

Antisthenica Cynica
Socratica

Edited by
Vladislav Suvák

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IX
DIOGENES OF SINOPE AS SOCRATES
MAINOMENOS

Lívía Flachbartová

Ancient Cynicism belongs to the Socratic tradition of thought. Even it is part of a less known “branch” of the Socratic tradition in comparison with Plato or Aristotle, it does not mean that Cynicism would be less Socratic or less significant in shaping its own way how to understand and develop philosophical message of Socrates. Cynicism offers a very different approach to questions considered being Socratic and based mainly on Plato’s dialogues.

Doxographical tradition has preserved one very interesting anecdote in which Diogenes of Sinope, one of the most eccentric figures of antiquity and the most famous Cynic, is called by Plato “Socrates gone mad” (Σωκράτης μαινόμενος).¹ It is no surprise that Diogenes’ extravagant behaviour raised such and even worse reactions. But the connection with Socrates prompts us that behind Diogenes’ performances could be found some inner logic which is essentially Socratic. Cynicism used to be viewed as philosophy pushing the Socratic principles to extreme or as a radicalization of Socrates’ way of life. This could be seen even when we look at the physical appear-

¹ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae*, VI,54 (*SSR* VB 59); cf. Aelian, *Var. hist.* XIV,33. For the fragments of Cynics I use Giannantoni’s edition *Socratis et Socraticorum reliquiae*, II. Fragments of the Cynics are marked VA – VN (Diogenes’ fragments are marked VB). In this paper I use primarily the translation of R. Hard (*Diogenes the Cynic. Sayings and Anecdotes with Other Popular Moralists*). In few cases I have used the translation of R. Dobbin (*The Cynic Philosophers from Diogenes to Julian*) – each of these cases is specified in footnote.

ance of both, Socrates and Diogenes. If Socrates did not care so much about his appearance, Diogenes' appearance provoked attention of Athenians from the distance. If Socrates used to walk barefoot, Diogenes walked not only barefoot but just in a cloak. If Socrates lived in poverty and did not attach importance to conventional goods but still had house and was married, Diogenes did not have any property and regarded conventional goods such a money, property or institutions (including marriage in traditional sense) to be senseless even harmful to a truly good life. If Socrates spent the most of the time in agora leading conversations, Diogenes spent all his time outside and used agora or other public places to everything including all the matters of Demeter and Aphrodite. If Socrates was one of the modest men of his times, Diogenes practiced an ascetic life *par excellence*; etc. At the first glance, this is a very suitable expression because it points to the core of Diogenes' activity and expresses the primary orientation of Cynicism as such. But is there Σωκράτης μαινόμενος such a suitable expression to describe Diogenes as a philosopher?

In this paper I adopt Σωκράτης μαινόμενος as the basic perspective, in an effort, on the one side, to see if this label of Diogenes is sustainable from historical point of view, and if it indeed points to the core of philosophy as it is understood by Diogenes; on the other side, to show the Socratic character of Cynicism and the Cynic representation of Socratic philosophy, a representation which is distinctive in its radical approach to the fundamental aspects of Socrates' philosophy.

1. Meaning and use of μαινόμενος in the Socratic context

At first, let me turn to the word μαινόμενος to show the full range of meaning as well as different contexts in which it appears. The *Greek-English Lexicon* (short *LSJ*) informs us that the verb μαινομαι refers to these basic meanings: to be rage or furious (e.g. with anger); to be mad; to be inspired or driven mad by something; riot or strong feelings.² All these meanings point to the behaviour which in some

² Cf. the verb μαινομαι in *LSJ*: (1) to be rage or furious (in Homer frequently of martial rage); rage with anger; to be mad (e.g. with wine, of Bacchic frenzy); to be inspired by, driven mad by; to be beside oneself (e.g.

way excesses common state or measure in the sense of adequateness. It bears rather negative than positive meaning since it describes a person (or a thing) who is going through some extreme, i.e. fury (in emotions) or madness (concerning reason).

To see the context in which this word occurs, we turn now to some examples in Greek texts. For us, the context of the Socratic literature is important, namely Xenophon and Plato, to see (1) meaning of the term as it is used in Socratic literature, and its relation to some other Socratic topics included in context of occurrence the term; (2) if any occurrence of the word bears the meaning in which we use to approach the Cynicism, i.e. as a radical adaptation of Socrates' philosophy.

In Xenophon's *Memorabilia* is the term *μαινόμενος* (and all derived forms) used mainly in the context of knowledge and ignorance as well as in relation to self-control and bodily pleasures. At the beginning of the book I of *Memorabilia* (I,1,13–14), Xenophon describes Socrates' attitude toward inquiry of the cosmos and those involved in such an inquiry. Socrates considers things concerning cosmos to be divine and thus appertaining to the divine wisdom which is not accessible to humans and human wisdom. Philosophers or thinkers interested in an examination of the cosmos differ from each other as madmen: "he marvelled at their blindness in not seeing that man cannot solve these riddles; since even the most conceited talkers on these problems did not agree in their theories, but behaved to one another like madmen (*μαιομένοις*). As some madmen (*μαιομένων*) have no fear of danger and others are afraid where there is nothing to be afraid of, as some will do or say anything in a crowd with no sense of shame, while others shrink even from going abroad among men".³ Fear of a madman roots in his ignorance about the dreadful and dangerous things. Similarly, those who are talking about cosmos and trying to grasp its character do not know which things belong to the human wisdom and which are matters of the divine one.⁴ Incon-

with joy); of madness in animals; *πόνους* at or because of. (2) of things, rage, riot (esp. of fire), a hot, strong; of feelings (e.g. *ἐλπις μαιομένη*). (3) *ἄμπελος μαιομένη*, of a vine that is never done bearing fruit. (4) malignant.

³ Trans. by E. C. Marchant (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*).

⁴ Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 530a–b.

sistency of their attitudes is a proof that they do not know what they are talking about exactly as madmen.⁵

Similar argument although in different context can be found in fourth book of *Memorabilia* (IV,6,10). This passage is situated in dialogue between Socrates and Euthydemus and concerns the question of courage (ἀνδρεία):

“Socrates asks: ‘Do you think that in the pressure of terrors and dangers it is useful to be ignorant of them?’

Euthydemus: ‘By no means.’

Socrates: ‘So those who feel no fear of such things because they are ignorant of them are not courageous?’

Euthydemus replies: ‘Of course not, for in that case many madmen (μυινομένων) and cowards would be courageous.’

Socrates: ‘What of those who are afraid when there is no ground for fear?’

Euthydemus: ‘Still less, of course.’

Socrates: ‘Then do you think that those who are good in the presence of terrors and dangers are courageous, and those who are bad are cowards?’

Euthydemus: ‘Certainly.’”

One’s action cannot be considered to be courageous without particular knowledge about danger, otherwise even madmen and cowards in their ignorance would act courageously. Thus, according to Socrates, only those who in the pressure of danger know how to deal well with situation are courageous, and those who mistaken are coward (IV,6,11). And to know how to deal with situation means to be able to come to right decision about what would be the best to do in the pressure of danger. In this respect, danger includes everything what would endanger not only life as such, but a good life, and hence involves also things like ignorance or intemperance.

⁵ One would wonder about philosophers’ opinions concerning ethics: they differ from each other exactly as those involved in inquiry of *kosmos*. But there is one fundamental difference between inquiry of *kosmos* and ethical one – inquiry of *kosmos* aims at some kind of universal knowledge, while ethics is a matter of individual life and of praxis and this is the reason why individual philosophers offer different approaches to question of a good life.

Two passages in *Memorabilia* directly confront ignorance (ἀμαθία) and μανία. In the third book (*Mem.* III,9,6) Xenophon reports that for Socrates madness and wisdom were opposites, however he did not regard madness and ignorance being the same thing: “Madness (μανίαν), again, according to him, was the opposite of Wisdom (σοφία). Nevertheless he did not identify Ignorance with Madness (μανίαν); but not to know yourself, and to assume and think that you know what you do not, he put next to Madness (μανίας). ‘Most men, however,’ he declared, ‘do not call those mad who err in matters that lie outside the knowledge of ordinary people: madness is the name they give to errors in matters of common knowledge.’”⁶ Madness does not directly consist in ignorance, although they are close to each other: according to Socrates people consider someone to be mad when he thinks he is able to do something what is evidently unfeasible, e.g. “if a man imagines himself to be so tall as to stoop when he goes through the gateways in the Wall, or so strong as to try to lift houses or to perform any other feat that everybody knows to be impossible” (III,9,7). From these examples we could assume that matters of common knowledge are somehow related to knowledge of one’s skills and powers or, in other words, to self-knowledge, and hence ignorance and madness stand next to each other. If one cannot rightly evaluate his own δύναμις and ἰσχύς, he does not know himself – he is ignorant of himself (ἀγνοεῖν ἑαυτόν) (IV,2,25). On the other side, if one is in the state of total delusion or derangement in these matters, i.e. in self-knowledge in the sense of knowledge of one’s δύναμις and ἰσχύς, he can be rightly considered to be mad (μαινόμενος): “They [people] don’t think a slight error implies madness, but just as they call strong desire (ἐπιθυμίαν) love, so they name a great delusion madness (μανίαν).”⁷ (III,9,7) Madness is here

⁶ μανίαν γε μὴν ἐναντίον μὲν ἔφη εἶναι σοφία, οὐ μὲντοι γε τὴν ἀνεπιστημοσύνην μανίαν ἐνόμιζε: τὸ δὲ ἀγνοεῖν ἑαυτόν καὶ ἃ μὴ οἶδε δοξάζειν τε καὶ οἶεσθαι γινώσκειν ἐγγυτάτω μανίας ἐλογίζετο εἶναι. τοὺς μὲντοι πολλοὺς ἔφη, ἃ μὲν οἱ πλείστοι ἀγνοοῦσι, τοὺς διημαρτηκότας τούτων οὐ φάσκειν μαίνεσθαι, τοὺς δὲ διημαρτηκότας ὧν οἱ πολλοὶ γινώσκουσι μαινομένους καλεῖν.

⁷ τοὺς δὲ μικρὸν διαμαρτάνοντας οὐ δοκεῖν τοῖς πολλοῖς μαίνεσθαι, ἀλλ’, ὥσπερ τὴν ἰσχυρὰν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔρωτα καλοῦσιν, οὕτω καὶ τὴν μεγάλην παράνοϊαν μανίαν αὐτοὺς καλεῖν

characterized as a great delusion (μεγάλη παράνοια) in the matters of common knowledge in comparison with “mere” ignorance which could be defined as an error in some more specific areas of knowledge that require conscious intention.

To see the distinction between them more clearly, let’s turn to another passage of *Memorabilia* (I,2,50): “In reality Socrates held that, if you clap fetters on a man for his ignorance, you deserve to be kept in gaol yourself by those whose knowledge is greater (ὕπὸ τῶν ἐπισταμένων) than your own: and such reasoning led him frequently to consider the difference between Madness and Ignorance (τί διαφέρει μανίας ἀμαθία). That madmen (μαινομένους) should be kept in prison was expedient, he thought, both for themselves and for their friends:⁸ but those who are ignorant (μὴ ἐπισταμένους) of what they ought to know deserve to learn from those who know it.” Madness is something like an extreme state of mind, like a state featured by such a great delusion that is not reversible neither through learning nor through any explanation regarding one’s errors. It does not consist only in one’s conviction he know what in fact he does not (what would belong to the ignorance), but he is not able even to see mistakes as mistakes because his notion of the context of his life, i.e. of himself and of reality as well, is completely different from that of others. An ignorant still has a chance to overcome his ignorance with the help of those experienced or wise and through learning of what he ought to know.

Another important feature of madness (and wisdom) lies in approach to bodily pleasures and passions, and thus is closely related to self-control (ἐγκράτεια), that is in *Memorabilia* (I,5) discussed as the foundation of all virtues (ἀρεταί). As we saw in definition of μαινόμενος, it denotes fury or rage concerning one’s feelings or emotions, e.g. anger or love etc. It points to someone who is driven mad or rage with desire of his soul and loses the control over himself (which is control based on the self-knowledge and the knowledge of good and useful things on the one side and bad and harmful things on the other). In *Memorabilia* (I,3,8–13) Socrates depicted in

⁸ Cf. Plato, *Leg.* 934c–d: “If any be a madman (μαινόμενος), he shall not appear openly in the city; the relatives of such persons shall keep them indoors, employing whatever means they know of, or else they shall pay a penalty.” Trans. by R. G. Bury (Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*).

conversation with Xenophon is criticizing Critobulus (who is present in conversation as well) for kissing a beautiful youngster. “And what do you think you would suffer after kissing someone beautiful? Would you not immediately be a slave rather than free, spend a lot for harmful pleasures (βλαβεράς ἡδονάς), be in great want of leisure for attending to anything noble and good, and be compelled to take seriously what even a madman (μαινόμενος) would not take seriously?”⁹ (I,3,11)¹⁰ This passage shows that if one cannot control his desire, it leads to slavery of one’s pleasures what inhibits him to care for noble and good things. Satisfying desires of body in effort to achieve pleasure means pursuing only these pleasures which appeal with still more strength and require full attention. In this respect uncontrolled bodily pleasures enslave those who put a fundamental importance to them. Hence they are becoming slaves of their bodies and in consequence lapse into self-deception.

Let us look at this issue more closely. In *Memorabilia* (I,2,1) Xenophon offers a characterization of Socrates: “In the first place, apart from what I have said, in control of his own passions and appetites he was the strictest of men; further, in endurance of cold and heat and every kind of toil he was most resolute; and besides, his needs were so schooled to moderation that having very little he was yet very content.”¹¹ Socrates is presented as a model example of ἐγκράτεια, what suggests its fundamental function in ethics of Xenophon’s Socrates. If one cannot control his desires with regard to food, wine, matters of love or sleep, he is unable to do the right decision in general¹² and

⁹ Here I follow the translation of Amy L. Bonnette (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*).

¹⁰ ὃ τλῆμον, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, καὶ τί ἂν οἶε παθεῖν καλὸν φιλήσας; ἄρ’ οὐκ ἂν αὐτίκα μάλα δοῦλος μὲν εἶναι ἄντ’ ἐλευθέρου, πολλὰ δὲ δαπανᾶν εἰς βλαβεράς ἡδονάς, πολλὴν δὲ ἀσχολίαν ἔχειν τοῦ ἐπιμεληθῆναι τινοῦ καλοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, σπουδάζειν δ’ ἀναγκασθῆναι ἐφ’ οἷς οὐδ’ ἂν μαινόμενος σπουδάσειεν;

¹¹ ὃς πρὸς τοῖς εἰρημένοις πρῶτον μὲν ἀφροδισίων καὶ γαστρὸς πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐγκρατέστατος ἦν, εἶτα πρὸς χειμῶνα καὶ θέρος καὶ πάντας πόνους καρτερικώτατος, ἔτι δὲ πρὸς τὸ μετρίων δεῖσθαι πεπαιδευμένος οὕτως, ὥστε πάνυ μικρὰ κεκτημένος πάνυ ῥαδίως ἔχειν ἀρκοῦντα.

¹² Inability to self-control presupposes an inclination to pleasure (ἡδονή). If one use to sleep whenever he is a little bit tired, he will not be able to

IX. Diogenes of Sinope as Socrates mainomenos

Socrates describes such a man as a slave (δοῦλος) of himself (I,5,5). In this respect, ἐγκράτεια is the foundation of freedom (ἐλευθερία) or free life as a whole. Freedom and slavery are treated in specific Socratic sense, i.e. for the conduct of good life. In *Memorabilia* (IV,5) Xenophon describes how Socrates through the example of his life exhorted his companions to ἐγκράτεια. Socrates' dialogue with Euthydemus begins with question regarding freedom: "Tell me, Euthydemus," he said, "do you think that freedom is a noble and splendid possession both for individuals and for communities?"¹³ When Euthydemus agreed, Socrates continued: "Then do you think that the man is free who is ruled by bodily pleasures and is unable to do what is best because of them?" (*Mem.* IV,5,3). Bodily pleasures, then, can have such strength they are able to take a control over oneself. Moreover, an effect of these pleasures is that one is unable to do what is best in particular situation. From this point of view, incontinence (ἄκρασία) is the worst form of slavery (IV,5,5), because those who are ruled by bodily pleasures are not only unable to do the best, but also forced by them to do what is the most dishonourable (IV,5,4). In the result, bodily pleasures lead to the worst behaviour or action and this is the reason why they are considered to be the worst masters (IV,5,5) leading man to the worst form of slavery, i.e. slavery of oneself. If one is a slave of his bodily pleasures, he cannot see what is important and cannot correctly distinguish what is good and what is not. Hence he has to free himself from the dominance of the false pleasures and become the master over himself in order to get an access to the genuine freedom (ἐλευθερία).

If the bodily pleasures are the worst masters, then, on the one hand ἄκρασία causes the greatest evil, and on the other hand self-mastery (ἐγκράτεια) over one's pleasures, passions and needs has to lead to the greatest good and one becomes the best master over himself.

overcome this habit in situations when it is impossible to sleep, or when being tired he will have to deal with important situation. He would be in a bad mood and miserable, making decisions (consciously or not) influenced with things he is missing besides focusing on right judgement about particular situation. In other words, absence of pleasure causes to such a man pain darkening the reason.

¹³ εἰπέ μοι, ἔφη, ὃ Εὐθύδημε, ἄρα καλὸν καὶ μεγαλεῖον νομίζεις εἶναι καὶ ἀνδρὶ καὶ πόλει κτῆμα ἐλευθερίαν; (*Mem.* IV,5,2).

Ἀκρατής person lacks the prudence or temperance (σωφροσύνη) and Socrates considers the actions prompted by prudence and incontinence to be exact opposites (IV,5,7)¹⁴. He asks: “And do you think there can be aught worse for a man than that which causes him to choose the harmful rather than the useful, and persuades him to care for the one and to be careless of the other, and forces him to do the opposite of what prudence dictates?” This question points to three interrelated features of ἀκρασία: ἀκρασία causes that (1) man chooses harmful rather than useful, (2) he care for what is worse rather than for what is good, and (3) he does the exact opposite than σωφροσύνη requires. These three points of ἀκρασία are consequences of bodily pleasures which are out of one’s control and, according to Socrates, in such state they provide only delusional pleasure (ἡδονή) and divert from the genuine pleasure. “Incontinence (ἀκρασία) will not let them endure (καρτερεῖν) hunger or thirst or desire or lack of sleep, which are the sole causes of pleasure in eating and drinking and sexual indulgence, and in resting and sleeping, after a time of waiting and resistance until the moment comes when these will give the greatest possible satisfaction; and thus she prevents them from experiencing any pleasure worthy to be mentioned in the most elementary and recurrent forms of enjoyment. But self-control (ἐγκράτεια) alone causes them to endure (καρτερεῖν) the sufferings I have named, and therefore she alone causes them to experience any pleasure worth mentioning in such enjoyments.” (IV,5,9) The main argument in this passage is that the greatest and genuine pleasure is possible only as a result of self-control, because only when we are able to resist the initial calling for satisfaction until the moment when it is necessary to satisfy the basic needs, we can experience the true pleasure. Moreover, ἀκρασία disables “from experiencing any pleasure worthy to be mentioned”, so we can say that from this perspective blind effort for satisfaction of every need, passion or bodily pleasure leads only to mischief and causes satisfying these needs more and more difficult even impossible. Anyway, this does not mean that Socrates would be against satisfying bodily pleasures at all. In I,2,4 Xenophon reports that “he himself [i.e. Socrates] never neglected the body, and reproved such neglect in others. Thus over-eating fol-

¹⁴ αὐτὰ γὰρ δήπου τὰ ἐναντία σωφροσύνης καὶ ἀκρασίας ἔργα ἐστίν.

lowed by over-exertion he disapproved. But he approved of taking as much hard exercise as is agreeable to the soul; for the habit not only insured good health, but did not hamper the care of the soul (τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν).” The aim of self-control over bodily pleasures is not to silence or eliminate them – for they are an integrate part of who we are, but to get them under one’s control. Connection between care of the body and care of the soul is one of the motives which from the beginning reoccurs in whole *Memorabilia* in the concept of ἐγκράτεια. Self-control is the question of the body as well as the soul, e.g. if one avoids over-eating, it is not only a sign that he has control over his body, but it is at once a sign that he came to inner decision to avoid something what is harmful for his body in the form of over-exertion etc., and what distracts the attention from the care of the soul. This is the reason why ἐγκράτεια is the foundation of all ἀρεταί and the necessary condition for attaining each of them. Only when one has control over himself he is able to lead a good life.

If ἀκρασία is the worst master, it is because, as Donald Morrison noted, it “deflect and divert and corrupt the person’s judgement”¹⁵. One chooses the harmful rather than the useful because of lack of σωφροσύνη and ἐγκράτεια. As we have seen these concepts are linked together in *Memorabilia* (IV,5,7), where action led by ἀκρασία is considered to be the exact opposite of action led by σωφροσύνη, not by ἐγκράτεια. In the passage III,9,4 Xenophon reports that Socrates drew no distinction between σωφροσύνη and σοφία for “if a man knows and practises what is beautiful and good, knows and avoids what is base, that man he judged to be both wise and prudent (σοφόν τε καὶ σώφρονα)”. Thus prudent actions are at the same time wise actions and self-control in bodily pleasures enables to achieve the right judgement about what is beautiful and good and what is not. At first one has to be master over oneself to be able to do the right decision in every particular situation in his life – from everyday banalities to the most important questions of his life – and in this sense is ἐγκράτεια the very base of every effort to know and practice what is good and beautiful, in other words of every effort to be wise (σοφός) and prudent (σώφρων).

¹⁵ D. Morrison, *Xenophon’s Socrates on Sophia and the Virtues*, p. 235.