

**DIOGENES OF SINOPE: THE MAN IN THE
TUB (CONTRIBUTIONS IN PHILOSOPHY
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Diogenes of Sinope

The Man in the Tub

LUIS E. NAVIA

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Review

"Given its spirited reconstruction of the Cynical attitude of Diogenes, this volume, arranged roughly into biography, philosophical principles, and legacy, may interest nonscholars who find a personal sympathy with a cynical approach to life."-Choice

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About the Author

LUIS E. NAVIA is Professor of Philosophy at New York Institute of Technology. He has held various administrative positions, including the deanship of Arts and Sciences, and he has worked for over twenty years for the Commission on Higher Education (Middle States). He is the author of thirteen books, including *The Socratic Presence: A Study of the Sources*, *The Philosophy of Cynicism: An Annotated Bibliography* (Greenwood, 1995), and *Classical Cynicism: A Critical Study* (Greenwood, 1996).

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The life and teachings of Diogenes of Sinope, the Greek philosopher who gave rise to classical Cynicism, deserve careful consideration because of their relevance to contemporary ethical issues. The task of reconstructing the philosopher's life, however, is exceedingly difficult, because in his case, more than in those of other ancient philosophers, we must deal not only with the scarcity of reliable sources and testimonies, but also with the mountains of anecdotal and fictional accounts that are responsible for the creation of a veritable literary legend around the Cynic who once lived in a tub. This comprehensive study reconstructs his biography on the basis of classical and Arabic sources, identifies the main ideas and principles of his philosophy, and shows the application of his philosophical message for our contemporary world.

It also includes an extensively annotated translation of Diogenes Laertius' Life of Diogenes of Sinope, which is our principal source of information about the philosopher.

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An important philosophy for our time.

By amc

I thoroughly recommend Diogenes of Sinope as essential reading for both Classical Greek scholars and those who simply wish to learn out more about the Cynics, their philosophy, and their way of life. Indeed, anyone who has overlooked this important philosophy. Scholarly in its approach, this book is yet compulsively readable. I was easily carried through the text which is generously peppered with fascinating anecdotes from the primary sources as well as Navia's own compelling interpretations. What better place to start an understanding of Cynicism than through its hero Diogenes.

In Chapter 4, Hegel's view that Cynicism contains little philosophy and no 'system' is demolished. Navia presents the reader with a very comprehensive and systematised account of what Cynicism's philosophy is, and yet achieves this without undermining Cynicism's integrity, for instance by not leaving a trail of 'truths' for some unscrupulous management theorist to claim as the latest quick fix for a failing company. At the end of this chapter, Cynicism emerges with its anti-scientific credentials intact, but also with much greater clarity about what Diogenes' brand of Cynicism stands FOR as well as what it opposes. I deliberately choose the present tense here, because what Navia demonstrates in these pages, is that (unlike the ideas of say Freud or Marx, who as one writer put it 'were weighed down by the cultural baggage of their time'), Diogenes' view of the world is as fresh and relevant today as it was 2,300 years ago. The reader should be left in no doubt that Cynicism represents a very powerful philosophy, even if he or she is not inclined to share it.

Throughout the book I was impressed by passages that sent me off contemplating contemporary issues and debates, but I also appreciated the detail and minutia that conjured up vivid portraits of life at the time ~ Diogenes life in particular. The appendix of Diogenes Laertius' (not to be confused with Navia's own hero) original writings about Diogenes the Cynic is very helpful in supporting Navia's own text. What Navia has achieved cleverly in this book, is to strike a balance between producing an authoritative text which reinforces the 'facts' available, while at the same time, acknowledging the myth-making that is essential for a real understanding of the Diogenes phenomenon.

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Not a lot is known about Diogenes. Diogenes was an enigma, an eccentric, call him wise or just a fool depends on perspective. Even a medical syndrome is named after him reflecting his way of life and not necessarily his insight. The work of academic scholarship brings to light the information we have about him which is very scarce and often controversial. Diogenes is often cited for his cynical remarks especially the famous ones with Alexander the great. The book is not as much about his philosophies as it is about Diogenes the man, and his life and of what is known about him. This is a good scholarship on the information we have on Diogenes based on research.

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