Epictetus on the Cynic’s Calling

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Abstract
This paper explores possible reasons why Epictetus was so attracted to Cynicism, both as a philosophical ideal and as a way of life. By this I mean that Epictetus not only agreed with much that Diogenes reputedly maintained, but he also seemed fascinated by the idea of Cynicism as a shortcut to the Stoic goal of becoming one of the sapiens. After a brief sketch of Epictetus’s account of Cynicism, I want to highlight the salient features of the Cynic lifestyle that he considers most consistent with Stoic doctrine. After this, I will outline what I take the shortcut to wisdom to consist in, and why this method might appeal to Later Stoics in general and Epictetus in particular. Through this analysis, I hope to help contribute a better overall picture of the relationship between Later Stoicism and Cynicism.

The influence of Cynicism on Stoic philosophy is only now achieving full thematization in contemporary Hellenistic scholarship. Recent articles have begun to trace explicit parallels between Cynic ethical practice and doctrines held by the Stoics, especially Late Stoic philosophers.¹ There is sufficient reason to do so. Both Cynic and Stoic traditions advocate in a more or less general way the idea of happiness as living in agreement with nature, the emphasis on physical and spiritual training, the importance of freedom, and indifference toward external circumstances beyond one’s control. Both traditions, it has been argued, appropriate these attitudes as functionaries of Socratic heritage.² As the bearers of Socratic wisdom, Stoics and Cynics alike attempt to fulfill the maxim gnôthi sauton (know thyself) and apply this knowledge to their daily lives. The degree to which self-knowledge implies for both parties similar practices is open for speculation. The Stoic sapiens (wise man) might, having achieved the kind of spiritual reflection that allows his behavior to reflect his mastery of physics, ethics, and logic, act in ways that are morally indiscernible from the experienced Cynic. The textual evidence does not immediately rule out a bold claim such as this, as I hope to show.

Cynicism therefore enjoys a loose affiliation with Stoic ideals, one that it does not share with certain other Hellenistic


² Long, p. 28.
philosophies, most notably Epicureanism. The association is perhaps most prominent in the Roman Stoics, though the alliance is an uneasy one, and Stoics are not at all of one mind on the matter. Cicero reports in De finibus 3.68 that some Stoics view the habits of the Cynics as appropriate to the sapiens, while others reject them outright. Some Stoics believed that the Cynics’ “canine” behavior and lack of social propriety ruled them out as legitimate affiliates in ethical matters, since such behavior made a Cynic lifestyle naturally adverse to fulfilling political duties. Cicero himself seems to have discredited the Cynical approach to philosophy on these grounds, just as, according to his report (De Off. Book 1), Panaetius did. Epictetus, however, is often seen as a more humane Stoic and one less interested in political reputation and political philosophy, unlike Panaetius, Cicero, and Seneca. Perhaps for these reasons he adopts a posture of respect and deference towards the Cynics, particularly Diogenes. Arrian devotes a sizable chapter to Cynicism in his report of Epictetus’s Discourses, and it is readily apparent that Epictetus considered Diogenes to be one of the most notable precursors to Stoicism, and counted him among the likes of Socrates, Chrysippus, and Zeno.

In this paper I want to discuss some possible reasons why Epictetus was so attracted to Cynicism, both as a philosophical ideal and as a way of life. By this I mean that Epictetus not only agreed with much that Diogenes reputedly maintained, but he also seemed fascinated by the idea of Cynicism as a shortcut to the Stoic goal of becoming one of the sapiens, as Apollodorus believed (D.L. 7.121). Though Epictetus shared in some of his fellow Stoics’ reservations about the uncleanly lifestyle reported of some Cynics, he nevertheless saw Cynicism as an alternative path to wisdom, one that was dangerous and fraught with difficulties and therefore unsuitable for all but a select group of sages. After a brief sketch of Epictetus’s account of Cynicism, I want to highlight the salient features of the Cynic lifestyle that he considers most consistent with Stoic doctrine. After this, I will outline what I take the shortcut to wisdom to consist in, and why this method might appeal to Later Stoics in general and Epictetus in particular. Through this analysis, I hope to help contribute a better overall picture of the relationship between Later Stoicism and Cynicism.

It should be noted from the outset that when Epictetus refers to the Cynics in the Discourses he is primarily thinking of Diogenes. Diogenes is one of the few Cynics that Epictetus even mentions by name in the work, and when he does mention others, such as Antisthenes and Crates, it is usually with reference to their relationship to Diogenes (3.22.63). The examples of Cynic behavior and way of life (askesis) that betray its values (apatheia, autarkeis, parrhesia, anaideia) all allude to Diogenes Laertius’s accounts of Diogenes of Sinope. The chreiai, or short, witty statements tinged with ethical seriousness, were also primarily taken from accounts of Diogenes the Cynic. Furthermore, when an unknown interlocutor (probably a student) offers Crates and Hipparchia as an example of Cynics who chose to marry, Epictetus dismisses them as an anomalous case, and not a true measure of how a real Cynic conducts his affairs (3.22.76). The real Cynic, he claims, has no friends that are not Cynics and does not marry or procreate—an image

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3 Diogenenes Laertius reports the outright admonition of Cynicism by Epicurus in the latter’s On Life (D.L. 10.119).


5 All translations of passages in the Discourses are taken from the edition edited by Christopher Gill and translated by Robin Hard (Rutland, VT: Everyman, 1995).
based upon the life of Diogenes. Exactly how accurate are Epictetus’s ideas about Cynicism in general and Diogenes in particular I set aside as outside the scope of the present paper. What remains crucial is to try to characterize accurately what Epictetus took the Cynicism to be.

However much Epictetus takes on Diogenes as his model for the Cynic life, he is careful not to locate the importance of Cynic philosophy in the eccentric appearance of the “dog philosopher” (3.22.10-11). In fact, Epictetus does not tolerate the pretentiousness of philosophers who use argument merely to impress or gain reputation, and he rebukes those who remain enchanted with the image of the philosopher and not with the philosopher’s pursuit of wisdom (2.19; 3.23; 4.8). Rather, the Cynic’s outward appearance and mannerisms are merely the effects of a more profound pursuit of wisdom, one that Epictetus calls the “Cynic Calling” (3.22.11). Detailing just what this calling involves will help uncover why Epictetus found the Cynics so fascinating.

The Cynic Calling had much in common with certain Stoic ideas about virtue and what is to be desired and avoided. The Cynic takes it upon himself to accuse neither god nor man, to suppress all desires that fall outside the realm of choice, to avoid the passions, and to shun appetites for food, sex, and power (3.22.13). The Stoic typically disciplines himself to these ends out of an intellectual desire to achieve virtue. His outward, practical behavior is a reflection of certain theoretical convictions that he has acquired through argumentation and understanding the various tenets of Stoic doctrine relating to logic and physics. The Cynic, according to Epictetus, has a more profound reason for adopting the aforementioned attitudes. When the Cynic takes on these dispositions as a way to purify his own ruling faculty, he does this as a condition of his calling by the gods. That is, the Cynic is fulfilling a role handed to him by a divine power, and in taking certain strategies toward desires and choices he is acting out that role.6

The role handed down by the gods is that of a messenger (aggielos), spy (kataskopos), and reporter (martus) (3.22.23-25). As a divine messenger, the Cynic must relate the will of the gods to the masses. As a spy, he must actively seek out good and evil, and as a reporter he must tell with confidence what he has learned from his researches. This image attempts to explain many of the behaviors of the Cynic. For example, Epictetus claims that Cynics display a lack of respect for authority because they recognize Zeus as their one and only master (3.22.56). Likewise, a Cynic is often beaten and made the object of ridicule and contempt because, like the man who is freed from Plato’s cave and reports back his findings to his fettered compatriots, the Cynic’s unabashed exposure of moral hypocrisy makes his role as a spy very unpopular (3.22.53-54). Yet despite the citizen’s rebukes, the Cynic must bear it as his privilege to be beaten and embrace them as brothers anyway. The Socratic elements are almost palpable here, in the form of the philosopher as social critic and upstart, who is at the same time someone bound both by duty to his community and the will of the gods.

A. A. Long’s point is well taken here. He claims that Diogenes’s fervent criticism of social values, customs, and institutions does not betray a general antipathy toward nomos. Long writes that “the target of his attack on convention was largely its hypocrisy and inconsistency. He saw the same conventional norms being invoked both to proscribe unethical conduct and to condone it, and conventional practice

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6 It is quite probable that Epictetus received inspiration for the image of the Cynic as divine messenger from accounts of Diogenes’s death (D.L. 6.76-77) and in a letter falsely ascribed to Diogenes in which he calls himself a “dog of heaven.” See Billerbeck, p. 206.
sanctioning what conventional precept prohibited.” In his role as spy and messenger, the Cynic must uncover hypocrisy wherever he finds it and admonish those who perpetrate it. This is not done out of a sense of moral superiority or general wickedness, but rather out of a concern for the well-being of the community, according to Epictetus. The Cynic must use the conscience of another to correct that person’s actions, because no other weapon will do. Tyrants may be able to get someone to do something using coercive force, the Cynic, if he is to be unhypocritical, can only use the conscience of the wrongdoer (3.22.94). To submit to the will of any authority other than Zeus is to bow in fear to “masks,” as children do (3.22.106). Yet, to chastise others with their own sense of guilt is to provoke them toward action without using titles, arms, or fear, all of which are things that the true Cynic abhors. Herein lies the Cynic’s strength.

A great example of this comes from an account by Diogenes Laertius, who apparently read it in a work by Metrocles (D.L. 6.33). According to the story, Diogenes of Sinope arrived at a party with his head shaven. The party got out of hand, and a few of the feistier attendants physically abused Diogenes, presumably to humiliate him. The next day, Diogenes made and wore a heavy tablet around his neck with the names of his attackers inscribed upon it. Soon enough, the public had denounced the actions of those guilty and admonished them.

This raises an interesting point about the lifestyle of the Cynic. Diogenes is renown for his crude and vulgar behavior. One way of explaining his eccentric behavior is that his frank directness of speech (parrhesia) and lack of shame in the performance of all bodily actions (anaideia) somehow conveyed the overall philosophical message or achieved some other desired effect, such as calling attention to instances of social hypocrisy. What is unique in Epictetus’s account of Diogenes is that the exact same behavior is seen as an expression of shame (aidôs), rather than of shamelessness. The openness and freedom with which Diogenes acted was unparalleled by any other ancient philosopher, including Socrates. He conducted his every daily affair, from eating and defecating, to engaging others in dialogue and masturbating, without consideration of place or those in attendance. While others saw these acts as indecent and betraying an ignorance of propriety, Epictetus saw in Diogenes’s behavior a sense of shame that reflected respect, both for himself and for others (3.22.14-15). Diogenes did everything in public because privacy conceals the acts of the common man. Activities done outside of public scrutiny allows one to act in a morally contemptible way without fear of reproach, thus magnifying one’s ability to be shameless.

Thus, under Epictetus’s account, Diogenes exhibited the ultimate sense of shame, in that he made his every action open to public scrutiny and judgment. This is consistent with the idea of the Cynic as a messenger of the gods for two reasons. One, the Cynic realizes that no matter how hard he tries to hide his actions, they are always observable by the ultimate judge and authority, Zeus. Two, it allows the Cynic to be a spy and messenger in that he avoids the hypocrisy inherent in any attempt to place his own actions above inspection. The Cynic not only chooses to do everything within the public sphere, he must, or else he ceases to be a Cynic (3.22.16). If the conscience of others is the weapon of the Cynic, his openness and aidôs are his defense. As Epictetus puts the point, “His sense of shame is

7 Long, p. 35

8 cf. D.L. 6.37-38. The Cynic, like all other moral agents, is also unable to escape the notice of the divine spark within himself, his own personal daemon (Disc. 1.14.12).
his house; and this is his door, his door-keeper and his darkness” (3.22.15).

The image of the Cynic as son and messenger of Zeus plays itself out in the Cynic’s behavior, as his constant criticism is meant to expose weak points in society and make them explicit to the masses and especially to those who cause them. The Cynic does this out of a sense of brotherhood, according to Epictetus, as we are all children of the gods (3.22.82). For this reason, the Cynic considers himself to be the companion of all families and related to all, not as an equal, but as a dog, a faithful hound, who remains devoted to his family even as he barks and growls at its injustices. For all of his crude and outrageous behavior, the Athenians seemed to recognize this much, and they loved him (D.L. 6.43).

However, the metaphor of the son of Zeus is played out even further in the analogical relation between the Cynic and Hercules. The task of the Cynic is seen as toil (ponos), or a series of labors. The Cynic takes these on himself because it is a part of his own purification of his ruling faculty. According to Epictetus, he does this without complaint (3.22.57), as Hercules did, and when the toils do not naturally present themselves, the Cynic creates them for himself, a practice that Epictetus greatly admires (1.6.32-34). Thus, we find Diogenes eating raw meat (D.L. 6.33), and embracing statues in the dead of winter (D.L. 6.23), and casting away his cup when he observes a child drinking out of his little hands (D.L. 6.37). Just as the labors of Hercules served the double function of providing for spiritual and physical development as well as relieving the world of certain menacing monsters, so too the labors of Diogenes provided for his own hardiness while displaying for others the kind of spiritual discipline that leads to happiness (eudaimonia).

The extent to which Epictetus’s Stoicism agrees with the means and ends of Cynicism as he describes them should be readily apparent. The ends of the sage, including the control of impulses, rigorous discipline, and pursuit of happiness, all mesh well with the goals of the Cynic. However, the means adopted seem radically different. There is no reference to a divine “calling” for the Stoic sapiens, nor is there a compulsive need to display every action before the public. There is a sense of community, but only insofar as the Stoic considers civic duty a virtue; there is no reference to a brotherhood based upon a common, divine parent. The discipline of the Stoic is one mostly of coping with the contingencies of life, and there is no advocacy of seeking out toil. Finally, the Stoic does not typically appreciate the special sense of shame that Epictetus attributes to the Cynic. The way of the Stoic and the way of the Cynic seem like completely different paths to some of the same goals. I submit that Epictetus recognizes Cynicism as a valid means to happiness, so much so that the sole difference with regard to ethical orientation between a Stoic sage and a Cynic is a matter of the latter’s answering of the divine call.

What exactly is meant by “ethical orientation” requires further elucidation. First, however, I want to explore the idea of the Cynic way of life as a shortcut to eudaimonia, one that bypasses all Stoic philosophical training. The most relevant work done thus far on this topic is a short essay by Emeljanow. He writes, “… the road to Cynic happiness is non-doctrinal . . . “doctrine” in fact hinders the man who seeks happiness because it wastes time by leading him along a winding side-track. Hence, for the Cynic, it is the means rather than the end that it criticized.” With this we see that it is

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9 Navia, pp. 59-60.

10 Cf. Griffin, pp. 198-204.

precisely the intellectualism that the Stoics advocate that is seen as a waste of time by the Cynics. Philosophy thus becomes primarily an active philosophy, a way of life. At least two consequences follow from this conception of philosophy. First, there is a natural obstacle to uncovering a philosophical “system” in Cynicism, as it is characterized as a loose collection of behaviors rather than a set of theoretical doctrines. Second, the only kind of philosophy that is worthwhile is a philosophy that cajoles others into action. The picture of the idea Cynic that Epictetus describes especially supports this second point, as we have seen.

It appears, then, that the so-called Cynic shortcut is actually an application of what I will call “Diogenes’s Razor.” This involves two moves. In the first move, all appeal to theoretical disciplines, especially logic and physics (which were hailed as essential to a complete Stoic system) is cleaved off (D.L. 6.103). All such systematizing is seen as superfluous. In the second move, this attitude of rejecting the superabundant is put into practice, as when Diogenes asked Plato for a few figs and reprimanded him for sending a whole jar full (D.L. 6.26). These two moves combine to allow the Cynic Way to favor the concrete, everyday, and practical over theory, which not only does not help, but also hinders moral progress by clouding the mind with excesses. In this way the ideal Cynic is seen as trumping the Stoic as an inheritor of the tradition of Socratic inquiry. As Miriam Griffin writes, “Cynicism was famous for neglecting, indeed despising, the other two branches of philosophy, logic and physics, and for concentrating on practical ethics. Whereas the Stoics could claim that their concern for logic fit with Socrates’ concern for definition and his general emphasis on knowledge as the key to morality, the Cynics claimed to be the true heirs to his insistence on human conduct as the proper concern of philosophers.”

I agree with Griffin that Epictetus wanted to describe the ideal Cynic in such a way that the features of Cynicism that he found compatible with Stoicism were made explicit. It is also clear that to make Diogenes more palatable to the Roman mindset Epictetus offered a unique (perhaps dubious) picture of the Cynic as a divine messenger and reinterpreting the Cynic’s outrageous and often lewd behavior as shame. However, over and above this Epictetus wanted to present Cynicism as a viable option for the select few who were specially chosen and who could endure their rigorous asceticism. It is not that he wanted to extract from Cynicism those features that he liked and incorporate those into his own brand of Stoicism. Nor did he present his notion of the ideal Cynic merely as a bit of historical curiosity or hero worship. Rather, Epictetus wanted to present the Cynic Calling as a shorter, more difficult path to virtue.

Can Epictetus really advocate a way to virtue that denigrates two of the three areas of Stoic theory? Does he think that virtue can be obtained without knowledge of physics and logic? Diogenes’s Razor holds only that knowledge that is sufficient to lead a moral life to be necessary. On all other matters, according to Diogenes (Stobaeus 3.86.19), we must remain ignorant (amathia) in order to retain clear vision. This most certainly involves the slicing off of logic and physics. How can Epictetus endorse a philosophy that eradicates these disciplines and yet still remain a Stoic?

To get a proper grasp of Epictetus on this point it is necessary to look at his overall idea of what philosophy

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12 Navia, p. 54.
13 Ibid., p. 56.
14 Navia, p. 58.
15 Griffin, p. 199.
16 Ibid., p. 204.
amounts to. It is clear that Epictetus favors discussion of ethics throughout the Discourses, for he only mentions logic on rare occasions to prove its usefulness and physics hardly at all. Logic, he writes, serves the important function of a standard of judgment in philosophical matters (1.17.10). Without logic, it would be difficult to distinguish the validity or invalidity of the claims that others make to us, and theoretical philosophy would be impossible. Furthermore, Epictetus holds that logic is necessary in the trivial sense—the claim that without it, one cannot demonstrate whether or not it is necessary (2.25.3). These scant passages and others like them give a picture of logic that makes it merely a necessary tool for discourse on theoretical matters. As such, it is not important in and of itself, but only with regard to how it is used in philosophical argumentation.

This degradation of the importance of logic is an example of Epictetus’s overall favoring of practical ethics over the theoretical aspects of Stoic philosophy. He writes that the route to wisdom and happiness is not merely through reading the works of Chrysippus, as some mistakenly think (1.4.9-12). Nor is the length and breadth of works by Stoics such as Zeno any indication whatsoever of the benefit to be gained by their study, as the basic message can be summed up very succinctly (1.20.14). While Stoic writings can help make the path clear, it is only by actually performing the necessary purification of the ruling facility that progress is made. That is, one must examine one’s impulses, desires and aversions, and so on, to determine if they are in accord with nature, and this cannot be done by theorizing. The aim of philosophy is not to expound great theories or to write magnificent treatises, just as it must not see as its goal the attraction of followers or the acquisition of fame. “What,” writes Epictetus, “is the business of the wise and good

man . . . is it to express difficult theories with precision?” (4.8.24) His answer: “Let others see to that too.”

Eschewing logic as a mere theoretical tool and giving pride of place to practical ethics is a bold philosophical move in itself. However, there is also the problem of formulating criteria for Cynic philosophy. That is, how does one determine whether the claims made by the Cynic are valid? Why should anyone believe anything that a Cynic has to say, if we cannot use logic to determine the validity of his asseverations? For while the Cynic does not adopt a formal argumentative approach, he nevertheless imposes ethical standards with his chreiai. It seems that placing all emphasis on philosophical practice without lending it the tools it needs to justify itself turns it into mere ranting and buffoonery.

Epictetus recognized this problem and had a ready defense for the Cynic. He claims that the outcome of the Cynic life speaks for itself. To this end, the cynic philosopher must appear to be healthy, happy, and wise, all as a result of his adopting the Cynic lifestyle and accepting the charge from Zeus. Epictetus writes, “See, both I and my body are witness to this.” That was the case with Diogenes; for he walked about radiant with health, and would draw the attention of the crowd by the very nature of his body (3.22.88). The proof that the Cynic Way is a path to virtue lie in the ability to withstand all manner of toil, to live in the open at all times, to survive of a minimal amount of clothing, food and shelter, and yet still maintain a healthy and engaging appearance. Speaking on behalf of the Cynic, Epictetus cries, “Behold, I have been sent to you as an example by god, having neither property nor house, nor wife nor children, nor even a bed, or tunic, or furniture. And see how healthy I am. Test me out, and, if you see me free from perturbation, hear the remedies, and by what means I was cured” (4.8.30). This move appears to be a rhetorical one at best,

17 Cf. Griffin, p. 198.
yet Epictetus thinks that it stands as the most convincing argument available for the truth of the Cynic’s ethical outlook and discipline. It certainly stands higher than any theoretical proof offered by those Stoics who are too cowardly or spiritually incompetent to put their claims into practice and make them work.

What about the claim that the true Cynic possesses the same ethical orientation as the Stoic sapiens? Both philosophical disciplines utilize rigorous personal training to develop themselves and bring their behavior in line with nature. Thus, they are oriented toward the same ideas: self-knowledge, virtue, and happiness. However, the true sage will not allow his orientation to rest with what theoretical claims he assents to. That is, the wise man is not defined by what ethical system he takes to be true. Rather, Epictetus argues that the philosopher is always defined by his overt actions, such that, for example, a person acting in a Platonc way, i.e. according to Platonic principles, is Platonic. Assent to this or that philosophical principle espoused by a certain philosophical school is only half the matter. Truly acting on that conviction is what defines a man.

This point is very important because it implies that one can claim to be a follower of a certain philosophical school, while his actions betray him as actually following another sect. Epictetus is very explicit on this point, as when he taunts his audience to show him a true Stoic (2.19.20-24). In this way, he can confidently hold that both the Stoicism and Cynicism can allow the philosopher to achieve wisdom. What distinguishes between the two is not ethical orientation, but the means by which they achieve their task. Their means, in turn, are revealed by their behavior, and not by what theoretical position they subscribe to. Epictetus claims that Diogenes was a master at revealing the hidden positions of self-proclaimed philosophers and sophists, as one might expect (3.2.11). Cynicism therefore has within it a kind of philosophical self-awareness absent from all other Hellenistic schools. It strives aware of its own presuppositions and makes these thematic. The best way to do this, of course, is to leave behind all theoretical pretensions via Diogenes’s Razor, and leave only the act to speak for itself.

The sameness of ethical orientation between the Stoics and the Cynics held great attraction for Epictetus. Judging from the above passage and others like it (2.19; 4.8), Epictetus had little tolerance for those who remained enamored with the idea of the philosopher as a wise man, able to refute others and reveal the truth by means of superior argument. These people were more in love with the idea of a philosopher, rather than with philosophy itself. Philosophical training, according to Epictetus, is like surgery: it should be painful and for the health of those who undergo it (3.23.30).

With this last point we find the reason why, if Cynicism shares the same orientation and some of the same ends as Stoicism, that one would choose the latter, more circuitous path rather than the so-called “shortcut.” The most important thing to be aware of when choosing a philosophical “route,” according to Epictetus, is one’s own natural disposition and ability. Each person has a path that is right for him, and he must not stray from it; this path is defined by one’s nature. He writes, “... neither a bull nor a noble-spirited man comes to be what he is all at once: he must undertake hard winter training, and prepare himself, and not propel himself rashly into what is not appropriate to him” (1.2.32). Through out his exposition of the Cynic Way, Epictetus cautions his students over and over to consider how difficult this path is, before they entertain any considerations of attempting it themselves, and subjecting themselves to the wrath of god if found unworthy (3.22.2).
Cynic adept must be fully aware of what he is getting into (3.22.9) and be prepared to leave behind all material possessions and honors; become subject to beatings by those he is trying to help; suffer the toils of thirst, heat, and cold; and “swallow and abundance of dust” (3.22.52). Finally, the adept must be wise enough to recognize and answer the call from Zeus, when and if it presents itself, and to make philosophy influence his every action (3.22.23; 4.8.34).

Therefore it is apparent that while Epictetus set up the Cynic Way as an ideal path, shorter and philosophically more self-conscious, it clearly was not for everyone. While Griffin, Billerbeck, and others recognize that Epictetus, like other Roman Stoics, found a great deal of value in Cynic teaching and philosophy, they tend to overlook the fact that Epictetus saw the Cynic Way as more than an ideal. It was a real option for those in pursuit of wisdom and virtue, and while those with the ability to follow it are scarce due to its demanding lifestyle (even by Stoic standards) and the element of divine calling, it nevertheless exists.

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