

[AccueilRevenir à l'accueilCollectionBoite_023 | Notes de la fin de sa vie pour ses derniers livres.CollectionBoite_023-16-chem | Cyniques. ItemDudley. Cynism in the 3rd century BC](#)

Dudley. Cynism in the 3rd century BC

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Présentation de la fiche

Coteb023_f0712

SourceBoite_023-16-chem | Cyniques.

LangueFrançais

TypeFicheLecture

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

Références éditoriales

Éditeuréquipe FFL (projet ANR *Fiches de lecture de Michel Foucault*) ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle).

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Notice créée par [équipe FFL](#) Notice créée le 19/03/2021 Dernière modification le 23/04/2021

Dudley

712

CYNICISM IN THE THIRD CENTURY B.C. 79

had been a citizen of Megalopolis, not the fellow-citizen of Diogenes in the *κόσμος*. But in one very remarkable fragment¹ we see how his Cynic leanings influenced his political views.

(Why does not God) choose out Xenon, that greedy cormorant of the well-lined purse, the child of licentiousness, and make him the child of poverty, giving to us who deserve it the silver that now runs to waste? What could prevent it (ask God that question, since it is easy for him to bring about whatever his mind resolves) that the man who ruins wealth by pouring out what he has or the filthy-dross-stained usurer, should be drained of their swine-befouled wealth, and the money now wasted given to him that has but his daily bread, and dips his cup at the common bowl? Has Justice then the sight of a mole, does Phaethon squint with a single pupil, is the vision dimmed of Themis the bright? How can one hold them for gods that lack eyes to see and ears to hear? Yet men say that the dread king, lord of the lightning, sits in mid-olympus holding the scales of justice, and never nods. So says Homer in the *Iliad*. 'He doth incline the scale to the mighty of valour, when the day of fate is at hand.' Why then does the impartial balancer never incline to *me*? 'But the Brygians,² dregs of humanity (yet I dread to say it), see how far they swing down in their favour the scales of Zeus! What lords, then, what sons of Ouranos shall a man find, that he may have justice? For Zeus, father of us all, verily is a father to some, to others but a step-father. Best leave the problem to astrologers; I think for them it will be a light task to solve. But for us, let us have a care for Paeon, and for Sharing—she is indeed a goddess—and Retribution that walketh the earth. While the godhead blows a favourable wind astern, hold her in honour; but though mortals fare well, yet shall a sudden wind blow vaunted wealth and proud fortune away. Who then shall vomit them back to you from the deep?'

Can we date this remarkable outburst against social inequality? Tarn thinks it emanates from the period when the reforms of Cleomenes were arousing the oppressed classes throughout the Peloponnese. Cercidas, he says, 'is actually found preaching philanthropy and exhorting his fellows' (i.e. the governing classes) 'to heal the sick and give to the poor while they had time, otherwise the social revolution might be

¹ Fr. 4 (Powell).

² Reading, with Κροχ, τὰ δ' ἔσχατα Βρυγία Μυσῶν. Powell reads τὰ δ' ἔσχατα βρυγία Μυσῶν.

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