

The Fatal Weakness of the God of Cynicism

We live in a culture of overpowering cynicism.

We assume the media is bending truth. We assume people won't speak their full minds to our faces. We assume companies, organizations, and governments will try to pull one over on us. We assume love, friendship, and honor are hollow ideals.

As products of this overpowering cynicism, we tend to view sincerity as impractical. And so we hardly ever encounter it.

It would be reasonable to view the rarity of sincerity as evidence of its weakness. That would be a mistake. To a culture of overpowering cynicism, sincerity is now rare enough to have the strategic advantage of being a surprise.

To tell the truth at risk to your own reputation? To celebrate virtue? To say what you think to someone's face? No one expects this behavior anymore, and so it is unsettling and difficult to counter.

If you set yourself against a cynical society, your sincerity can be a great advantage.

This relentlessly sincerity can't be born of naivete. It has to look cynicism straight in the eye and know it. It has to be a sincerity "in spite of" – in spite of the cost of doubt, in spite of excuses, in spite of accusation, in spite of mockery, and in spite of the fact that cynicism is a "safer" and more "realistic" option.

No one will know what to do with a sincerity like that. A sincerity that can persist despite a culture of cynicism unsettles that culture of cynicism. It's what might start to change things.

Originally published at JamesWalpole.com.