It is hard to imagine how one could think about exile—ancient or modern—and not think through Cynicism. The founding fathers of Cynicism, Diogenes of Sinope and Crates of Thebes, were exiles, after all, the former involuntarily, the latter voluntarily. Later in the Roman empire two exiled courtiers, Seneca and Dio Chrysostom, are among the most important writers on Cynic themes, and then there is the sophist Lucian, a Syrian living in voluntary exile among Greeks, duly attracted to Cynic masks and Cynic *parrhesia* (*παρρησία*, ‘frankness’, ‘freedom of speech’). We might also think of Epictetus, a Stoic with an interest in Cynicism, who as a slave lives in a kind of internal exile, which he tries to re-describe as freedom. And then there are modern Cynics living in exile like Nietzsche (in exile) from Germany or Diderot from France. An existential response to exile has from the very beginning been part of what makes Cynicism interesting and strangely modern—it is a response to banishment, to being cut away from society and at the same time...
time having to take part; it is about getting thrown out, or dropping out, or checking out, opting out and preferring not to—not to be a citizen, i.e., a soldier, taxpayer or voter; not to be a producer, i.e., a farmer, merchant or craftsman and thus also about not being a philosopher—at least according to an Aristotelian or Platonic conception, since both are centrally concerned with how to make better citizens.\(^5\) Hence, when Diogenes is reproached for having suffered exile (in one of the anecdotes Diogenes Laertius reports) his reply is typically forthright: “You miserable fool, that’s how I became a philosopher!”\(^6\)

Here he makes the connection as emphatically as possible between Cynicism (or his philosophy) and exile. But what is the story here? How did a philosophy emerge from the experience of exile? Or how did suffering exile get turned into a philosophy—if that is what Cynicism is—for of course there has always been some doubt about how to classify it—whether as a way of life or a full blown philosophy.\(^7\)

When I first started reading about the Cynics I thought the story of Diogenes’ exile probably had as much truth to it as the related story that he was given his philosophic mission in life—to deface the currency (παραχαράττειν τό νόμισμα, cf. Diog. Laert. 6.20–1)—by the Delphic or Delian oracle, a story clearly modeled on the oracle Plato’s Socrates reports in the Apology. Such stories probably originated in a literary context—perhaps a philosophic parody by or about Diogenes—and were later treated biographically by the doxographers.\(^8\) As Niehues-Pröbsting (1979) 13) observes, Diogenes’ image is already a product of his reception wherever we encounter it.

The ancient traditions reported by Diogenes Laertius agree that Diogenes was forced into exile but the circumstances and cause of his exile vary; in one account he is exiled because his father Hicesias was entrusted with the money of the state and defaced the coinage (cf. Diog. Laert. 6.20: δημοσίαν αὐτοῦ τὴν τράπεζαν ἔχοντος τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παραχαράξαντος τὸ νόμισμα); according to another version of the story Diogenes’ father entrusted him with the money and he defaced it, in consequence of which his father was imprisoned and died while the son fled (cf. Diog. Laert. 6.21: ἐνιοί δὲ φασὶ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτὸν λαβόντα τὸ νόμισμα διαφθείραι· καὶ τὸν μὲν δεθέντα ἀποθανεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυγεῖν); in

\(^5\) A major concern in Plato’s Republic and Aristotle’s Politics. Hence their interest in education.

\(^6\) Cf. Diog. Laert. 6.49: ὃ κακόδαιμον, ἐφιλοσοφίσσα.

\(^7\) For discussion, see Branham/Goulet-Cazé (1996) 21–7.

\(^8\) For discussion, see Niehues-Pröbsting (1979) 43–56.