

## **Peter Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason**

### **What is enlightenment?**

Mündigkeit-- own mouth, own voice; consent

Kant's Categorical Imperative from the Critique of Pure Reason

The Formula of the Law of Nature: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature."

The Formula of the End Itself: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end."

Sloterdijk's Kritik der zynischen Vernunft is a play on Kant

### **who were the greek cynics?**

dog philosophers

believed that virtue was the only necessity for  
happiness

desires lead ultimately to misery

followed this philosophy to the extent of neglecting  
everything that did not

further their perfection of virtue

lived like dogs; neglecting society, hygiene, family,

money, etc. in order to lead wholly virtuous and happy lives. (Jude Mason)

### **Who is the cynic today?**

urban figure, modern

no longer an outsider

191/ only in the city, under the pressure of public and a general love-hate, can the cynic clearly emerge as the negative profile of the city

Discontent in culture appears as universal, diffuse cynicism.

the modern cynic-- extant as a mass phenomenon since ww1-- is no longer an outsider

\*Sloterdijk notes that rise of modern cynic corresponds with ascendance of  
Nietzsche's thought

Cynic is borderline melancholic-- he can still work!

Cynic has "enlightened false consciousness"

Cynicism is the twilight of false consciousness (1984)

**what is false consciousness?**

people act contrary to their true interests because they don't know what's good for them.

people voluntarily shop at Wal-Mart and Home Depot.

"Why do so many people patronize large, impersonal retailers who destroy downtowns and sell goods that destroy the human spirit?"

Why do consumers and workers willingly permit themselves to be oppressed by capitalism?"

answer: false consciousness (also: bad faith)

"enlightened false consciousness" is cynicism in a crystalline state.

**ideology critique**

what is ideology?

the german ideology

**Sloterdijk's critique of modernity**

how does it compare to that of Botho Strauß?

198/ notes innovations of 'garden of humanity'

BUT: experience mocks optimism (Auschwitz)

There's a problem with modern ideology critique:

it has lost its ties to the cynics

it has gotten mired in the enlightenment pursuit of reason and communication

"The status quo is better served by silence