

"THE EVIL YOU WOULD NOT HAVE DONE TO YOU, DO NOT TO OTHERS."
ANTISTHENES (445 BCE – 365 BCE)

CYNICISM — An Overview

Inception: Antisthenes (445 BCE – 365 BCE)

Adherents: Cynicism disappeared in the late 5th century. [EBI Estimate]

Primary Value Proposition: Live a Simple and Virtuous Life

The Word of (about and/or attributed to) God:

- God is supreme; he is the Most High of heaven and earth. God is the perfected circle of eternity, and he rules the universe of universes. He is the sole maker of the heavens and the earth. When he decrees a thing, that thing is. Our God is one God, and he is compassionate and merciful. Everything that is high, holy, true, and beautiful is like our God. The Most High is the light of heaven and earth.
- God is self-existent, and he is devoid of all anger and enmity; he is immortal and infinite.
- The Most High has decreed the union of body and soul and has endowed man with his own spirit.
- We search for the Most High and then find him in our hearts. You go in quest of a dear friend, and then you discover him within your soul.
- The man who knows God looks upon all men as equal; they are his brethren.
- All the worlds and the universes worship the Most High. And with all your prayers give thanks — ascend to worship.
- The Most High is like a loving father and mother; he really loves us, his children on earth.
- God is just: What fruit we receive not from our plantings in this world we shall receive in the next.

Core Beliefs: The Cynics made their philosophy democratic with broad appeal to the common person. They promised an afterlife aying any man could save himself and meet death without fear. They advocated simplicity and urged virtue. To the adherents of Cynicism, people could gain happiness by rigorous training and by living in a way which was natural for humans. They believed that the world belonged equally to everyone, and that suffering was caused by false judgments of what was valuable and by the worthless customs and conventions which surrounded society. The fundamental principles of Cynicism can be summarized as follows:

The goal of life is happiness which is to live in agreement with nature. This happiness depends on being self-sufficient, and a master of mental attitude. Self-sufficiency is achieved by living a life of virtue. The road to virtue is to free oneself from any influence such as wealth, fame, or power, which have no value in nature. Suffering is caused by false judgments of value, which cause negative emotions and a vicious character.

Thus a Cynic has no property and rejects all conventional values of money, fame, power or reputation. A life lived according to nature requires only the bare necessities required for existence, and one can become free by unshackling oneself from any needs which are the result of convention. The Cynics adopted Hercules as their hero, as epitomizing the ideal Cynic. Hercules "was he who brought Cerberus, the hound of Hades, from the underworld, a point of special appeal to the dog-man, Diogenes." According to Lucian, "Cerberus and Cynic are surely related through the dog." The title Cynics was derived from the Greek word κύων (meaning "dog") because they allegedly neglected society, hygiene, family, money, etc., in a manner reminiscent of dogs.