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In Search of Lost Cheekiness An Introduction to Peter Sloterdijk's "Critique of Cynical Reason"

Summary: *In the article, "On Search of Lost Cheekiness: An Introduction to Peter Sloterdijk's 'Critique of Cynical Reason'" I put forward a critical summary of Sloterdijk's first major work which established his reputation as a leading German philosopher. My article is structured as follows: Firstly, I analyse Sloterdijk's understanding of philosophy where I explain that he is concerned with the questions of life, and of values (if we take values not only to refer to general principles, but also include attitudes towards life) and that one could say he is one of Nietzsche's philosophers of the future, who are the inventors of new values and do not believe in truth anymore. The main focus of Sloterdijk's book lies in the interpretation of the Enlightenment, and our current cultural situation. Hence, I put forward my reading of Sloterdijk's understanding of the Enlightenment period (part two), which leads me to an analysis of the notion of 'Cynicism' (part three). His notion of 'Cynicism' represents the attitude towards life which is supposed to be prevalent in the present and which is personified best by the Frankfurt School. Sloterdijk is extremely critical of this attitude and puts forward 'Kynicism' as an alternative to 'Cynicism'. Finally, I critically interpret Sloterdijk's notion of 'Kynicism'.*

Key Words: *Sloterdijk, Cynical Reason, Kynicism, Values, Nietzsche*

In this essay I wish to give an introduction to the first main work of a major German contemporary philosopher - Peter Sloterdijk. He was born in Karlsruhe in 1947. 36 years later, in 1983, he became the shooting star of German philosophy with the publication of his early main work 'The Critique of Cynical Reason' with which I will be concerned in this paper.

In later publications he has dealt with topics as diverse as the flight from the world (Weltflucht) of monks, to the cultural history of drugs, the location when we listen to music [Sloterdijk (1993a)], and even a Taoism for Europe [Sloterdijk (1996)]. In addition, it should be mentioned that the philosophy of his latest main works which are called "Spheres" {"Sphären 1" [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998b] & "Sphären 2" [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999]} differs significantly from the 'Critique of Cynical Reason'. Yet, he

is not only a philosopher and cultural critic, but he has also published a novel called 'the magic tree' (Der Zauberbaum) [Sloterdijk (1985)] which deals with the birth of psychoanalysis. His fame in German philosophical circles is only being matched by Habermas, Marquard, and Gadamer.

There are, however, also quite a few people, who would object to me calling Sloterdijk a philosopher, because, according to them, Sloterdijk lacks academic rigour, and deals with topics not normally discussed in Academic philosophy. Still, Habermas takes him seriously [J. Habermas, in: Pflasterstrand: Nr.: 159 / 1983], internationally renowned Professors of philosophy have written articles about him [ed. Suhrkamp (1987)], and there are already lecture series being organised on some of his writings in Germany, so it seem as if one should not dismiss him that easily, even if the initial impression one might get about him is that he is just a cultural critic.

Let us consider the philosopher's educational background. Peter Sloterdijk went through the German educational system. He studied German literature, history, and philosophy in Munich and Hamburg, where he received his Dr. phil. in German Literature. After he had finished his studies, he was working as a free lance writer in Munich for some time. Then he was producing his "Critique of Cynical Reason". Nowadays, he is a Professor at the Karlsruher Hochschule für Gestaltung, and the Wiener Akademie der Bildenden Künste.

Although, he now is a professional academic, his inventive style of writing has not changed, and the titles, as well as the content of his works are still as innovative and idiosyncratic as they used to be in his early publications. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has even compared him to such high class writers as Schopenhauer, and Spengler [J. Busche, in FAZ: 7.4.1983]. Besides Sloterdijk's rather dull discussion of Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy in his "Thinker on Stage" [Sloterdijk (1989)], wherein one gets to know Sloterdijk, but not Nietzsche; I regard this to be a fair estimation.

After briefly having introduced Sloterdijk as a person, and a writer, I wish to turn to his main work – 'The Critique of Cynical Reason'. This 1000 page long giant was published in Germany in 1983, and translated into English in 1987. It contains some of the most refreshing German prose written after 1945. As the title already suggests it is a Critique, which criticises cynical reason. This sounds interesting, but where can we place him as a philosopher, one might wonder.

Philosophy

Peter Sloterdijk is not someone, who would translate philosophy as 'love of the truth', because he is not concerned with the great metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological problems:

The great themes, they were evasions and half truths. Those futile, beautiful, soaring flights - God, Universe, Theory, Praxis, Subject, Object, Body, Spirit, Meaning, Nothingness - all that is nothing. They are nouns for young people, for outsiders, clerics, sociologists. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. xxvi]

His philosophy is about all the seemingly insignificant, apparently lower aspects of life.

The *Zeitgeist* has left its mark on us, and whoever wants to decipher it is faced with the task of working on the psychosomatics of Cynicism. This is what an integrating philosophy demands of itself. It is called integrating because it does not let itself be seduced by the attraction of the 'great problems', but instead initially finds its themes in the trivial, in everyday life, in the so-called unimportant, in those things that otherwise are not worth speaking about, in petty details. Whoever wants to can, in such a perspective, already recognise the kynical impulse for which the 'low-brow themes' are not too low. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 140 – 141]

He is still concerned with the questions of life, and of values, if we take values not only to refer to general principles, but include attitudes towards life as well. So, one could say that Sloterdijk understands philosophy as the 'love of wisdom'. Thereby, he is one of Nietzsche's philosopher's of the future, who are the inventors of new values, and do not believe in the truth anymore. In other words, he is a post-modernist. I take the term 'post-modernist' to refer to someone who regards the possibility of human beings to get to know the truth, in respect to metaphysics as well as in respect to ethics, as impossible. This implies that for him there is also no set of values, or principles, which is absolutely valid. A couple of problems in respect to ones own life arise out of this attitude because each of us has to find answers to the following questions: How am I supposed to live? What are the values, and principles, I intend to stick to? What could be a possible basis for my actions? Sloterdijk does not provide direct answers to these questions.

If we took the notion 'value' to refer to general principles concerning the good life only, then Sloterdijk would not be a philosopher in the above mentioned sense because, in contrast to Marx, and Nietzsche, he is not building up a new immanent system of virtues and values to give answers to the aforementioned questions {"New values? No thanks!" [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 6]}, but he accepts that currently our Western societies are mainly based on nihilism, and puts forward an altered attitude towards it. The present attitude human beings take in respect to life, if they believe in nihilism, is Cynicism, according to him. This he contrasts with Kynicism, and while doing so he describes Kynicism in such a

way that this state of consciousness is much more appealing than the cynical one. Therefore, one can say that he is putting forward Kynicism as a better reaction to nihilism than Cynicism. Cynicism as well as Kynicism are states of consciousness, according to Sloterdijk, and they also agree insofar as they both are far beyond the belief in idealism, and stable, absolute values. Whenever Sloterdijk employs the term “idealism”, he does not mean typical idealism à la Hegel, but he refers to all types of belief in absolutes. The loss of the belief in stable values, idealism et cetera, e.g. nihilism, was brought about by the Enlightenment movement. This movement was accompanied by the cynical attitude, which he criticises in this work. His work is not primarily a critique of the Enlightenment, as Andreas Huyssen pointed out [Sloterdijk (1987b): Foreword], but rather a critique of the attitude of Cynicism, which accompanied the Enlightenment movement. It is not a critique of the Enlightenment at all, but only a critique of the state of consciousness, which is usually brought about by any form of enlightenment, e.g. Cynicism, or as he calls it: Cynical reason.

After having pointed out, where Peter Sloterdijk is to be found on the philosophical map, I now give a brief overview over the structure of the ‘Critique of Cynical Reason’. In the first part of his Critique, he provides us with the concepts of “Cynicism” and “Kynicism”, and states examples of the loss of absolutes from the Enlightenment period, which have brought about cynical reason in human beings. In the second main part, which is nearly three times longer than the first, he goes through masses of examples of Cynicism in the world process. These examples are divided up into four main categories. The first one deals with physiognomy, the second with phenomenology, the third with logic, and the last with a historical example, e.g. the Weimar Republic. He does so to provide us with an understanding of the various variations and complexities of Cynicism. One should also bear in mind that the four headings, just mentioned, have rather idiosyncratic meanings within his work, which are however easily grasped, if one reads the parts itself. Space here is too limited to deal with all the problematic notions in question, but a brief introduction to the key notions of the ‘Critique of Cynical Reason’ can be given.

I begin with an interpretation of what took place during the Enlightenment period, according to Sloterdijk, this leads me to an analysis of the notion of ‘Cynicism’, which as an attitude towards life is supposed to be prevalent in the present, and finally I put forward my analysis of Sloterdijk’s notion ‘Kynicism’, which he defends as an alternative to ‘Cynicism’.

Enlightenment

The Enlightenment brought about the end of the Christian domination of the Western world, a destruction of any ideals, absolutes, or truths, whether in respect to ontology, or morality. The various destructions, of course, did not happen from one moment to the other, but took place over a long period of time. In the history of philosophy the enlightenment began with Descartes "Meditations". Kants critiques are further central works concerning the enlightenment movement. The more the Enlightenment progressed, the more the importance of nihilism increased, as more and more ideals were destroyed. However, within the enlightenment one still has had the reasonable unified subject on which one could rely and on which all critiques but also all positive, non nihilistic conceptions, like Kantian ethics, were based. So within the enlightenment there was still a small stronghold against nihilism – the reasonable unified subject.

Before the enlightenment, one used to believe that the Christian metaphysics is true, that the bible was revealed to us and represents the actual word of God, that human beings can get to know the metaphysic of the whole world by using their faculty of reason, that if we live a moral life we will gain an eternal blissful afterlife, that any form of absolutes exists ontologically in some separate realm, that the earth is at the centre of the universe, that God is the creator of everything and many other things from the support we get from Angels to the existence of the devil. However, in the Enlightenment period all these beliefs and various others more were attacked by critiques. A critique is a theory or a set of beliefs which attacks or sheds doubt upon an absolute truth, an indubitable belief. Human beings use their faculty of reason to undertake these critiques. Sloterdijk explains the dynamic of these critiques as follows, and counterposes his own critique to the other ones:

It is the a-priori pain - it makes even the simplest things in life difficult for a person - that opens his eyes critically. There is no significant critique without significant defects. It is the critically wounded in a culture who, with great effort, find something healing, who continue to turn the wheel of critique... Among the great critical achievements in modern times, sores open up everywhere... Out of the self healing of deep sores come critiques that serve epochs as rallying points for self knowledge. Every critique is pioneering work on the pain of the times (*Zeitschmerz*) and a piece of exemplary healing.

It is not my ambition to enlarge this honourable infirmary of critical theories. It is time for a new critique of temperaments. Where

enlightenment appears as a 'melancholy science' (Adorno, Transl.), it unintentionally furthers melancholic stagnation. Thus, the critique of cynical reason hopes to achieve more from a work that cheers us up, whereby it is understood from the beginning that it is not so much a matter of work but rather of relaxation. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. xxxvi – xxxvii]

So Sloterdijk's critique is supposed to be a *gay science*, as opposed to the critiques of the enlightenment which were *sad sciences* because they merely destroyed all the ideals in which people used to believe in, which people employed for structuring their lives, and which provided a meaning to the lives of people. Of course, his critique aims to destroy or attack something as well. Yet, what it goes against is an attitude towards life which makes people miserable and depressed, whereas the ideals the Enlightenment critiques attacked brought at least an apparent fulfilment and joy into the lives of the people, like a blissful afterlife. This can be seen at the critiques which came up during the Enlightenment period:

There is the Critique of Revelation, Religious Illusion, Metaphysical Illusion, the Idealistic Superstructure, Moral Illusion, Transparency, Natural Illusion, and Illusion of Privacy. I do not wish to go into too much detail here, although Sloterdijk does. He sets out the different critiques in a fairly detailed manner. I will cite only three examples from two categories. I have taken the first one from Sloterdijk's critique of religious illusion. It is the theory of priests' deception, as it came up in the 18th century:

It is known as *the theory of priests' deception*. Here enlightenment approaches religion through an instrumentalist perspective by asking, Whom does religion serve, and what function does it serve in the life of society? The enlighteners were not at a loss for the - apparently simple - answer. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 28]

All religions are erected on the ground of fear. Gales, thunder, storms... are the cause of this fear. Human beings who felt impotent in the face of such natural events, sought refuge in beings who were stronger than themselves. Only later did *ambitious men, artful politicians and philosophers* begin to take advantage of the people's gullibility. For this purpose they invented a multitude of equally fantastic and cruel gods, who serve no other purpose than to consolidate and maintain their power over people.. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 28]

Here the Christian metaphysics was being attacked by a philosopher. However, this sort of critique was not only practised by politicians, or philosophers, but also of artists, as one can see at the next example taken from Heinrich Heine's work. It goes against the morals of the servants of God on earth:

I know the style, I know the text
And also their lordships, the authors:
I know they secretly drank wine
And publicly preached water. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 33]

The last example I wish to give is contained in Sloterdijk's critique of illusion of privacy. It deals with the place of the self in relation to nature and society. It tells us that:

In that which is 'given in nature' there is always something 'given in addition' by human beings. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 59]

The aristocratic programming of a heightened self-consciousness, however, comprises more than just what is too hastily called vanity or arrogance. It provides at the same time a high level of character formation and education that works to form opinions, etiquette, emotionality, and cultural taste... With the ascendancy of the *bourgeoisie*, the place of the 'best' is awarded anew... The bourgeoisie found its own way of being *better* than the others, better than the corrupt nobility and the uncultivated mob. At first its class ego raised itself on the feeling of having the better, purer, more rational, and more useful *morality* in all areas of life, from sexuality to management... From a historical perspective, the bourgeoisie is the first class that has learned *to say I* and at the same time has the *experience of labour*... When the bourgeois says 'I' the idea of the pride of labour, of productive accomplishment can also be heard for the first time... In the *workers' movement*... a new political ego took the floor once more. It was no longer a bourgeois ego, but initially and for a long time, it spoke a bourgeois language... Its ideology was: freedom, equality, solidarity... The labourer ego... possesses no primary narcissistic will to power. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 62 - 66]

i.e. it does not claim to be the best form of life as the others do.

At these excerpts it becomes clear that Sloterdijk does not put forward arguments but merely states claims. As he thinks that there is no truth, and that anything can possibly be argued given the respective premisses, he turns to the premisses themselves, and tells a tempting story with which he tries to

convince the readers of the plausibility of his premisses, and his story. Here he tries to convey that if one understands that the aristocratic morality or the middle class morality were only regarded as the one and only natural morality because it suited the character of the inventors and usually the subscribers of the respective morality, then it is tempting to start to believe in the relativity of morality. Every social group develops a morality suitable for its own good. Members of the different groups, once they are aware of the fact that they have the morality they have because they are who they are, and not because it is the one and only true morality, and who still have to stick to the morality accepted in their social group, tend to become cynics, which means that the enlightenment about the non universal validity of a strong morality makes them miserable. Enlightenment thinkers realised that any strong account of the Good cannot claim universal validity, and so they tried to establish a universal morality based on reason. This, however, did not provide them with a strong conceptions of the Good life, but only with an account of what should not be done. From then on it was allowed to do what one whises to do, as long as one did not limit the freedom of other individuals, because all individuals have the right to be free, as they all are reasonable creatures.

No matter whether it is morality or religion, as it is the case in our two examples, or whether we take other cases of Enlightenment critiques into consideration, what is important is that traditional absolutes were destroyed by putting forward different explanations which suggest that the absolutes in questions are no absolutes, but are rather regarded as truth or absolutely valid due to who one is, yet they are metaphysically non existent. The whole tradition of critiques can be subsumed under the heading of critiques of ideologies.

The 'philosophical' ideology critique is truly the heir if a great *satirical* tradition, in which the motif of unmasking, exposing, baring has served for aeons now as a weapon. But modern ideology critique - according to our thesis has ominously cut itself away from the powerful traditions of laughter in satirical knowledge, which have their roots in ancient Kynicism. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 16]

So although the history of critiques of ideologies was linked to laughter and the satiric tradition, it has dissolved from this and has altered into one which leads to misery, depression, and pessimism. Sloterdijk calls this attitude towards life Cynicism. It came into existence parallel to the progression of the enlightenment period, and has now reached a very influential position in our society.

Cynicism

What is Cynicism?

Cynicism is *enlightened false consciousness* [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 5]

Sloterdijk understands Cynicism as enlightened false consciousness. I have already alluded to what this means. A cynic is someone, who is part of an institution, or group, whose existence and values he himself can no longer see as absolute, necessary and unconditional, and who is miserable, due to this enlightenment, because he sticks to principles he does not believe in. The only knowledge left for a cynic is his trust in reason, which, however, cannot provide him with a firm basis for action, and this again is another reason for being miserable.

According to Sloterdijk Cynicism, nowadays, is a common problem. He even says that Cynicism is universal. I do not think that he says this to refer to the whole world because the form of Cynicism he describes is clearly linked to the Enlightenment, and this also implies that he is mainly justified in referring to the history of the Western industrial countries, or at most all the educated people all over the world, although even this seems to go a bit far because I think that the educated people especially in Asian countries still are very involved in the traditional religions of their countries. This means that the Cynicism we are concerned with is mainly a phenomenon of the Western Industrial countries.

The discontent in our culture has assumed a new quality: it appears as a universal, diffuse Cynicism. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 3]

According to Sloterdijk, the corner stone for this development can already be found in the education we get at schools and universities.

The universities and schools practice a schizoid role playing in which an unmotivated, prospectless but intelligent youth learns to keep up with the general standards of enlightened meaninglessness. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 83 - 84]

We get already educated in such a way that we are bound to end up as cynics. Why is this the case? It is due to the schizoid role playing we are supposedly taught at school and universities. This means that in our education we come in contact with a huge amount of lifestyles, and we are also being told that most of them are justified by reference to a metaphysics or a religion, but we also learn that religions or metaphysics can no longer be upheld. Such an education puts us into the schizoid situation that we have got the chance to lead

many lifestyles, but without any one of them being justified. So one is forced to act without being convinced of what one does. The higher one gets within our educational system, the more contingencies we get to learn, and the more uncertain our lives become.

This short explanation of what schizoid role playing means should have already made it clear that the cynical type of human being can be seen as a mass phenomena among the people of the upper and the upper middle class nowadays.

Today the cynic appears as a mass figure: an average social character in the upper echelons of the elevated superstructure. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 4]

It can only be people from the higher classes, who are cynical, because Cynicism implies that one has to be in the positions of authority, and not believe in it or rather reject their purposefulness. In the position of authority are priests, atheists, metaphysical philosophers, Marxists, fascists, scientists, or anyone else who sticks to some abstract ideology and is part of / a representative of an absolute system. The problem all these representatives face nowadays is that all these ideologies have been severely and convincingly attacked and destroyed via all the critiques published in the Enlightenment period, according to Sloterdijk. So many of the representatives of the respective ideologies themselves do not believe in what they are doing anymore, or do not regard their position to be the one and only truth - like members of the church who do not believe in God, or economists who would like to be farmers. Still, they have to act and talk as if they were completely convinced of what they are doing, which is what makes them miserable. It is the contingency of the value of all life styles which was brought about by the critiques, and which has led to a schizoid state of mind, and to misery, as publicly everybody still has to represent the path chosen. As the result of this the representatives of the ideologies are often engaged in empty discourse, which progresses in the following manner.

Each side has developed certain, almost rigged, moves of critique; the religious criticise the areligious and vice versa, whereby each side has in its repertoire a metacritique of the ideology critique used by the opposing side: the moves in the dialogue between the Marxists and liberals are to a large extent fixed, likewise those of between Marxists and anarchists as well as those between anarchists and liberals... One knows pretty well what natural scientists and representatives of the humanities will accuse each other of. Even the ideology critique used by militarists and pacifists on each other threatens to stagnate, at least as far as creative moves are

concerned. For ideology critique, the Sartrean film title, *The Game Is Over*, itself almost half a century old, thus seems apposite. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 90]

This sort of engagement in one's daily tasks results in pessimism, depression, and indifference. The cynics are living without any passion for life are miserable, and regard the world to be futile and as something which has to be rejected.

We live from day to day, from vacation to vacation, from news show to news show, from problem to problem, from orgasm to orgasm, in private turbulences and medium-term affairs, tense, relaxed. With some things we feel dismay but with most things we can't really give a damn... We would still like to see a lot of the world and in general 'to live a whole lot more.' We ask ourselves what to do next and what will happen next. In the *Feuilleton* of the *Zeit*, the culture critics argue about the right way to be pessimistic." [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 98 - 99]

Of course, they do not have any long term goals anymore, or any great aims. Yet, they do not take pleasure in what they have either. None of the ideals are worth striving for any more, and what they have reached, millions of other people have achieved as well. Nothing is special, everything is permanently the same, the cynics think that they just strive and inflict pain upon themselves to achieve a position of respect and authority, although the position for which they are respected is not regarded to be worthwhile anymore because many critiques have already attacked it convincingly. There are catholic priests who praise God, tell their community all the nice little comforting stories about Jesus Christ, and explain how one is able to reach the blissful afterlife, but themselves do not believe that there is such an after-life and get involved in rather dubious activities in their private lives. This is a prime example for what Sloterdijk regards as a cynic. The bitterness, life denying attitude, the pessimism and the double standarts which are essential to being a cynic is partly understandable, even according to Sloterdijk:

However, since the technological atrocities of the twentieth century, from Verdun to the Gulag, from Auschwitz to Hiroshima, experience scorns all optimism. Historical consciousness and pessimism seem to amount to the same thing. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 11 - 12]

One the other hand, one might also wish to point out the benefits we have gained during the enlightenment, like social welfare, human rights, and

an incredible medical progress. Although these aspects indeed provide us with many goods, we are lacking something which gives meaning to our lives, and we do not have a world view through which we can justify our lives, and both of the last mentioned elements provides human beings with more life fulfilment than does a huge selection of technological products. Therefore there are good reasons for being a cynic, and for being miserable.

However, Sloterdijk does not regard it as necessary to react in such a way to the nihilism of our times or as he calls it to having an enlightened consciousness, but he regards it only as a contingent response. He does not think that the awareness of the enlightenment critiques or the enlightened consciousness is the problem, but the response towards this knowledge should not be Cynicism, but rather Kynicism, which I will introduce in the next section. He says:

In order to survive, one must be schooled in reality. Of course. Those who mean well call it growing up, and there is a grain of truth to that. But that is not it all. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 6 - 7]

Kynicism

We can get an initial grasp of the difference between Cynicism and Kynicism, in an example Sloterdijk gives us. It involves a kynical critique of the great cynic Adorno. He

was just about to begin his lecture when a group of demonstrators prevented him from mounting the podium...Among the disrupters were some female students who, in protest, attracted attention to themselves by exposing their breast to the thinker. Here, on the one side, stood naked flesh, exercising 'critique'; there, on the other side, stood the bitterly disappointed man without whom scarcely any of those present would have known what critique meant... It was not naked force that reduced the philosopher to muteness, but the force of the naked. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. xxxvii]

Sloterdijk introduces the notion 'Kynicism' by dealing with its Greek origin. Once we have grasped what Greek-Kynicism is all about, it should be easy for us to apply the concept to our times. So firstly I will cite what Sloterdijk tells us about Kynicism:

Greek Philosophy of Cheekiness: Kynicism

Ancient Kynicism, at least in its Greek origins, is in principle cheeky... In kynismos a kind of argumentation was discovered that, to the present

day, respectable thinking does not know how to deal with. Is not crude and grotesque to pick one's nose while Socrates exorcises his demon and speaks of the divine soul? Can it be called anything other than vulgar when Diogenes lets a fart fly against the Platonic theory of ideas - or is fartiness itself one of the ideas God discharged from his meditation on the genesis of the cosmos? And what is it supposed to mean when this philosophising town bum answers Plato's subtle theory of Eros by masturbating in public?

To understand these apparently irrelevantly provocative gestures, it is worth reflecting on a principle that called into being the doctrines of wisdom and that was regarded by the ancient world as a truism, before modern developments eradicated it. For the philosopher, the human being who exemplifies the love of truth and *conscious* living, life and doctrine must be in harmony... The appearance of Diogenes marks the most dramatic moment in the process of truth of early European philosophy... With Diogenes, the resistance against the rigged game of 'discourse' begins in European philosophy. Desperately funny, he resists the 'linguistification' of the cosmic universalism that called the philosopher to this occupation. Whether monologic or dialogic 'theory', in both, Diogenes smells the swindle of Idealistic abstractions and the schizoid staleness of a thinking limited to the satirical resistance, an uncivil enlightenment. He starts the *non-platonic dialogue*. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 101 - 102]

It is this cheerful cheekiness which one can find in all of the kynics action, and which distinguishes the kynics attitude from the cynics. The kynics argue with the whole of their bodies, especially with its lower part, which has been neglected through out the history of philosophy. The kynic is similar to the cynic only in so far as they both have an enlightened consciousness. Yet, the enlightened consciousness of the cynics is called false by Sloterdijk, because their consciousness makes them miserable. Whereas the enlightened consciousness of the cynics can be called correct, because they are cheerful, life-affirming, full of vitality and therefore also cheeky.

Cheekiness has, in principle, two positions, namely, above and below, hegemonic power and oppositional power, expressed on the language of the Middle Ages: master and serf. Ancient Kynicism begins the process of 'naked arguments' from the opposition, carried by the power that comes from below. The kynic farts, shits, pisses, masturbates on the street, before

there remained no alternative but to slander his weird and unwieldy opponent. He called him a “Socrates gone mad” (Socrates *mainoumenos*). The phrase is intended as an annihilation, but it is the highest recognition. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 104]

Yet, it is not only the divine Plato who implicitly showed the greatest respect for Diogenes, but authorities or great people in general have this or a similar related sort of attitude towards him.

Those who rule lose their real self-confidence to the fools, clowns, and kynics: for this reason, an anecdote has Alexander the Great say that he would like to be Diogenes if he were not Alexander. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 102]

It is only the kynical attitude which is able to put forward effective reasons against idealism, because of the following reasons.

In the dog philosophy of the kynic (*kyon*, dog in Greek:- Trans.), a materialist position appears that is clearly a match for the idealist dialectic. It possesses the wisdom of original philosophy, the realism of a fundamental materialist stance, and the serenity of an ironic religiosity. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 104]

When Diogenes urinates and masturbates in the marketplace, he does both because he does them publicly - in a model situation... The philosopher thus gives the small man in the market the same rights to an unashamed experience of the corporeal that does well to defy all discrimination. Ethical living may be good, but naturalness is good too. That is all kynical scandal says. Because the teaching explicates life, the kynic had to take oppressed sensuality out into the market. Look how this wise man, before whom Alexander the Great stood in admiration, enjoys himself with his own organ. And he shits in front of everybody. So that can't be all that bad. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 106]

Like Cynicism Kynicism is a realist position, which rejects idealism, absolutes, and unconditional truths, however, in contrast to Cynicism, which makes people miserable because cynics are still part of higher orders in which they themselves do not believe any longer, the kynics are happy, cheerful, and cheeky and kynics do not belong to hierarchically ordered systems or normal social institutions.

One might be tempted to reply to Sloterdijk that his defence of neo-Kynicism is a very immature conception because his kynics just fail to take any

practical human tasks into consideration, e.g. one simply needs to earn money to have something to eat, to drink and a place to live in. However, to earn money one has to belong to a social system, but social systems are always ordered hierarchically, therefore it is impossible to live like a kynik and to secure ones own existence. A kynical lifestyle can be seen as just a dream young immature people usually have. Yet, Sloterdijk is not so simple minded not to have a response to that objection. In that respect he mentions three institutions in which this kynical cheekiness can be found and where it can be practised.

Apart from the *city*, three social dies of serene refractoriness have played an essential role in the history of cheekiness: the *carnival*, the *universities*, and the *Bohemians*. All three function as safety valves through which needs that otherwise are not given their due in social life can achieve a limited release. Here, cheekiness has had a space in which it has been tolerated, even if the tolerance has lasted only a short time and can be rescinded.” [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 117]

So it is the carnival, the universities, and the boheme, which allow one to be a true kynic. Although one should also keep something from this light kynical spirit for the rest of the time, these are the social institutions in which a kynical lifestyle is possible and one is justified to express it in an extreme manner.

The old carnival was a substitute revolution for the poor. A kingly fool was elected who reigned over a thoroughly inverted world for a day and a night. In this inverted world, the poor and the decent brought their dreams to life, as costumed oafs and bacchanals, forgetting themselves to the point of truth, cheeky, lewd, turbulent, and disgraceful. One was allowed to lie and to tell the truth, to be obscene and honest, drunken and irrational... Class societies can scarcely survive without the institution of the inverted world and the crazy day - as the Indian and Brazilian carnivals demonstrate.

Likewise since the Middle Ages, universities have become important in the social economy of cheekiness and kynical intelligence. They were by no means simply places of teaching and research. In them, there romped also a vagrant, extravagant, youthful intelligence that was clever enough to know something better than just cramming.

The Bohemians, a relatively recent phenomenon, played a prominent role in the regulation of the tensions between art and bourgeois society. Bohemianism was the space in which the transition from art into the art of living was tried out... Research has established that there were

only a few long-term Bohemians, the milieu remained a transit station, a space for testing out life and departing from the norms. There they used their freedom to work out their rejection of bourgeois society until a (perhaps) more grown-up 'yes, but' took its place. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 117 - 118]

However, Sloterdijk does not think that these three neo-kynical institutions fulfil their roles properly anymore.

For a long time now carnival has meant not "inverted world" but flight into safe world, of anaesthesia from a permanently inverted world full of daily absurdities. We know that, at least since Hitler, Bohemianism is dead, and in its offshoots in the subcultures cheeky moods are to be found less than the cheerless attitude of withdrawal. And as far as the universities are concerned - oh, let's not talk about that!

These mutilations of cheeky impulses indicate that society has entered a stage of organised seriousness in which the playgrounds of lived enlightenment are becoming increasingly clogged. This is what dampens the climate of this country so much. We live on in a morose realism, not wanting to be noticed, and play the respectable games. Cynicism prickles beneath the monotony. A clear-sighted academia and elsewhere. The provocations seem to be exhausted, all bizarre twists of modern existence seem to be already tried out. A state of public, respectable torpor has been entered. A tired, schizoidly demoralised intelligentsia plays at realism by contemplatively walling itself up in harsh circumstances. [Sloterdijk (1987b): P. 118]

The fact that these traditional kynical institutions do not fulfil their role anymore in a proper way is exactly what Sloterdijk is criticising. By doing so, he is trying to reintroduce cheekiness and kynical life-style elements into our society to make our lives more colourful, cheerful and cheeky. It is not that he portrays Kynicism as a new God, but he solely wishes to increase its importance.

It has to be pointed out that although Sloterdijk regards kynicism as a better reaction to the state the enlightenment has left us with, and therefore to a position within the enlightenment, I doubt that this is actually the case. As with the introduction of "kynicism" the notions of "truth" and "the reasonable unified subject" also get attacked. These, however, represent the basis of the enlightenment project. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to say that by introducing "kynicism" Sloterdijk goes beyond the enlightenment. As enlightenment and modernity are closely related concepts, and by going beyond the enlightenment,

he also goes beyond modernity, one should call the cynical position defended in the 'Critique of Cynical Reason' a postmodern. Within Sloterdijks recent work, he becomes doubtful of his earlier position, as he seems to have realised that the cynical position is not one which solves the problem of cynicism properly. It might bring about a temporary relief, but that is all. Therefore, he has been working towards a stronger conception of the Good within his latest main works. Although, Sloterdijk himself has gone beyond his early works, the cynical position defended in the "Critique of Cynical Reason" nevertheless has to be regarded as a suitable developmental step between cynicism and a stronger position of the good, and so is a position worth to be taken lightly.

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U traganju za izgubljenom bezobzirnošću: Uvod u Sloderdajkovu Kritiku ciničkog um

Sažetak: U tekstu «U traganju za izgubljenom bezobzirnošću: Uvod u Sloderdajkovu Kritiku ciničkog uma» dajem kritički pregled Sloterdajkovog glavnog dela kojim je stekao reputaciju vodećeg nemačkog filozofa. Moj članak je strukturisan na sledeći način: prvo, analiziram Sloderdajkovu razumevanje filozofije gde pokazujem kako se on bavio pitanjima života i vrednosti – ukoliko pod vrednostima ne podrazumevamo samo opšte principe, nego i stavove o životu – te se tako može reći kako je on jedan od ničeanskih filozofa budućnosti, koji su tvorci novih vrednosti i koji ne veruju u istinu. Središnja tačka Sloderdajkove knjige jeste interpretacija prosvetiteljstva, i naše sadašnje situacije u kulturi. Potom u drugom delu rada tematizujem Sloderdajkovo razumevanje perioda prosvetiteljstva, što me vodi u trećem delu rada ka analizi pojma «cinizma». Njegov pojam «cinizma» predstavlja stav prema životu za koji se smatra da prevladava u sadašnjosti i koji je personifikovan u Frankfurtskoj školi. Sloderdajk je izrazito kritičan prema «cinizmu», kao alternativu «cinizmu» on uzima «kinizam». I na kraju kritički interpretiram Sloderdajkov pojam «kinizma».

Ključne reči: Sloterdajk, cinički um, kinizam, vrednosti, Niče