is abandoned and eclipsed with you, poor unfortunates that you are, tablets and statute books and slabs of stone with their fruitless symbols are treasured by you (80.5).

Similarly, we see Paul encouraging those in Galatia to abandon their own societal mores and laws (Gal 4.8-10) in favor of a new freedom found in Christ.

And still other striking similarities arise in the Cynic's use of parrêsia. As noted above, parrêsia typically translates to freedom of speech or the practice of frank and open discourse.

⁶¹ Ibid., 66. Downing notes that DL 6.72 is a later addition and represents a desire to see the Cynic tradition in continuity with later Stoicism.

⁶² Ibid., 68. Cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.29, 32, 34-6, 38, 46, 48, 61, 62, 64, 69, 82, 87-89, 94, 96-97; Lucian, *The Cynic*, 10.

This can be meant positively or negatively literally meaning “loose-tongued.”⁶³ The term is commonly found in pedagogical texts with the purpose of fostering a learning environment where the student and teacher are free to voice their opinion without reproach. The Cynic seems to have taken this freedom to the political realm, deriding important officials for their hypocrisy. For instance, one story of Diogenes meeting Alexander helps illustrate this point. Leartius tells us, “When he was sunning himself in the Craneum, Alexander came and stood over him and said, ‘Ask of me any boon you like’ to which he replied, ‘Stand out of my light.’” (DL 6.38). Here, Diogenes is not merely an insipid idler. Rather, the Cynic highlights what Kristen Kennedy sees as the main purpose of parrêsia, namely, “parrhesia [sic] becomes a political practice used to question and critique not only social injustices and unethical practices but also the political authority of leaders.”⁶⁴

Eventually, however, parrêsia became almost exclusively an ethical term. Though its origins in the political sphere, according to Kennedy, is found in Cynic discourse because of their purpose, that is, to combine the public and private realm in order to display truth. Kennedy forcefully argues that parrêsia developed into a term describing one’s metaphysical pursuit, that is, one who is concerned with philosophical truths instead of merely political concerns. This progression is seen beginning with Antisthenes and Diogenes, where their use of parrêsia is almost exclusively political, to those later Cynics such as Dio Chrysostom, who uses the term both politically and ethically, that is, philosophically. Kennedy summarizes her point by saying, “In effect, the Cynic took inventory of the rhetorical situation and rejected any and all

⁶³ Liddell, 535.

⁶⁴ Kennedy, 33.

constraints, including political ones, spurned onward by an ethical imperative to speak, to remain visible in the *polis*.”⁶⁵

Similarly, Paul employ *parrêsia*, as Kennedy says, by rejecting all conventional political barriers, exhorting an ethical message. Paul knowingly casts aside expected decorum, boldly, in order to proclaim the message of the gospel (2 Cor. 3.12; Eph. 3.12, 6.9; Phil. 1.20; 1 Tim. 3.13; Philem. 1.8; Heb. 3.6, 10.19; 1 John 5.14). Soon after Paul’s vision, he is described by Barnabas as speaking boldly (*parrêsia*) in the name of Jesus (Acts 9.27). After, Paul speaks to the disciples boldly (*parrêsia*) in the name of the Lord (Acts 9.28). And when confronted by numerous Jews, devout converts, and even “the whole city” (Acts 13.43-45), Paul speaks boldly (*parrêsia*) against what would have been highly controversial (Acts 13.46; cf Acts 14.3, 19.8). Even Apollos, a Jew in Ephesus, spoke boldly (*parrêsia*) proclaiming the gospel against those Jews both in public and in the synagogue (Acts 18.24-28). And further, freedom for Paul (ἐλευθερία) (2 Cor. 3.17) is intimately tied to *parrêsia* (2 Cor. 3.12), ensuring a great reward in the end (ἥτις ἔχει μισθαποδοσίαν μεγάλην) (Heb. 10.35; cf 1 John 2.28, 4.17).

Other such parallels are found in Abraham J. Malherbe’s acclaimed article “‘Gentle as a Nurse’: The Cynic Background to I Thess II,” where Malherbe highlights Dio’s primary dispute with various Cynics.⁶⁶ Malherbe points out that Dio criticizes common Cynic preachers of inaccuracy (ἀπάτη, πλάνη), seeking flattery (κολακεία), glory (δόξα), wealth (χρήματα), and pleasure (ἡδονή). Although Dio does describe other Cynics as too harsh (βάρος), but

⁶⁵ Ibid., 37

⁶⁶ Abraham J. Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse: The Cynic Background to I Thess II,” *Novum Testamentum* 12, no. 2 (1970): 214.

elsewhere says this harshness is acceptable because of parrêsia, which apparently at times did not allow for gentleness (ἡπιότης).⁶⁷

Malherbe describes the phrase καθαρῶς καὶ ἀδόλως as an indication of Dio's insistence on purity of mind, which he portrays as the fight for freedom, the foundation of παρρησία.⁶⁸ And Epictetus, also, determines the true Cynic by insistence on a purity of mind. This knowledge allows the Cynic to speak with παρρησία. Of course, those imposter Cynics do not have this knowledge, but only those καθαρῶς παρρησιαζόμενον are true Cynics who speak with the purity of mind.⁶⁹ Both Dio (*Orat.* 13; 32, 21; 34, 4) and Epictetus (*Diss* 3, 22, 2.9) further contrast those tricksters from the true Cynic's divine call.⁷⁰ Their call seems to have been verified by the violence (ὑβρις) of the crowd (Epictetus, *Diss.* 4, 24, 1-10; Dio, *Orat.* 9, 9; 12, 9; 32, 21).⁷¹

According to Malherbe, Dio's description has many similarities with Paul's ministry in 1 Thess. 2. Just as the Cynic is faced with violence from the crowd (ὑβρις), Paul describes (1 Thess. 2.2) his mistreatment (προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες). And just as Dio criticizes those imposter Cynics as empty (κενός), not struggling (ἀγών), and those true Cynics facing the crowd with παρρησία, Paul also says his journey to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2.1-2) was not empty (κενός), but involved a great struggle (ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι) where he spoke in the boldness of God (ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ).⁷²

⁶⁷ Ibid., 214.

⁶⁸ For a thorough background, see Malherbe, *Nurse*, 215.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 215.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 216.

Malherbe continues by pointing out that Dio states the imposters trick (ἀδόλως) listeners, leading them astray (πλάνη). Similarly, Paul (1 Thess. 2.3) describes that his ministry is not meant to mislead (οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης). And just as Dio portrays the archetypal Cynic as one with purity of mind (καθαρώς) and without deceit (ἀδόλως), Paul exhorts (1 Thess. 2.3) that he was not preaching out of impurity (οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας), nor deceitfully (οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ).⁷³

Further, Dio writes that a true Cynic will not teach for glory (μήτε δόξης χάριν), or wealth (μήτ' ἐπ' ἀργυρίῳ), or as a flatterer (κολάκων). Likewise, Paul says to have not sought glory (οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν) (1 Thess 2.6), or came as a pretext for greed (οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας), or used flattering speech (οὔτε . . . ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας) (1 Thess. 2.5).⁷⁴

Additionally, Malherbe argues that Dio's primary purpose is to help his listeners, which often involved a modification of his message. So much so that Dio is seen as being even kinder to his listeners than their own fathers. He exhorts that a philosopher should not be habitually harsh (βαρύς), but at times be "gentle (ἡπιός) as a nurse."⁷⁵ Similarly, Paul's affection (1 Thess. 2.8) is so strong that he will lay down his life for his hearers (ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς). And he dealt with them just as a father with his children (καθάπερ οἶδατε ὥς ἕνα ἕκαστος ὑμῶν, ὥς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ) (1 Thess. 2.11). And though Paul might have had demands of his hearers, he says he was gentle with them like a nurse (ἀλλ' ἐγενήθημεν ἡπιοὶ ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν ὥς ἂν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα) (1 Thess. 2.7).⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 216.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 217.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 216-217.

Of course, parallels can also be drawn between Paul and other groups. It should not be underestimated the influence of other philosophies or life-styles available to Paul. Stoicism, for instance, has been identified as closely related, and at times, indistinguishable from Cynicism, in part, because of the immense diversity of the Cynic corpus. Even modern scholars typically refer to Cynics by appealing to generalizations, describing them by their cloak, staff, begging-bag, long hair and beard.⁷⁷ Writers in antiquity, too, clearly used vague descriptions that did not represent the variety of Cynicism.⁷⁸ And Pauline Christianity, like Cynicism, was not homogenous.⁷⁹ Paul, also, at times could be just as harsh as the Cynics, while at other times looking quite different.⁸⁰ What we take away from these similarities is not that Paul was a sort of secret Cynic, but that he leaned upon commonly understood language that his Gentile listeners would have understood, that is, as an anarchist Cynic.

Upon closer examination there appears to be more differences between the two. If we trust at all early Christian writings, then it seems improbable early Christians would have misunderstood Paul as a Cynic – in fact it is quite the opposite. What we take away from early Christian Scriptures is the religiosity of both Paul and his early followers, even to the extent that some, such as Desmond, point out the “wholly unGreek”⁸¹ nature of early Christianity, with features such as: baptism, the coming of the Kingdom, the resurrection of the body, the forgiveness of sins, and the intimacy of the Father.⁸² Thus, we can conclude there is little doubt that the early Christians were in some way touched by Cynicism, yet it remained a background

⁷⁷ Downing, *Paul*, 33.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 34; cf. pseudo-Quintilian, *Declamations* 28.3; Epictetus 3.1.24; 3.22.10, 50; 4.8.11-12, 34; Dio 33.14, 72.2.

⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 7.8-9; Col. 2.16-18; 1 Tim. 4.1-5.

⁸⁰ Pseudo-Diogenes 7.1, 29.1; 1 Cor. 4.21; 2 Cor. 13.10.

⁸¹ Desmond, 212-216.

⁸² Ibid., 215.

philosophy amongst dozens of others, and perhaps in the case of Philippians, a formidable influence that required admonishing. We now turn to why Paul might have addressed the Cynics based on their “dog-like” shamelessness addressed in 3.2 and 3.19.

Diogenes' dog-like Shamelessness

Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, perhaps our earliest extant source, describes why the Cynics are associated with dogs:

There are four reasons why the Cynics are so named. First because of the indifference of their way of life, for they make a cult of indifference and, like dogs, eat and make love in public, go barefoot, and sleep in tubs and at crossroads. The second reason is that the dog is a shameless animal, and they make a cult of shamelessness, not as being beneath modesty, but as superior to it. The third reason is that the dog is a good guard, and they guard the tenets of their philosophy. The fourth reason is that the dog is a discriminating animal which can distinguish between its friends and enemies. So they recognize as friends those are suited to philosophy, and receive them kindly, while those unfitted they drive away, like dogs, by barking at them.⁸³

Aristotle omits the name of Diogenes, only calling him "the dog" (ὁ κύων) (1411a24). Plato also, according to Laertius (6.40), uses Diogenes and κύων interchangeably. Thus, from our earliest sources Diogenes' identification as "the dog" becomes common, and further, may reasonably be synonymous with Cynicism as it later developed as a group.⁸⁴

As a well-known group, the Cynics do not occur in Plato or Xenophon, but finally arrive in the account of Antisthenes (DL 6.13), the supposed founder of Cynicism who is described as “the Absolute Dog” (ἡ ἀποκύων).⁸⁵ Cynicism as an identifiable group begins to solidify in the accounts of Diogenes and those subsequent Cynics. Just as Cynicism began to be seen as well-

⁸³ Cited in Luis E. Navia, *Diogenes the Cynic: The War against the World* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2005), 66.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 63; the word "Cynicism" is a derivation from the Greek word *kunikos*, an adjectival form from the original κύων, translated literally as one who is dog-like.

⁸⁵ LCL uses the translation “a hound pure and simple.”

known way of life, the moniker dog begins to be used negatively, both manifested in what remains describing Diogenes.⁸⁶ With Diogenes we begin to see the name “Cynic” designating a certain type of philosopher. Slowly after, the term begins to change from its origin of styling the Cynic in positive light, toward absolute rejection. Lucian, in his *Runaways* (5.16), describes the Cynics as deserving none of the good qualities often associated with dogs:

Consequently, every city is filled with such upstarts, particularly with those who enter the names of Diogenes, Antisthenes, and Crates as their patrons and enlist in the army of the dog. Those fellows have not in any way imitated the good that there is in the nature of dogs, as, for instance, guarding property, keeping at home, loving their masters, or remembering kindnesses, but their barking, gluttony, thievishness, excessive interest in females, truckling, fawning upon people who give them things, and hanging about tables – all this they have copied with painful accuracy.

We must, therefore, focus our discussion on Diogenes, since he is the first to be titled “the dog,” a term which from then on became synonymous with the “school” of philosophy that emerged. As noted above, examining the sources of Cynicism reveals that it is not a philosophical group in the strictest sense of the word.⁸⁷ Aristotlelianism, Platonism, and other groups are more aptly titled schools of philosophy because they follow an identifiable pattern of beliefs that were passed on throughout their subsequent followers for at least a century.⁸⁸

Although it can said that those larger philosophical schools, such as Platonism, changed dramatically in their beliefs from one scholarch to the next, Cynicism differs because of its lack of continuity. While Diogenes himself adheres to a life of conviction which may have led to the beginnings of a philosophical school, he differs substantially from what remains of other Cynics.

⁸⁶ Navia, *Classical Cynicism*, 14-15.

⁸⁷ Hippobotus in his *On Philosophical Sects* omits the Cynics as a philosophical group. Further, Varro’s lost work *De Philosophia* is quoted by Augustine, where it is said the Cynics do not establish a genuine school (*City of God* 19.2).

⁸⁸ Luis E. Navia, *Diogenes of Sinope: The Man in the Tub* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 54.

For instance, we find Diogenes living in a tub in absolute hardship, while others are living relatively comfortable lives. The corpus of Cynicism takes on a variety of forms: dialogues, epistles, diatribes, and others.⁸⁹ Regardless, it is Diogenes who remained the paradigmatic Cynic, who both later Cynics and its adversaries characterized as the archetype of Cynic practices and beliefs. Years later, those who chronicled Cynicism saw Diogenes as exemplifying the only true Cynicism, while those others were merely falling short of what genuine Cynicism practiced.⁹⁰ Thus, from then on the Cynics became known as “dogs” or “dog-like,” in part because of Antisthenes’ time spent at the *Kynosarges* as the “the absolute dog,” but more importantly because of Diogenes’ shameful acts as “the dog.”

However, Diogenes was more than happy to embrace the moniker κύων. Laertius recounts a story (6.46) where Diogenes was passing by a group of men at a feast, who eagerly threw bones at him, saying, “Here goes the dog!” Without saying a word, Diogenes approached and began urinating on them just as a dog would.⁹¹ Dog-like behavior is seen not only throughout Laertius’ account, but others including Dio Chrysostom, who notes that Diogenes defecated and even masturbated in public (Dio 8.36). Furthermore, according to Dio, dog-like behavior was the main tenet of Cynicism:

Let your language be barbarous, your voice discordant and just like the barking of a dog: let your expression be set, and your gait consistent with your expression. In a word, let everything about you be bestial and savage. Put off modestly, decency and moderation, and wipe away blushes from your face completely. Frequent the most crowded place, and in those very places desire to be solitary and uncommunicative, greeting nor friend nor stranger; for to do so is abdication of the empire. Do boldly in full view of all what another would not do in secret; choose the most ridiculous ways of satisfying your lust;

⁸⁹ Ibid., 55.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁹¹ Reference to a similar occurrence is made in Dio, 9.8.

and at the last, if you like, eat a raw devilfish or squid, and die. That is the bliss we vouchsafe you.⁹²

Thus, in the eyes of his contemporaries, Diogenes was contemptuously called a dog. Their purpose was to deride him by bringing out those shameful qualities in an animal that was known for its disgraceful behavior. At times, Diogenes responds to the nick-name (DL 6.61) by turning it on his opponents, saying, “It is you who are dogs,” and again, “Don’t be afraid, a hound is not found of beetroot.” It is clear from what remains of Diogenes Laertius, Dio Chrysostom, Epictetus, and those later philosophers such as Augustine, that the use of dog in a negative sense was first employed against Diogenes of Sinope.⁹³ It is interesting to note that Augustine, although not seeing Diogenes’ behavior firsthand, is so repulsed by his public sexual acts that he concludes it was all a ruse.⁹⁴ Cicero, also not a contemporary of Diogenes, portrays a similar message as Augustine by arguing that Cynicism represents the evil of shamefulness.⁹⁵ What can be taken away from both commentaries is the long lasting and burning image Cynicism created as a group identified as dog-like for their egregious shameless behavior. Regardless of Diogenes’ historical behavior, his biographers implanted an image of him as a shameless dog which had lasting influence for centuries.

Still, even Diogenes recognized the usefulness of sobriquets. He uses animals to describe others, calling some donkeys and Perdiccas of Macedonia a tarantula. It seems obvious, even to Diogenes, that these animals are meant to both insult and laud. The former, referred to as theriomorphism, is the reverse of anthropomorphism and is used to equate a person’s action with an ignoble animal trait. Theriophily, also using an animal's attribute, is employed to admire the

⁹² Dio, *Philosophies for Sale*, 10.

⁹³ Navia, *Diogenes the Cynic*, 67-68.

⁹⁴ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 14.20.

⁹⁵ Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.41.

person by ascribing an animal quality understood as superior.⁹⁶ But to Diogenes himself we encounter both theriomorphism and theriophily. The former is encountered in his adversaries, while the latter to Diogenes himself. Since Diogenes considered human decorum detestable, he considered the moniker "dog" a compliment, while of course his contemporaries injuriously used the nickname.

Further, there are a variety of *chreia* in which Laertius introduces the leitmotif of dogs. Often, Laertius details Diogenes described as a dog, referred to a dog, or describes himself as a dog (DL 6.33). Diogenes expands on his identification as a dog by maintaining that everyone praises his dog-like behavior; but only hedonistically, venerating him from a distance, since few are intrepid enough to emulate his shamelessness (DL 6.33). Again Diogenes returns to the motif when asked what kind of dog he was, saying, "When hungry, a Maltese; when full, a Molossian – two breeds which most people praise, though for fear of fatigue they do not venture out hunting with them. So neither can you live with me, because you are afraid of the discomforts" (DL 6.55). Thus, according to Diogenes, Cynicism is admired insomuch as its shameful followers do not adulterate common decorum.

Laertius tells us that while introducing himself to Alexander of Macedon, Diogenes identifies himself, "Diogenes the Dog" (6.60). We are also told that once Alexander asked Diogenes why he was called a dog. He replied saying he fawns at those who give him anything, "barks" at those who give him nothing, and "bites" those who are worthless (DL 6.60). Aggressive dog-like behavior is seen throughout Laertius' account. At times Diogenes is presented as repulsive, even terrifying, and barking and even attempting to bite children (DL 6.45; 61). Combative exploits are repeatedly shown between Plato and Diogenes. Plato, who

⁹⁶ See note 3 in Navia, *Diogenes the Cynic*, 87.

referred to Diogenes as a “Socrates gone mad,” (DL 6.54) dismisses Diogenes as merely a dog. Diogenes, of course, turns Plato’s polemic on its head, seeing dog-like traits not as abhorrent, but virtuous (DL 6.40).

Even more interesting is the *chreia* of Diogenes eating in the marketplace, where others are shown calling him a dog (DL 6.61). These anecdotes situate Diogenes as a well-known Cynic, often being recognized by important officials, philosophers, and commoners (DL 6.78). At his death, Diogenes’ burial ritual is even argued about amongst his disciples. Not only that, but fellow-citizens honored him with statues, even erecting a pillar and a marble dog upon it (DL 6.78).

To be sure, these accounts are not valuable because of their historicity. Rather, they are helpful in establishing not only Diogenes, but Cynicism, as a way of life that was often characterized by shameless dog-like behavior.⁹⁷ Later biographers speak of the eminence of Diogenes, such as Dio Chrysostom in his *Seventy-Second Discourse*, who provides ample evidence, saying, “And the masses still remember the sayings of Diogenes, some of which he may have spoken himself, though some too were composed by others” (77.11). And further, Dio even speaks of the people comparing Socrates’ wisdom to that of Diogenes (77.11) Lucian, too, in his *Demonax* twice mentions both Socrates and Diogenes, where their author assumes others would know of Diogenes’ reputation just as Socrates’ (169, 171).

Moreover, additional similarities between Cynicism and Paul exist, though the examples cited throughout this paper, at the very least, situate Paul responding to a well-known group known for its dog-like shamelessness during the first century. Of course, it is entirely

⁹⁷ Reumann notes, “Their crude *adiaphoria* or shameless indifference to conventional behavior – ‘constant barking, scavenging, urinating, and mating in public’ – made them unwelcome,” 471.

conceivable that Paul was responding to some other well-known group, or perhaps speaking against a small local problem specific to the Philippian community. Still, based on the lack of evidence supporting the traditional argument other avenues need to be explored.

Conclusions

This essay has focused on the question: does Paul admonish the Philippian community against Cynics by referring to their common moniker “dog” or “dogs” in 3.2 and then again in 3.19 by their shamelessness? Unfortunately evidence is not strong enough to definitely decide. However, drawing from the initial suggestion from Nanos, as well as contributions from Downing and Malherbe, we can certainly conclude that Paul shares a striking number of similarities with well-known Cynics. Perhaps this warranted a response to the Philippian community who thought Paul a Cynic? Or perhaps the community was being influenced by Cynics, which Paul felt compelled to extinguish? Again, evidence is in short supply.

Still, Paul does not appear to be addressing those Judaizers. This anti-Jewish tendency is a mistake that Christian scholarship has unwittingly perpetuated. Such assumptions, however, must be overturned. Instead, the fluidity of the ancient world needs to be recovered, a world in which differentiating between Jew, Christian, and Greek is not easily done. As a Greek-speaking Jew, Paul is likely to have known and used the philosophical language, even superficial references, of the Greco-Roman world in his exhortations to Christian communities. Whether or not Paul recognized these similarities and thought it important to condemn Cynicism to onlookers cannot be definitively argued. Yet those differences between Paul and the lasting legacy of well-known Cynics described by their “dog-like” and “shameful” activities, such as Diogenes, remains striking. Thus, Paul thought it necessary to be harsh with those “dogs” in

Philippians 3.2, as well as those condemned for their shamelessness in 3.19, in order to combat a type of indecorous behavior, perhaps from Cynics, that was not compatible with his gospel.

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