

## Mad Dogs Tragic and Philosophical

By Magda Filliou Vasilescu\*

“Our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness,  
provided the madness is given to us by divine gift.”  
-Socrates, *Phaedrus* (244a)

“‘Like a dog!’ he said, it was as if the shame of it should outlive him.”  
-Kafka, *The Trial* (Ch. 10)

*The distinction between being a dog (metaphorically) and being mad in ancient Greek philosophy- focusing on Diogenes the Cynic- and tragedy. It is with regards to ancient philosophy and tragedy because the former dogginess is aware of itself in that there is a theory behind it and aims at the good life, whereas the latter, I argue, is destructive and closer to madness.*

**Keywords:** *Tragedies, Early Cynicism, dogs, madness, metaphor*

### Introduction

There were two kinds of metaphorical ‘dogs’ in antiquity: the philosophical dog and the tragic dog. In keeping with the Aristotelian notion that a metaphor is effective ‘provided it be neither strange, for then it is difficult to take in at a glance, nor superficial, for then it does not impress the hearer’ (*Rhetoric* 1410b), I shall treat the epithet ‘dog’ as neither strange nor superficial, but as a meaningful metaphor that reveals some important aspects of the characters to whom it is ascribed. As such the fact that ‘dog’ was chosen as a metaphor over other animals to describe two rather distinct types of character demands justification. They need to have enough similarities for the ‘dog’ metaphor to be meaningful and enough differences for the terms ‘philosophical’ and ‘tragic’ to be justifiable. Two basic questions arise: firstly, do those called ‘dogs’ behave like dogs; and, are those called ‘dogs’ treated like dogs (both in the sense of treating oneself as a dog - whether consciously or not- and being treated as such by others)? In other words, why are they called dogs?

In what follows, I shall investigate metaphorical dogs in tragedies and philosophy, specifically Diogenes the Cynic, with reference to the literal place this animal has in the wider ancient Greek culture. In the first section of this paper I shall briefly look into how dogs, the animals, were perceived in the ancient world.<sup>1</sup> In the second section, I shall look into references with regards to dogs (animal) in tragedies, and the various meanings of ‘dog’ both as a positive, or neutral, and offensive epithet<sup>2</sup> with the conclusion that ‘dog’ is intimately connected to madness.

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<sup>1</sup>The sources I use are not exhaustive, but indicative for my thesis. For a fuller account of dogs in ancient Greece, see: Trantalidou (2006), Franco (2014), Denyer (unpublished).

<sup>2</sup>That is, an epithet aiming at the ridicule, judgement, or humiliation of a party.

My approach to madness in the second section shall be based on how the people who are said to be mad are described in the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides.

Finally, in the third section, I shall investigate the reasons the offensive epithet ‘dog’ was transformed into a positive epithet under the Cynics- even if the rest of the ancient world may have seen them under the light of madness. In the third section I conclude that the Cynics were the positive double of the negative representation of the tragic dog. In other words, I conclude that whereas tragic dogs are mad by way of being betrayed by the values set by human convention which they treated as the paramount moral law; the Cynics seem mad, but are not, by way of choosing to betray- that is to say not believe in or abide by- these moral values. Tragic dogs are people who are brought to be mad by the very artificial moral norms they serve, whereas philosophical dogs *escape* madness by choosing not to serve any moral authority other than Nature.

## Dogs

The ancient Greek term *kyon* along with its derivatives<sup>3</sup> was a term denoting moral worthlessness. A dog is thought to be someone who has parasitic tendencies, an insatiable appetite, and is prone to indecency, psychic instability, opportunism, treachery, filthiness, or vulgarity. Indeed, a dog is someone that lacks shame (*aidos*). ‘Dog’ was rarely used as a positive epithet.<sup>4</sup> Under a positive light, ‘dog’ would denote faithfulness, wit, and great military prowess. In order to understand the reasons behind dog being used predominantly as a negative epithet and simile for either the tragic or the philosophical dogs, we first need to understand the status and meaning of dogs as animals in the ancient world. We need to understand the traditional cultural expectations and conscious views as expressed in the literature<sup>5</sup> of the time that were invoked when tragic (literary) and philosophical (real) characters were called ‘dogs.’ In what follows I shall argue that given the fact that dogs were the closest animal to human beings, it is their shameless betrayal of the human moral code, whenever it occurred, that sparked a deep sense of contempt and gave rise to ‘dog’ being used as an insult.

Dogs resemble human beings in that, unlike other animals, each dog has individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. Whereas the behaviour of foxes is more or less consistent and uniform within its species, human beings do not exhibit the same consistency in terms of character and behaviour. Yet, even though dogs are non-human animals, they exhibit human behaviour: it is not the case that their character is predictable on account of the fact that they are dogs. As such they teeter at the precipice of the taxonomical gap. To put it in Cristina Franco’s words: ‘Residing in an interstitial niche, the dog

<sup>3</sup>For the repugnancy of dogs, see: Scholz (1937, pp. 7–10), Merlen (1971, p. 27), Lilja (1976, pp. 21–25), Mainoldi (1981, pp. 109, 119), Franco (2014, pp. 7–53).

<sup>4</sup>Such an example can be found in Plato’s *Republic* (375a-6c), where dog and man (*skylax* and *phylax*) are equated in terms of political virtues. See Sorabji (1993, pp. 10–11). Another example is that of Aristogeiton, who is called ‘dog of the people’ in *Dem.* 25,40.

<sup>5</sup>For an exploration of the dog in art see Trantalidou (2006).

straddles the line that separates humans from other animals' (Franco 2014, p. 53). Yet, unlike human beings, dogs do not form societies and institutional bodies. An observation to this effect is put forward by Eleatic Stranger in the *Statesman*: 'it is not worth our while to count the class of dogs as among creatures living in herds' (266a1–4). Though dogs do not form herds, however, they are not simply an individualistic animal. Whatever role is given to them, or adopted by them, each dog is within a human, as opposed to a canine, community (Franco 2014, 53, 205 n.142).

Dogs' individualistic lifestyles can be seen in that they lack the kind of code of conduct and organisation that define societies, be those human or bee-like societies. The fact that dogs do not form societies can be seen in that they play an intricate part in human societies but in a rather isolated manner: they do not form self-organising packs. That is the case even in cases where dogs are placed in packs: man along with a pack of dogs may hunt together, but the dogs adhere, to different degrees, to the orders and demands of their master, rather than to orders they give to each other.<sup>6</sup> The individuality of dogs can also be seen in that both praise and blame is given to individual, as opposed to groups of, dogs. Aelian, for example, tells of the commemoration in the Stoa Poikile of a dog who fought at Marathon (*NA* 7.38).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, an example of blame is the case of the dog Labes in Aristophanes' *Wasps*, who was called into court for snatching and eating a Sicilian cheese in its entirety (Arist., *Wasps*, 967–72).<sup>8</sup>

Their taxonomical anomaly can also be seen in that, as Aristotle tells us, dogs, much like human beings<sup>9</sup>, mate with other species (Aristotle, *Gen. An.* 2.7.9). The mating of dogs with humans, specifically, can be seen in Aelian's story about a married woman that was charge by her spouse with the offence of adultery with a dog (Ael., *NA* 7.19). Less shockingly, according to ancient sources, dogs mate with other members of its animal family, such as wolves (e.g., Arist., *Hist. An.* 8.28.13, Plin., *Nat.* 8.148) and foxes (Xenophon, *Cynegetica* 3.1), as well as other species such as tigers and lions (Arist., *Gen. An.* 747 a 34–6, *Hist. An.* 8.28.14; Poll., *Onom.* 5.38; Grattius, *Cyneg.* 161–66; Ael., *NA* 8.1; Pliny, *Nat.* 8.148) (Denyer unpublished).

Even as peripheral members of human societies, dogs shamelessly ignore many societal distinctions, which form the foundations of a human society. They are not attentive in distinctions such as those between danger and security, suffering and pleasure, decency and indecency, cleanliness and griminess (Denyer unpublished). Aelian, for example, tells of how a female dog is able to re-enter the fighting stage right after she has given birth (*HA* 7.12). They further disregard

<sup>6</sup>According to Aelian dogs are so capable of following orders to the degree that they can "manage household affairs for those who have trained them; and for a poor man it is enough to have a dog as slave" (*NA* 6.10).

<sup>7</sup>Other examples of heroic dogs: Pollux 5.65; Aelian *HA* 7.38; Plutarch *Aratus* 24; Pliny *Nat.* 8.143.

<sup>8</sup>In a different story the king of Albania gifted a dog to Alexander the Great, which was disinterested by the bears and boars it was meant to hunt, and so Alexander had it destroyed (Pliny, *Nat.* 8.149-50)

<sup>9</sup>Bestiality as a human sexual preference can be seen in Greek mythology, e.g. Zeus seducing Europa as a bull. On modern studies on bestiality, see: e.g., Earls and Lalumiere (2002, pp. 83–88).

distinctions between places and the behaviours that are appropriate in each of them. Dogs eat anything<sup>10</sup> and anywhere: they root for food in dung heaps (*Phaedrus* 4.17.6), as much as in dining rooms (e.g., Aesop, 283).

Dogs, even as members of the human social strata, whose predatory instincts are suppressed; surprisingly, retain a wild, anti-social, side. A dog is the only animal, along with humans, that is particularly at risk of *lyssa* (<*lykos*, wolf). A *lyssētēr* or *lyssōdēs kyon* is one that starts behaving with excessive aggression and savagery aimed at whoever or whatever is around. *Lyssa*, whether it presents itself in the form of a disease, rabies (Aristotle *HA* 7.22.604a4–10), or as a set of non-pathological symptoms, is expressed as limitless blind rage and frenzied madness (*CGL s.v. lyssa* 2021, 883; Franco 2014; 29–31, 196n54). In the case of both the tragic and philosophical dogs, however, *lyssa* should be thought of as a ‘symptomatology rather than a pathology’ (Franco 2014, p. 29). That is because their aggressiveness is caused by a clash of values, in the case of the philosophical dogs, and by the unstable character of human ethical systems upon which they have based their lives, in the case of tragic dogs, rather than their physiological constitution being infected by a viral disease.

If dogs were thought of as constituent pieces of a human societal structure, no matter what their status within it may be, then dogs are also subject to the moral order that defines that society. That means that dogs may also be viewed as breaching the social contract whenever they do not behave according to the community’s moral code. Given dog’s inferior position in human society, their membership to it requires their acknowledgement and payment of their debt due to nourishment in the currency of loyalty and obedience. The position of the dog’s relatives, such as that of the fox, with regards to human society is that of an outsider, enemy and competitor. Their world comes to direct opposition to that of man’s. Unlike foxes, dogs, in all their diversity, as the animal amongst humans, unknowingly participate in the ethical apparatus of duty (Franco 2014, p. 50).

The symbiotic nexus between human beings and dogs was often expressed in scenes where men are seen raising and nurturing dogs.<sup>11</sup> Although dogs occupy a higher position than other animals, they remain below man in the hierarchy: they remain indebted to man. Despite their asymmetrical relationship, men and dogs share a bond that resembles filial solidarity. To that effect dogs have been burdened with the expectation of having internalised the ethical content of human culture and assimilated its practices and values. Dogs insofar as they were their master’s table (e.g., Homer *Odyssey* 17.309–10; Alciphron *Epistles* 3.9; Plut. *How to Distinguish Friend from Flatterer* 3.50c.) and hunting companions (e.g., Homer

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<sup>10</sup>Dogs eat everything apart from other dogs (Ael., *NA* 4.40). E.g. dogs are necrophagic: *Iliad* 1.4, 22.42, 22.335, 23.21, 24.409; Onesicritus *apud* Str. 11.11.13; Aeschylus *Suppliants* 800, *Seven* 1014; Sophocles *Antigone* 206, 1017, *Ajax* 830; Euripides *Hecabe* 1077; Thucydides 2.50.2; Hdt.1.140.1, 7.10 q 3, 9.112. Dogs drink blood: Plato *Republic* 537a; Homer *Iliad* 22.66–76. Dogs eat filthy food: Aristophanes *Peace* 24; Clearchus *apud* Athenaeus 13.93. Dogs eat human leftovers and scraps: Aristophanes *Knights* 413–6, *Clouds* 489–91; Plutarch *Life of Lycurgus* 12.9; Homer *Odyssey* 17.220.

<sup>11</sup>Man’s favouritism of dog’s can be seen in Aesop’s 93 (ed. Hausrath). And the fact that people nurture them in Plato’s *Rival Lovers* (137c6–7): ‘Well then, aren’t those who know how to make dogs better also those who know how to discipline them properly?’.

*Odyssey* 11.a.5; Xen. *Cyn.* 4.4, 6.15; Ael. *NA* 8.2; Arrian *Cyn.* 18), guards of their homes, flock, temples and graves (e.g., Flock: Aesop 153, 342 (ed. Perry); Hesiod *Work of Days* 795–97; Ael. *NA* 8.2; Xenophon, *Cyn.* 6.11–14. Temples: Ael., *NA* 11.3, *NA* 7.13; Plu., *Sol. Anim.* 13; cf. D.L. 7.32. Graves: Ael. *NA* 10.41.); appear to have been subject to the same cultural expectations as any other member of society.

The fact that dogs are co-opted into human societies can be seen in the idea that it is shameful when a dog is being licentious, that is, when it shows lack of moral restraint. In the *Republic* Socrates reports that ‘the most terrible and most shameful thing of all is for a shepherd to rear dogs as auxiliaries to help him with his flocks in such a way that, through licentiousness, hunger, or some other bad trait of character, they do evil to the sheep and become like wolves instead of dogs’ (416a2–6).

The dog’s astute preoccupation with virtue pertaining to vegetation that Aratus attributes as a characteristic of Sirius the Dog Star shows their eagerness to concern itself with the rewarding of virtue and the punishing vice:

*Sirius the Star who rises together with the Sun  
and cannot be fooled by the trees full of leafs  
which bear no fruit. For he sharply rushes through them  
and judges, which to strengthen and which to destroy completely.  
(Phainomena 331–335)*

Dogs were also concerned with virtue amongst themselves. Pliny tells us that ‘the best dog of the litter is the one which is last in obtaining its sight, or else the one which the mother carries first into her bed’ (*Nat.* 8.151).<sup>12</sup> Dog’s primary concern, however, is human virtue. Despite his familiarity to his neighbour’s bitch, Theophrastus’ Doltish Man gets bitten by her (*Char.* 14.5). Pyrrhus of Epirus once befriended a gentle dog whose master had been murdered. As Pyrrhus was in the process of reviewing his troops, his review was interrupted by the barks of the dog. The dog was fixated on one of Pyrrhus’ soldiers and was trying to divert Pyrrhus’ attention onto him. Pyrrhus understood the dog’s message and after torture the soldier confessed to having murdered the dog’s previous master (Plu., *Sol. Anim.* 13; Ael., *NA* 7.10; Pliny *Nat.* 8.142) (Denyer, unpublished).

Dog’s keen sense of detecting virtue was said to be owed to them having a remarkable perceptual capacity. An old ploughman, Pliny tells us, expressed the wish for dogs’ intellectual capacity to have been equal to their sensory capacities for then there would be strong epistemic grounds as to whom they should direct their aggression (*Theoc.* 25.78–83). According to other sources dog’s capacities exceed the limits of simply being perceptive. Pliny lists superior memory that is the only which comes close to the human one (*Nat.* 8.146). Simonides tells us that the bitch is the only one of the female animals that is unable to restrain her inquisitiveness (*Semon.* 7.12–20).

Furthermore, dogs are animals capable of some form of basic prudential reasoning (Denyer, unpublished). Chrysippus tells the story of a dog which, as it

<sup>12</sup>Other such stories: Nem., *Cynegetica* 133–50; Arist., *Pr.* 10.35, *HA* 6.18.5; Semon. 7.33–4.

was tracking its prey, it arrived at a crossroads with three different paths. Not knowing which path the prey animal chose to take, the dog sniffed for traces two of the three possible paths the prey animal could have taken. In the absence of any evidence of a trace, and without sniffing out the third, the dog chose the third, and correct, path. According to Chrysippus this story demonstrates the dog's capacity to use the fifth indemonstrable syllogism: that from a disjunction and the negation of one of its disjuncts you can conclude the other disjunct (S.E., *PH* 1.69; Cf. Aelian *NA* 6.59).<sup>13</sup> Whether dogs' especially keen sense, or prudential reasoning, dogs are particularly sensitive to things humans often overlook. Similarly, Argus was the only one to recognise Odysseus in his Diogenean disguise.<sup>14</sup>

Despite their capacity for prudential reasoning and their attunement to human virtue and vice (Philostr. *VA* 8.30; Ael. *NA* 10.41; Ael. *NA* 7.25), their close relationship to men and their debt to them, dogs disregard societal behavioural demands. This disregard for human values, especially given the dog's perceived duty to follow the orders of men who belong in societies and themselves perform those values, may, from man's perspective, be understood as a kind of betrayal produced when a dog is *lyssōdēs*. That is, canine transgression, whether small or big, is, in a meaningful sense, equivalent to madness.

The Stranger in the *Statesman* talks about the difference 'between a wolf and a dog' as 'the wildest thing there is and the gentlest' (231a6–b1). This highlights the shocking effect produced to one witnessing this transition. A depiction of someone who becomes *lyssōdēs* can be found in Euripides' *Hercules Furens*: Herakles maddened (952) by *Lyssa* 'suddenly begins to change: his eyes rolled and bulged from their sockets, and the veins stood out, gorged with blood, and froth began to trickle down his bearded chin' (931–4), he 'laughs like a maniac' (935) and blinded by his 'murderous rage' (1005) he mistakenly kills his own children and wife (965–1005).

The *lyssa* of Herakles shows that someone can turn from being 'the gentlest thing there is,' an affectionate father and husband to 'the wildest thing there is,' to someone who is capable of killing those closest to him. The anxiety of this reversal of roles can be seen in the numerous references of canine anthropophagy. In the *Odyssey* (21.362–65), Penelope's suitors forecast that Eumaeus will be eaten by his own dogs.<sup>15</sup> Callimachus too spoke of Actaeon's dogs, who would initially share a meal with their master, and later 'made a meal of him' (*Hymns* 5.114–5).

## Tragic Dogs

The tragic dogs are the *dramatis personae* called dogs in the tragedies of Euripides (where the term 'dog', whether it refers to the animal or a person, occurs

<sup>13</sup>For an objection, see Plutarch *Sol. Anim.* 13.

<sup>14</sup>According to other sources such as Clearchus (*apud* Athenaeus 13.93), however, dogs' virtues are limited to having keen senses as to recognise and refrain from attacking those who are familiar to them.

<sup>15</sup>Another example: Actaeon was killed by his own canine hunting companions as a punishment for accidentally, seeing Artemis bathe on Mount Cithaeron (Euripides, *Bacchae*, 338–9).

30 times), Aeschylus (16 times) and Sophocles (11 times).<sup>16</sup> In what follows, using Franco's distinction (Franco 2014, 17), I shall be looking at both the meaning and intention behind calling someone a 'dog.' And that is because the meaning and the intention of an insult do not always coincide. One may be called a dog because of their canine-like features and habits, and another may be called a dog as a means of provocation and humiliation such that the insulted party is made aware, or is made to feel that, they have the same status and power as a dog in their shared society.

Not all of the dog-references in tragedies are used as epithets. But, even in cases where 'dog' is used to refer to the animal, rather than as an anthropocentric epithet, it reveals certain underlying associations. The motifs, such as those of hunting, anthropophagy, prudential reasoning, virtue-vice and guardianship, are often the same as those seen in the previous section. These demonstrate both a relationship of dependence between man and dog, but also the deep fear of reversal of roles rooted in man.

Dogs and men are equated in their depiction as guardians (*skylax* and *phylax*). In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the watchman (*phylax*) 'begs the gods to give him release from this misery- from his long year of watch-keeping, during which he has spent his nights on the Atreidae's roof resting on his elbows like a dog' (5).<sup>17</sup> This is partly in keeping with Plato's *Republic* (375a–6c), in which dog and man (*skylax* and *phylax*) are equated in terms of political virtues.<sup>18</sup> To the question as to whether there is 'any difference between the nature of a pedigree young dog and that of a well-born youth' that are meant to be guardians, for example, the answer is that 'each needs to be courageous' and have 'keen senses, speed to catch what it sees, and strength in case it has to fight it out with what it captures' (375a2–8). Specifically the comparison is between dog and the ruling-guardian class of citizens. This comparison is made both because the guardians are meant to watch over the rest of the citizens (much as watch-dogs watch over whatever they are meant to protect); and on the level of justified potential aggression, especially towards an external enemy. Yet, Aeschylus' watch-man does not equate himself with a dog in a positive way. For instead of acting 'like a watch-dog,' the watch-man gives the sense that he 'is (lived the life of and as such reduced to) a watch-dog.'

A lot of the scenes depict dogs as man's hunting companions. Aphrodite tells her audience that Hippolytus 'hunts with swift hounds and clears the land of wild beasts, sharing in greater than mortal companionship' (Eur., *Hippolytus*, 18–19). Together, we are told, they 'hunted wild beasts and killed to the honour of holy Dictynna' (1127–30).<sup>19</sup> The special relationship between dog and man is highlighted in these lines: man and dog share a filial-like bond that involves both chasing away other animals from civilised society and killing others to honour a god. Dogs and

<sup>16</sup>The adjacent 'wolf', on the other hand, occurs in Aeschylus 5 times, in Euripides 2, and none in Sophocles. For a complete list of all the animals in tragedies, see: Thumiger (2008, pp. 1–21).

<sup>17</sup>The theme of the dog as a guard is also seen in the image of Cerberus, the watch-dog of Hades, in *The Women of Trachis* (1098–9), *Alcestis* (360–2), and *Herakles* (1278).

<sup>18</sup>Also, in Sorabji (1993, pp. 10–11).

<sup>19</sup>Other hunting scenes: Euripides *Helen* 153–5, 1169–70.

men are put together in opposition to other animals. Dogs here may be taking orders from man and for that reason their relationship is asymmetrical, but they perform the same function and they are both under the guidance of the same deity.

The fear of man being hunted down by dogs is also apparent in tragedies. This fear is echoed in Castor's warning: 'The hounds are here. Quick, to Athens! Run to escape, for they hurl their ghostly tracking against you, serpent-fisted and blackened of flesh, offering the fruit of terrible pain' (Euripides *Electra*, 1342–6). This is a scene in which men are hunted by metaphorical dogs, who, unlike dogs that act as hunting companions, actually harm their prey. In this passage the disturbing suspicion that dogs may be superior than men is confirmed: dogs can out-strengthen men. And whence that happens, dogs kill, rather than catch and deliver, their inferior. It is only because dogs are thought of as members of the human community that the act of hunting men and eating human flesh renders them the mad *par excellence*. Such an example is Apollodorus's (*Bibliotheca* 3.4.4) version of the myth of Actaeon, which holds *Lyssa* (canine madness) as being the cause for Actaeon's hunting dogs confusing their master for a prey animal and tearing him to pieces.<sup>20</sup>

The fear of *anthropophagic* dogs is also a common theme. In fact, amongst all three tragedians the motif of dogs and birds<sup>21</sup> being paired together to eat the flesh of dead men is one of the most common ones (Soph. *Pho.* 1634, 1650; *HF* 568; *Tro.* 450, 600; *Aj.* 830, 1065, 1297; *Ant.* 29, 205, 206, 257, 697, 698, 1017, 1021, 1081, 1082; Aesch. *Su.* 800, 801; *Sept.* 1014, 1020, 1036; Eur. *El.* 897; *Ion* 903, 917, 1494). For one's body to be consumed by dogs often appears as a threat: Alcmena orders the 'attendants, to take him away to that place and then after you have killed him give his body to the dogs!' (*Herakleides*, 1050).<sup>22</sup> Man, who otherwise controls both the feeding schedule and what is considered appropriate food for dogs, himself becomes their food. I am in agreement with Franco that this threat aims at producing a certain effect. By calling one 'dog-food'<sup>23</sup> one publicly establishes one's own superiority over their enemy (Franco 2014, p. 77). More important perhaps, however, is that the appearance of a threat that combines the promise of great violence together with the appearance of dogs signifies that the person who is flying is himself *lyssōdēs*. That is, it signifies that they are themselves dogs who will devour the recipient of the threat as though they were nothing more than dog-food. Regardless of whether the flyer is aware of his self-imposed identification with dogs; they are, rather shamelessly, publicly acting like a dog.

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20 Actaeon's myth resembles that of Herakles in that both stories involve *lyssa* blinding an agent to kill someone close to them.

21 On how birds, especially those of prey, are called 'winged hounds of the father' (*Ag.* 136), see Franco (2014).

22 Also: e.g., *Antig.* 205–206, 257–8, 697–8, 1017–19, 1080–2.

23 It is the equivalent of calling someone 'human waste' since dogs did not eat their (hunting) prey, but human left-overs (*apomagdaliai*).

‘Dog’ as an epithet used in tragedies is associated with, but in a less dignified way than lions, violence<sup>24</sup> (Thumiger 2014, p. 106). In particular, there is a strong connection between the anti-societal properties of rage, madness, and shamelessness, and human dogginess. In Aeschylus’s *Suppliants*, for example, the Chorus (Danaids) speaks of ‘the crazed family of Aegyptus’ (741), specifically that their ‘appetite for battle is insatiable’ (742) and that they are ‘so arrogant, maddened by their unholy rage, as shameless as dogs, turning a deaf ear to the gods’ (757–9). They exhibit lack of restraint in showing violent intention and action, and they refuse to respect the dignity of the Danaids. What this means is that the family of Aegyptus lacks the kind of shame that most effectively regulates social equilibrium.

The Erinyes are decisively relevant here for they highlight the cultural association between dogs, women, madness, and rage. In the *Choephoroi* the female featured monsters are called ‘the wrathful hounds’ (924–5, 1054) and ‘maenads’ (mainades: ‘the raving ones’: *Eumenides*, 500). They are depicted as the avengers of a party that has been wronged. As such, they may be simultaneously the wrathful hounds of both Klytemnestra and Agamemnon (*Choephoroi*, 924–5). In the *Electra* (1380–90), they are the ‘champions of Justice, hounds of the gods, hot on the trail of crime.’ What seems apparent here is that, though there is a difference between a sense of personal justice and universal divine Justice, the Erinyes serve both indiscriminately. The Erinyes represent pure vengeance of the sort that asks for no moral justification. Similarly, the dog may serve its master’s vengeful appetite without regard as to the nature of its justification.

The Furies again in the *Electra* are said to be ‘the dreadful dog-faced goddesses of destiny’ that ‘will roll you like a wheel through maddened wandering’ (Euripides, *Electra*, 1252–3).<sup>25</sup> Though the Furies may not be the ones who are mad in this passage, they are portrayed as dogs that pass on or sentence someone into madness. The fact that the doggish part of their body is the head seems all the more significant considering that the most common way for rabies to be transmitted is through biting (Franco 2014, pp.34-5) and that dogs are said to *sniff out* vice and virtue.

In Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi*, the Chorus refers to Scylla as ‘the murderous maiden’ (613) who is ‘a woman with a dog’s heart’ (620). This passage highlights the connection between betrayal and dogginess. Scylla has betrayed her father and her city. A woman with a dog’s heart is one that has no loyalty. In the *Agamemnon* (1233–36) Scylla is called ‘the bane of sailors, a raging, hellish mother, breathing out truceless war against her nearest and dearest.’<sup>26</sup> When Polymystor tells Hecuba that her promontory Cynossema, ‘Memorial of the Bitch’, will be named after her

<sup>24</sup>The lion imagery in the *Oresteia* is a classic example (on which see Knox (1952), Lebeck (1971, pp. 50–51), Saayman (1993, pp. 13–16), and Heath (1999, p. 20). For the *Iliad*, see Alden (2005, pp. 335–342).

<sup>25</sup>It is unclear about whom this passage is referring to as the ‘goddess of destiny’: the Fates or the Furies. However, due to the Furies being invoked shortly after (1380-90), the Furies are probably the ones discussed in 1252-3.

<sup>26</sup>Similarly, Oedipus calls the Sphinx a ‘singing bitch’ (*Oedipus Rex*, 390–5) on account of the fact that she was both a monster and female, even though she was not said to have any canine features.

and will serve as a mark for sailors, it echoes the rest of Scylla's attributes.

*Hecuba* stands as the cautionary tale that artificial moral codes leave tragic dogs in their precarious positions. The starting point of the tragedy finds Hecuba already in a grieving state: after the fall of Troy, Hecuba, once the queen of Troy, and her daughter Polyxena have been taken by the Greek army as slaves. She has already lost her city, status, husband and most of her children with seemingly two children remaining alive. After Polyxena is willingly sacrificed to appease the ghost of Achilles, Hecuba's grief is consoled in the knowledge that her daughter's noble nurturing has shaped in her adult life. When she becomes aware of the death of her last surviving child, Polydorus, whom she had entrusted to her friend Polymestor to keep him in safety, she immediately deciphers Polymestor's treachery, and all her deeply rooted beliefs about the fundamentality of human moral law, along with herself, are shattered. She now becomes the personification of vengeance. The result is that once these agreements break, so does the person that had internalised them as their own ethical system (Nussbaum 2001, p. 399).

Following Nussbaum's reading of the tragedy, Hecuba's story may be understood as an analogy of the life of a dog that has turned into a wolf and is unable to act as a member of a human society. Though Hecuba has become an individual, she is someone who has lost all control and freedom over her life to destructive vengeance. Polymestor in fact gives a vivid account of Hecuba's vengeful actions against him: 'They [Hecuba and the women] suddenly pulled daggers from their robes and butchered both my sons, while troops of women rushed to tackle me, seizing my arms and legs and holding me down. I tried to leap up but they caught me by the hair and pulled me down. I fought to free my arms, but I was swamped beneath a flood of women. I could not move. And then they crowned their hideous work with worse, the most inhuman brutal crime of all. They took their brooches and stabbed my hapless eyes till they poured out blood! Then they ran for cover, scattering through the tent. I leaped to my feet, like a wounded beast chasing a pack of hounds, tracking along every wall, like a hunter beating and striking everywhere' (1160–75). In Polymestor's words dog and hunter are divorced and we see him associate the hunter with the wounded beast. Once the intimate bond, the societal contract, between the dog and the hunter has been broken, the hunter no longer knows who is the enemy and blindly aims at everyone and everything. The masterless pack of dogs, unable to self-organise, ran for cover and scatter (Nussbaum 2001, pp. 397–421).

In the *Choephoroi* Electra, like Hecuba, transgresses the same ethical norms she is defending. Electra's inability to comply with the demands of complacency placed upon her by her kins to let the death of her father unavenged and for her to be 'dishonored' and 'treated as worthless' (444) by the people that are representatives of moral convention; leads her to call herself a 'savage-hearted wolf' that has 'rage' (420–22) and a 'dangerous dog' (445). This indicates the possibility that a dog may, in its most dangerous state, be transformed into a wolf that is capable of savage acts. In the end, Electra commits the same crime her mother, and Hecuba, committed: she kills someone she was meant to honour and respect. The dissolution of the ethical system brings Klytemnestra, much like a wolf-like dog that kills its master, to kill her husband, Electra's father, and Electra

to kill her mother.

Madness and dogginess can be used as interchangeable terms in the *Bacchae*. The Chorus urges the women of Thebes, who are the female worshippers of Dionysus and, like the Erinyes, are called ‘maenads’, to ‘run to the mountain,’ and calls them ‘hounds of madness!’ (Euripides, *Bacchae*, 977). And after Cadmus informs Agave that Pentheus was killed by dogs (1290–1), implying that herself and the maenads were dogs; he goes on to answer her other question: ‘Agave: What were we doing in the mountain? Cadmus: You were mad’ (*Bacchae*, 1294–5). Here again we see the same pattern as in the stories of Herakles and Actaeon’s dogs<sup>27</sup>: Agave too blinded by the ‘dogs of *Lyssa*’ (977; Cf Aeschylus, *Xanthis* fr.169)<sup>28</sup> has savagely killed someone with whom they share a bond, her son.

The exploitation of the dog’s dualistic tendencies to create morally ambiguous characters is intensified in the *Bacchae*. For they are simultaneously faithful followers of their master’s commands, and blood-thirsty hunters of strangers (Franco 2014, 98). Both the Erinyes and the maenads are called dogs, or dog-faced, because, from the perspective of those with whom they are not in conspiracy, they are vicious man-eating disturbed figures. Yet this is sharply contrasted with the image of the maenads as ‘modest and sober’ (686), with that they are said not to be in a ‘maddened wandering’ or ‘led astray’ (*Electra* 1253; cf. *Bacchae* 687), and with that they are further said to be ‘wise hunters’ (*Bacchae* 1189–91). The moment upon which the women have turned into maenads is not defined by a heinous act of betrayal towards the ethical laws of the city, but by the rather innocent act of not being *in par* with society as such.

The wise madness of the maenads is intertwined with their fleeing to Nature and their refusal to re-enter society. They embrace the ‘brute wildness’ of the mountain of Cithaeron along with its flora and fauna. All social strata have collapsed: ‘a lovely sight to see: all together the old women and the young and the unmarried girls’ (693–4). All pretension to urbanism has been dropped: ‘First they let their hair fall loose, down over their shoulders, and those whose fastenings had slipped closed up their skins of fawn with writhing snakes that licked their cheeks... Then they crowned their hair with leaves, ivy and oak and flowering bryony’ (695–703). That is to say that the madness of the maenads further consists in that they followed the demands of nature over those of rationalised civility. And in the mountains, instead of a society, they have formed a community of co-existing individuals that have become assimilated to their natural surroundings. Aggression overtakes them only when they are threatened. And Agave killing her own son becomes a horrifying reality only once she has returned to an organised and morally oriented society; and when relational values have been restored. (Nussbaum 2001, pp.399-401)

Men in tragedies, unlike women, are most often called ‘dogs’ in a negative way only indirectly<sup>29</sup>: either by proxy, or, by way of their actions being recognisably

<sup>27</sup>On the similarities between the myth of Actaeon and the *Bacchae*, see: Frontisi-Ducroux (1997, pp. 437–438).

<sup>28</sup>On the similarity of function between the Erinyes and ‘the dogs of *Lyssa*,’ see: Dodds (1960, p. 199).

<sup>29</sup>That is not the case in the wider literature.

doggish. Peleus calls Menelaus a dog by proxy (*Andromache*, 625–31): ‘Were you so afraid to lose your wicked wife? And when you took Troy... and caught your worthless wife, you didn’t kill her. No, when you saw her breast, you threw down your sword and kissed her, fawning on the treacherous bitch, overcome by Aphrodite you disgusting man!’. The accusations of shamelessness are directed both toward Menelaus and Helen. Menelaus is the husband of a dog and by showing slavish desire for her, he himself also acts as one. In other words, Menelaus is acting like a dog because he is acting like a shameless woman. Similarly, when Klytemnestra ‘speaks of this man [*Agamemnon*] as the watch-dog of his homestead’ (896), she uses ‘watch-dog’ in the same ironical tone as when she used the term for herself. That is, though she *prima facie* calls him a dog in a positive way directly, she is in fact indirectly insulting him. For he is not a ‘watch-dog,’ as in protector; like herself<sup>30</sup>, he is exactly the opposite: he is powerless against what awaits him. Polymestor is also a dog in this way, for he calls Hecuba a dog based on the nature of her actions, and yet they both act and speak to one another in exactly the same manner: they are both only moved by uncontrollable rage.

There are two exceptions to this rule. One exception was, as we saw earlier in this section, the men of Aegyptus. This may be justified in that they were foreigners and bringers of war in an otherwise peaceful city. But, also in that in their unholiness, they are utterly masterless. The other is a case in which ‘dog’ is used as a positive epithet- this also being the only unambiguously positive instance. In Sophocles’ *Ajax* (10–30), Odysseus indirectly describes himself as a dog by way of how he describes his actions: he is ‘tracking down’ and ‘prowling round to catch an enemy.’ Later in the play, the suspicion that Odysseus is indirectly calling himself a dog in that passage is confirmed when Athena calls Odysseus ‘a keen Spartan hound upon the scent’ (8). Odysseus is Athena’s hound. And, given that Athena is thought to represent the voice of reason in people’s minds, Odysseus, the hound of reason, comes in direct opposition to the Erinyes, the hounds of irrational vengeance. The fact that Athena is calling him a hound within a context of praise renders the simile a positive one.

More important, however, is the fact that in his activity as a dog, Odysseus is using canine reasoning of the sort noticed by Chrysippus and Aelian. This is best seen in Odysseus’ knowledge of Athena’s presence: he has ‘grasped her sounds in his mind’ (16) and directly recognises her even if she is invisible simply by hearing her voice (13–17). It can also be seen in that we are told that he decides his tactical moves against his enemies by ‘sniffing them out’ (2). Like the dog of Chrysippus, he is ‘scouring and comparing tracks’ in order to ‘trace fresh printed movements, and determine whether he is inside or not’ (4–6). And like Chrysippus’ dog, Odysseus succeeds in finding his way to his prey (7).<sup>31</sup> Even more remarkable is the fact, however, that through canine reasoning, Odysseus is the

<sup>30</sup>Klytemnestra calls herself a ‘watch-dog’ which initially seems to mean faithful, but interpreted ironically, it means faithless. For the dog-epithet in *Agamemnon*, see: Saayman (1993, pp. 9–13).

<sup>31</sup>In line 12 of the *Ajax*, Odysseus is also seen resembling a dog, such as Aelian’s dog who re-entered the battle after giving birth, in that he shows little concern for the distinction between safety and pain. For the connection between Odysseus and dogs, see: Rose (1979, pp. 215–230).

one tragic dog that escapes madness and misfortune.

## Philosophical Dogs

Do philosophical dogs, like Odysseus, escape madness?<sup>32</sup> What does it mean for a lover of wisdom to be and behave like a dog?<sup>33</sup> And what is wisdom in this context? A dog, being an animal, does not possess reasoned speech (*logos*); which prompts the question: how does one go about doing philosophy without *logos*? Can there be a systematic philosophy that does not primarily stem from *logos*, but instead from indicative symbolic sounds and performative acts? How do the Cynics make philosophy out of the behaviour of dogs? I propose that, by living the life a dog, Diogenes corroborated the otherwise frightening idea that dogs are indeed our superiors (Denyer, unpublished).

The name of ‘Dog’ (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 3.10.1411a25)<sup>34</sup> may have been attached to the Cynics by association with the gymnasium of Cynosarges (Billot 1994, vol. 2 917–66; Navia 1996, 15–7, 19, 20, 56, 59, 69; Harvey 2011, 165), where Antisthenes the Cynic had taught and Diogenes had also spend part of his life being taught (Navia, 1998). That location was a place characterised by the fact that foreigners, people in exile and generally social outcasts resided there. Therefore, this historical point does not speak against the second, yet not secondary reason for the dog epithet being attached to Diogenes and in fact the rest of the Cynics: namely, the cultural association of dogs with shamelessness and madness.

The identification of dogginess with madness in the case of Cynicism is long-standing: Alberti in 1450<sup>35</sup> dismissed the early Cynics on account of the fact that they ‘are concerned only with criticising and insulting each other, and their rejection of social life is condemned as a form of madness’ (Alberti 1942, p. 120)<sup>36,37</sup>. Diogenes’s alleged madness can also be seen in Stobaeus’s *Florilegium*: “Someone said that Diogenes was out of his mind. ‘I am not out of my mind,’ he replied, ‘but I don’t have your mind’” (Stobaeus, 3.3.5). Furthermore, Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives of the Philosophers* includes the following *chreia*<sup>38</sup>: “When [Plato] was asked by someone, ‘What sort of person does Diogenes seem to you to be?’, he answered, ‘A Socrates<sup>39</sup> gone mad [*mainomenos*]’” (D. L. 6.54. Cf. Ael.,

32For the connection between madness and Cynicism, see: Krueger (1996, pp. 101–102).

33Also, Denyer (unpublished). On the identification of dog and Cynic in collections of Cynic anecdotes, see for example D.L. 6.33, 40, 61, 77. In modern scholarship: Lipsey (1989, pp. 50–59).

34A proponents of the view that Antisthenes was the ‘Dog’ in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, see: Bracht et al. (1996, pp. 414–415). For a convincing opponent of this view, see: Zaccaria (2017, pp. 364–370).

35On the reception of Diogenes in the Renaissance, see: Livsay (1948, pp. 447–455).

36“omnibus maledicere et mordere, ne vero is non furor est, molle rebus perfrui quae ad cultum, ad victum faciant, quibus caeteri omnes mortales utantur?... stultitia est.”

37Furthermore, ‘plague of madness’ that devastated the city of Amida in 560 involve alleged cases of people barking like dogs (Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.32).

38*Cheiai* are anecdotes or short stories often, but not exclusively, to do with the life and philosophy of the Cynics. Most of the Cynic-themed *chreiai* are about Diogenes of Sinope. Though they may be biographically unreliable, they do reveal Diogenes’ general philosophical attitudes. More on the *chreiai* can be found in: Navia (1998, p. 45) and (1996, 32n17, 133).

39On the similarities between Socrates and Diogenes, see: Amelung (1927, pp. 281–296), McKirahan (1994, pp. 367–391), Navia (1993).

*Var. Hist.* 14.33).<sup>40</sup> One may rightfully connect the proposed madness of Diogenes of Sinope in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* with Diogenes Laertius's reports of an uncertainty over whether Cynicism constitutes a philosophy (D.L. 6.103). As such, Diogenes of Sinope is someone who acts even more strangely than Socrates from the point of view of the ancient Greek observer, but lacks the philosophical foundations to justify his anti-social strangeness and elevate him from madness. To be mad in this context then, is to act strangely without reason. The question arises then as to whether Diogenes was mad, that is, as to whether Diogenes lacked philosophical foundations.

Even though his reasoning may at times contain some form of argument, the way the *chreiai* are worded shows Diogenes' derision for the common usage of philosophical argumentation.<sup>41</sup> To someone who professed to be a philosopher but engaged in sophistical quibblings, Stobaeus tells us, 'you [Diogenes] wretch, you defile what is best in a philosopher's life by your means of argument, and yet you claim to be a philosopher' (Stobaeus 3.33.14). There are whole series of *chreiai* (e.g., D.L. 6.25, 6.69, 39-40; cf. Lucian, *DMort.* 1.2; Gel. 18.13.7-8) to illustrate Diogenes' distaste for theory and argument (Denyer, unpublished). 'Once a dialectician from Plato's school put it forward hoping to make fun of him. For when the dialectician had asked, 'That which I am, you are not?' and Diogenes first assented, and he then added, 'Now I am a human being', and Diogenes concluded: 'So it follows that you are not a human being.' 'Now that', replied Diogenes, 'is false, but if you want it to become true, start off with me'' (Aul. Gell., *AN* 18, 13.7-8).

In other words, Diogenes may use human language and basic forms of inductive and deductive reasoning, but he does not exceed the limit of what is necessary for him to be understood. His arguments are never elaborate, never embellished and often accompanied by performative symbolic actions, e.g. defecating in public, and sounds, e.g., barking. To someone running into him with a plank saying, 'Watch out!', Diogenes struck him with his stick and cried, 'Watch out!' (D. L. 6.41); when someone proved by an impeccable deduction that he had horns, he touched his forehead and said, 'Well, I don't see any.' And likewise, when somebody said there is no such thing as motion, he got up and walked around (D. L. 6.38-9)<sup>42</sup>; and when Plato defined man as a two-footed animal without wings, and was praised for it, Diogenes plucked a cock and brought it into the lecture hall, saying, 'Here's Plato's man!' As a result the definition was supplemented with the phrase 'having broad nails' (D. L. 6.40).

Instead, the kind of reasoning favoured by Diogenes is the kind of prudential reasoning of dogs such as that of the dog that attended to the fifth indemonstrable syllogism and the kind exercised by Odysseus in *Ajax*. That is, Diogenes should be thought of as 'a keen hound upon the scent' of virtue. The kind of virtue that, much like in the case of maenadic virtue, is not defined by, nor assessed by the degree to which it serves, society. But, one that he can sniff out with his nose, and can catch it with his teeth:

<sup>40</sup>Many of the Diogenes texts I cite here can also be found in: Giannantoni (1990).

<sup>41</sup>On Diogenes' rhetoric, see: Bracht Branham (1993, pp. 445-473).

<sup>42</sup>See also Simplicius, *On the Physics*, p. 1012, lines 22-26.

“Socrates: ‘Come, see that you catch some in the air when I throw you some piece of knowledge about celestial beings.’  
 Strepsiades: ‘What is that? Am I to eat wisdom in tidbits, like a dog?’”  
 (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 489-91; Cf. Plutarch, *On the Intelligence of Animals* 13 (969f))

To which question, on the condition that we substitute ‘celestial beings’ for ‘Nature,’ we can imagine, Diogenes would have answered an emphatic ‘yes.’<sup>43</sup> For to live in accordance with Nature in Cynic philosophy means to be self-sufficient, free from societal norms and capable of some kind of reasoning, Diogenes ‘the Dog’ cannot be said to be a philosopher, if philosophy is restricted to formal arguments and abstract theorising. Diogenes’ reasoning instead involves the ‘modesty and sobriety’ (686) of the Bacchae, which stems from the axiom that epistemic distinctions and judgements that are there to give reason to, accommodate the demands of, and are enforced by, society are false.<sup>44</sup> Reasoning, according to Cynicism and the canines, is supposed to aid personal freedom *qua* absolute necessity instead.

That Diogenes the Dog imitated dogs in their disregard for these kinds of distinctions can be seen in a notorious *chreia* found in Plutarch’s *De Stoicorum Repugnantiiis*: “He [Chrysippus] praised Diogenes for rubbing away on his genital organ in public and saying to the bystanders ‘If only it were as easy to rub hunger away from my stomach’” (21.1044b). An astute observation by Denyer is that Diogenes in Plutarch’s *chreia* about him is ‘rubbing away’ distinctions between public and private spaces, bodily parts that are considered appropriate to expose to the public and those that are not; but also, citing Dover,<sup>45</sup> distinctions between ‘slave and free, between urban and rustic, and between male and female,<sup>46</sup> human and animal’ (Denyer, unpublished). Indeed dogs disregard this distinction without asking for human permission.

Another such example is Diogenes’ very embrace of the epithet ‘The Dog’ (D.L. 6.33). The epithet *kyon* and its derivatives were primarily used, as we saw in the previous section, as insults against women often with the implication that the insulted party is mad. By the mere act of embracing dogginess, Diogenes undermined fundamental distinctions upon which Athenian society operated: between male and female, human and animal, sanity and insanity. *Pace* Sedley (1980, pp. 1–17), someone who chooses the argumentative style of a dog, that is to say, someone that enacts the dissolution of certain distinctions and the creation of others based on down to earth axioms of virtue, can legitimately be said to be a lover of wisdom in a complete and systematic fashion (Denyer, unpublished).

Diogenes, that is, is not anti-philosophy *per se*, but is instead against a

<sup>43</sup>For example, see: Long (1996, p. 34), Navia (1998), Dudley (1937).

<sup>44</sup>The Cynic jargon for false judgement is ‘typhos.’

<sup>45</sup>Dover (1978, p. 97): “There is a certain tendency in comedy to treat masturbation as behaviour characteristic of slaves, who could not expect sexual outlets comparable in number or quality with those of free men...!”

<sup>46</sup>That masturbation was believed to have been exercised among the female citizens can be seen in Aristophanes’s *Lysistrata* 108-110, 158 and *Ecclesiazousai* 915–918.

culture of philosophy.<sup>47</sup> Diogenes, in other words, is anti-banquet: against symposiums where people would intoxicate themselves and engage in abstract theorising. He is against philosophy for the sake of philosophy and seeks, similarly to members of the Vienna Circle,<sup>48</sup> to minimise and eradicate it. Knowledge instead is to be expressed as an instinctive response to circumstances as they come. The dog fits this requirement nicely for, both in its practical and intellectual life, it is a self-sufficient (*autarkēs*) agent. And, what it means for knowledge to be understood as an innate instinctive response can be seen in the *Republic*:

“And does it seem to you also that the future guardian must have this additional characteristic, that besides being spirited, he must also be by nature a lover of wisdom [*philosophos*]?”

‘How is this?’ he said. ‘I don’t understand.’

‘This too,’ I said, ‘you have noticed about dogs, something truly surprising for an animal.’

‘What?’

‘That when it sees someone unfamiliar it becomes aggressive, even if it has suffered nothing bad from them, but when it sees one it knows it greets them warmly, even if it has received no benefit from them. Haven’t you ever marvelled at this?’

‘No,’ he said. ‘I had not noticed that before. But that is certainly how they behave.’

‘Well, this element of their nature seems a fine one, something truly wisdom-loving [*philosophos*].’

‘In what sense?’

‘In the sense,’ I said, ‘that it has no other criterion for distinguishing friend from enemy than that it knows the one and doesn’t know the other. And how could any being not have a love of learning that defines the familiar and foreign by knowledge and ignorance?’”

(Plato, *Republic* 375e–376b)

According to Socrates’ argument, the philosopher-dog is the guard *par excellence* precisely because, in its love for wisdom, knowledge is the only standard by which the dog makes distinctions by way of its sight, smell, or its other senses. For Diogenes the function of knowledge is to aid one in maintaining life, not to create a culture of living or a life-style. According to Diogenes the two pursuits are incompatible. For all its lack of embellishment, dog’s prudential reasoning makes for a better life than human reasoning. That is because the reasoning of the dogs is less attuned to desire and self-identity and more attuned to necessity which makes them more predisposed to recognising and choosing virtue over vice:

“This was Argus...

a dog lying there lifted its nose and ears,

Argus, of long-suffering Odysseus—he had raised the dog

but could not enjoy him, since he left for sacred Ilium beforehand.

...he lay there in a lot of dung in front of the gates,

47On the anti-intellectualism of Diogenes, see: Meilland (1983, pp. 233–246), Navia (1995).

48Members of the Vienna Circle aimed at clarifying philosophy to its elimination as a field.

strewn there in quantities from mules and cattle...  
 There the dog Argus lay,  
 infected with dog-pests.  
 ... on seeing Odysseus close by,  
 it wagged its tail in greeting and lowered both its ears..."  
 (Homer, *Odyssey* 17.291–4)

Argus was quick to notice the only distinction that truly matters: that between vice and virtue (Denyer, unpublished). For the life led by the suitors, however luxurious, safe, clean and comfortable, is a vicious one, and the life of Odysseus, as Diogenes sees it, however beggarly, dangerous, filthy, and painful, is virtuous (*Od.* 13. 437). Odysseus and Argus resemble each other both with regards to their physical and moral state. As such they recognised and rejoiced in each other's image, as unrecognisable and miserable it may have seemed. And both of them rejected the image of the suitors, no matter how exuberant and beautiful they may have seemed. Diogenes, in a *chreia* by an 11<sup>th</sup> century Arabic scholar Mubassir, is seen embodying Argus and Odysseus's attitude when, to the question as to why he is called the Dog, he replied that it was because he knows to bark at the foolish and respect the wise. Yet, to the eyes of the suitors, much like in the eyes of those who are perceived as strangers by the maenaeds, Argus and Odysseus' rejection was a social transgression.

To question social convention is to question the necessity of society. To Diogenes Athenian society was a society of suitors: "When he was going back from Sparta to Athens, someone asked him 'Where have you come from? And where are you going to?' Diogenes replied 'From the men's quarters to the women's'" (D.L. 6.59). "When asked where in Greece he could see good men, he said 'Good men nowhere, but good boys in Sparta'" (D.L. 6.27; Arsenius p. 198, ll. 23–25). Yet, Diogenes did not simply question Athenian society, but society as such. One *chreia* tells us of a Spartan who praised the line from Hesiod which says, "Not an ox would be lost if your neighbour were not bad"; and on hearing this, Diogenes said, 'Why, to be sure, the Messenians and their oxen have been lost, and you are their neighbours' (Ael., *Hist. Misc.* 9.28). Another *chreia* tells us that "Diogenes went to Olympia, and saw at the festival some lavishly clothed young Rhodians. 'That's deceptive behaviour,' he said. He next encountered some Spartans in cheap and dirty tunics with only one sleeve. He said 'That's even more deceptive'" (Ael. *VH* 9.34).

Diogenes' performative contributions to his arguments were in the form of social transgressions which invited the accusation of madness. Diogenes' transgressions are a lot smaller and seemingly insignificant, yet a lot more systematic, and most definitely consciously and argumentatively intentional, compared to the transgressions of the tragic dogs. Diogenes may have eaten raw meat and human flesh, but as a dog he did not kill any of his kin, nor is he seen involved in a great dispute for disobeying his parents. That is because Diogenes' disdain for societal status frees him from any commitment to fight for his honor, or for the honor of a family member, or that of the city. For Diogenes being virtuous means having neither honour in society nor dignity.

There are many *chreiai* that illustrate Diogenes's commitment to a doggishly

ethical, and rather sane, life. But, perhaps the one that ties together the way in which Diogenes has been talked about in this paper, can be seen in Maximus of Tyre's description of him: "The man from Sinope in Pontus, after consulting the Apollonian oracle, stripped from himself all unnecessary things, broke asunder all the chains that had previously imprisoned his spirit, and devoted himself to a wandering life of freedom, like a bird, unafraid of tyrants and governments, not constrained by any human laws, undisturbed by politics and political events, free from the hindrance of children and a wife, unwilling to work the fruits of the earth in the fields, rejecting even the thought of serving in an army, the contemptuous of the market activities that consume most people" (*Or.* XXXVI, 5).

## Conclusion

The epithet 'dog,' which was used at a societal and literary level to denote a rather mad character that is incapable of reasoning, undergoes a positive transformation which emphasizes central features of Cynic philosophy. Both tragic and philosophical dogs may in a way be understood as a case of bestial madness similar to that of Nebuchadnezzar, who was given 'the heart of a beast' such that 'his life appeared of no value to him... he does not love son or daughter... family and clan does not exist' (Daniel 4:13). Both tragic and philosophical dogs become shameless in that, at least at one way or another, they do not recognise or accept traditional relational values.

The majority of the tragic dogs are Ophelic women driven mad by mistreatment and loss. As such their shamelessness is more or less purely destructive. Hecuba is the epitome of the destructive dog for, driven by vengeance, she aims at eliminating life. The *Bacchic maenads* and Odysseus in the *Ajax* are in certain ways the exceptions to the purely destructive rule and stand in greater proximity with the Diogenean life.

Though Diogenes, on the other hand, may appear at first sight as though he is simply a deranged beggar who has chosen a Hobbesian existence similar to the 'Bedlam beggar' (Shakespeare, *King Lear*) who deliberately disguises himself as a madman and wanders naked through the countryside.<sup>49</sup> He is in fact closer to Shakespeare's Fool in *King Lear* whose mental state (which is best understood as a doggishly philosophically inclined mind in Diogenes' case) licenses him to tell truths socially-saner mortals dare not to utter. Diogenes' shamelessness is productive- and manages for that reason to escape madness- in that it aims at a virtuous life. That is, in his rejection of morality founded upon *a* society, there is Natural life.

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<sup>49</sup>On Cynicism and *King Lear*, see: Butler (1986, pp. 511–524), Doloff (1991, pp. 253–255); Donawerth (1977, pp. 10–14).

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