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CYNICISM IN ORGANIZATIONS

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with

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Report by James W. Dean Jr.

Abstract

According to James Dean, cynicism begins to develop in organizations when emloyees feel disappointed by their management, and it can spread like a virus. Several attendees, who delved into their dictionaries before the session, were surprised that cynicism can be discussed such a manner. Perhaps the meaning of the term in American English is distanced frome its etymology, or American management methods count too much on the commitment of employees to the goals of the organization.

I. James Dean's Talk

I would like to begin by thanking Professor Michel Berry for inviting me to speak at one of the breakfasts of the École de Paris. When he invited me, Michel told me that you "grilled" Jittendra Singh, which made me a little nervous, but I decided to come anyway. I would also like to thank Olivier Pasquier, a student at the University of Cincinnati, who helped me very much by translating this talk into French. My thanks also to Pamela Brandes-Duncan, my student and research partner, and to Michel Vialet, a French professor who also helped me very much.

This is the second time in my life that I have given a talk in French. The first one was when I was seventeen years old, in a contest for high school students. I still remember the first line of my talk: *Vers le soir, nous transportames ses precieux restes dans une overture de la grotte qui donnait vers le nord.* Obviously, I didn't write language like this! It was from La Mort d'Attila by Rene de Chateaubriand.

Today, as you know, I will not be discussing Attila, but rather cynicism in organizations. I will discuss how I became interested in cynicism, why I think it is important, a preliminary definition, and some ideas about its development. I will leave plenty of time to answer your questions, and to discuss your ideas and reactions to my talk. I am very interested in knowing how our perspective about cynicism in the U.S. compares to your observations in France. Perhaps there is even some potential for joint research on this topic.

I first became interested in cynicism in organizations when I was teaching a class to graduate students about two years ago. This was an evening class, for students who work during the day. Most of the students were between 25 and thirty years old. I was using terms like "teamwork" and "total quality", but it was obvious that they did not take these terms at all seriously, believing that these were just empty slogans. While I had seen such attitudes before, I was surprised that people so young were already so cynical. Most of them had only been working for three or four years. I decided soon after that to try to understand how people in organizations became cynical.

A Definition of Cynicism

In order to understand how cynicism develops, we first had to define it. What is organizational cynicism? This turned out to be harder to define than we expected. While there are many possible targets of organizational cynicism, including customers or co-workers, we have chosen management as the target for our definition, because of both the importance and the pervasiveness of cynicism regarding managers. We have in mind the top managers, who are associated in the minds of employees with the organization. For example, when employees say, "This company doesn't care about me", they actually mean that the managers in charge of running the company don't care about them.

Our original definition centered on beliefs about the self-interested behavior of management, but this was too narrow, as our interviews with employees of various organizations revealed that there is a great variety of managerial behavior that people can be cynical about. Thus, we broadened our definition. Our provisional conception of organizational cynicism is as follows: It is *a negative attitude of employees toward management and the organization, based on the firm belief that management will consistently fail to meet their expectations.* This belief is often accompanied by feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, and perhaps anger or resignation.

It is important to state here that we are not trying to neatly divide the world into cynics and non-cynics. Instead, we see cynicism as a characteristic that varies among individuals, with a great many people being moderately cynical, and a few very cynical or not at all cynical. In short, we expect it to be normally distributed.

We have defined cynicism in terms of employee beliefs that managers will consistently fail to live up to their expectations. This begs the question: What types of expectations do employees have for managers? More precisely, what expectations do employees have that are frequently not met? Through our reading, as well as a number of interviews with employees, we have identified several. First, employees expect managers to care about the goals of the organization, and to act in ways that promote the organization's welfare, not just their own. If employees believe that managers will act only to benefit their own careers, we would consider them cynical. This was in fact our original conception of cynicism. Second, employees expect managers to be capable of running the organization successfully. If employees believe that management will not be able to do so, we would define them as cynical. Employees also expect management to deal with employees fairly. If employees come to anticipate unfair treatment, we would consider them cynical. Other employee expectations that are potential sources of cynicism include the expectation that management has a viable competitive strategy, that management genuinely cares about the employees, and that management will provide adequate resources so that people can do their jobs. Finally, people expect management to follow through on their policies and plans, to provide the real reason why decisions are made, and to follow themselves the principles that they preach to others in the organization.

This is a preliminary list, which we will refine through research. We do not claim at this point that it is a complete list, and we would be interested in hearing your own ideas about the dimensions of organizational cynicism. We still are not sure whether we can identify aspects of cynicism that will apply to all or even most employees, or whether employee expectations of management are significantly influenced by culture, or perhaps even by the personalities or experiences of individual employees.

Cynicism and Realism

You may already be asking yourselves an important question about the beliefs that make a person cynical, that is, are the cynics right? Perhaps management really will consistently fail to meet their expectations, because they are dishonest, incompetent, hypocritical, and so on. And if the cynics are right, are they really cynical, or simply realistic?

We have chosen to consider people cynical even if their beliefs appear to be accurate. There are several reasons for this choice. First, the behavior of "cynics who are right" will not be any different from the behavior of "cynics that are wrong", because both groups believe that they are right about management. Second, determining whether cynics are in fact right is not an easy thing to do. Recall that we defined cynicism in terms of expectations of future management behavior. Therefore, the truth of the cynical beliefs held by employees at any given time can only be assessed after enough time has passed to see if their predictions have come true. Finally, as many theorists have pointed out, organizational reality is socially constructed. Therefore, in an organizational environment, the same managerial behavior may be seen in many different ways, making it quite difficult to say with any confidence that cynics are right or wrong. A final comment on this question: Frankly, and unfortunately, we believe that many cynics are in fact right about management. (One of the problems with doing research on cynicism is that it is hard to avoid becoming cynical yourself.)

The Individual and Collective Levels

Another aspect of our definition is that cynicism may be seen as a property of individuals, or as a property of groups (i.e. organizations or subunits). We believe that both are possible. It may be that the pattern of cynicism within an organization is such that one individual may be very cynical, and the person at the next desk not at all cynical. Alternatively, it may be that whole departments, or even whole organizations, have similar levels of cynicism. There are good reasons for both, and this is ultimately a question for research. At this point, we suspect that organizations and work groups as a whole do vary in their level of cynicism, but that there is also variation within organizations and departments.

To say that an organization or subunit as a whole is cynical, we would require three

conditions. First, a majority of the members of the organization or subunit must be cynical. Second, the members must be aware of one another's cynicism. Third, and most important, cynicism must be seen as a defining characteristic of membership in the organization or subunit. In other words, the organization must think of itself as a cynical entity. This conception is somewhat restrictive, so that many organizations in which many of the members are cynical would not be included.

The next question regarding cynicism is - Why does it matter? What difference does it make if employees become cynical about the management of their company? Why is this worth studying, or even worth discussing?

We believe that the answer to this question is that, as employees become cynical, they begin to question the legitimacy of management. More precisely, they doubt the legitimacy of management both as managers of the enterprise, and as leaders of the people who make up the enterprise. Of course they still recognize the legal right of management to run the company, but no longer attribute any charismatic or larger-than-life qualities to management. Worse yet, they begin to see top managers as frauds, who must have gained their position purely through luck or connections.

As this happens, employees begin to think differently about the company. They realize that these individuals for whom they have lost respect are actually at the head of the company, and furthermore that the company actually put these individuals in positions of such authority. What kind of company would do such a thing? Thus the process of questioning, which begins with the leadership itself, begins to extend to the organization as a whole. No longer considering their organization an institution which stands for something, cynical employees begin to think of their company as fundamentally flawed, perhaps perhaps even corrupt.

Symptoms of Cynicism

While we will have much more research to do, our interviews so far suggest certain patterns of behavior among cynical employees.

First, as employees come to think of their organization in this manner, behavior that appeared noble in the past begins to appear ridiculous and naive. Such behavior would include, for example, working very long hours, or doing things for the organization that are not absolutely required by one's job description. Eventually this results in employees who do what they are required to do, nothing more. If you are familiar with the work of Etzioni, one would say in his terms that the relationship changes from "normative" to "utilitarian." In the competitive environment in which most firms operate today, widespread behavior of this type would place a firm at a serious competitive disadvantage.

Second, employees who are becoming cynical are more likely to publicly criticize their company as a way to vent their anger and disappointment. If this public criticism is done to customers, it will obviously damage the company's reputation. If the criticism is done with coworkers, it may lead the coworkers to eventually share these feelings. In this manner, cynicism may spread like a type of virus throughout the organization.

Third, cynical employees are very unlikely to have confidence in management's announcements that the organization is going to be undertaking major programs of change, such as total quality or employee involvement. Such announcements by management are likely to be met by beliefs that managers do not really believe in quality principles, that they are only trying to find ways to advance their own careers or to create a good external impression of the company. Furthermore, cynical employees believe that such programs will be abandoned in favor of some new fad almost before the ink is dry on the announcements. They will not work very hard to make sure the program works, and thus the program will actually not work.

Sources of Cynicism

To summarize, I have defined cynicism in organizations, discussed several issues relating to our definition, and proposed certain consequences. What remains is to identify some of its causes. What causes people in organizations to be cynical? We have arrived at a number of tentative propositions. In offering these propositions, we must keep in mind two aspects of our definition of cynicism.

First, cynicism is defined as a gap between employees' expectations for appropriate managerial behavior and the level of behavior employees have come to expect from this particular group of managers. Thus, anything that causes employee expectations of management to be high, or causes their perceptions of actual managerial behavior to be low, or both, will cause them to be cynical. All of our propositions can be understood in this manner.

Second, we raised the possibility that cynicism in organizations could be defined at the organizational, subunit, or individual levels. Our propositions are given in this order as well, starting with factors that would lead the organization as a whole to be cynical, and ending with those that would effect the cynicism of individuals. For each category, I will provide three propositions.

Cynical Organiztions

Let's begin with some examples of factors that could increase the cynicism of organizations as a whole. First, organizations in complex and rapidly changing environments are more likely to be cynical than those in simple and stable environments (if any such environments actually still exist). In complex environments, managers are more likely to make strategic or tactical mistakes, leading organization members to question their ability to run the organization. Managers in such environments are also likely to design complex strategies which contain apparent inconsistencies. These inconsistencies may be seized upon by organization members as evidence of a lack of ability among top managers.

Also, in environments that are rapidly changing, managers will be required to make frequent changes in their policies and tactics. Once again, organization members may see these changes as evidence that management is not likely to follow through on their plans. In general, complex and changing environments are likely to lead to both inconsistencies and failures among top management, which will drive a wedge between what people would like to see from their top management, and what they have come to expect.

Second, organizations which experience a very high level of dependence on external entities will also often be characterized by high levels of cynicism. There are two reasons why we think this will be true. One is that managers in such circumstances will be forced to make statements about their intentions that are meant to be heard by powerful forces outside the organization. If these statements are heard by those inside the organization, they will create expectations that management has no intention of living up to. In the American business context, such expectations could be related to the importance of environmental issues, or the appreciation of "diversity" in hiring and promotion decisions. Another reason that powerful outsiders can create cynicism among organization members is that they can force top managers to do their bidding, regardless of whether this is inconsistent with the promises managers have made to organization members. For example, powerful shareholders may demand that dividends be raised, forcing management to reduce or eliminate pay raises that have been anticipated.

Third, organizations are likely to be more cynical when top managers are hired from outside the organization, rather than inside. Such managers will not understand or perhaps even be aware of the expectations held for them by longtime organization members, as they are derived from an organizational culture that they do not share. They will also not feel bound to fulfill such expectations, even if they do come to understand them, because they

will not feel the social bond with the organization that comes from years of comradery and shared experiences. From the standpoint of employees, they may feel resentment toward the managers from outside the organization, due to the fact that insiders were not chosen for top management posts. Thus they may be predisposed toward interpreting the behavior of management in a cynical manner.

Three factors thus may lead to cynical organization: a complex and changing environment, powerful external forces, and managers from outside the organization. These conditions are very common among American organizations. Thus it is not surprising to see such high levels of cynicism among employees of American companies. Perhaps you can comment on whether or not these conditions are also typical among French companies.

Cynical subunits :

Our second set of propositions refers to subunits or departments of organizations. The question here is, whatever the average level of cynicism in an organization, why would some subunits or departments be more cynical than others? We offer three tentative answers: departments that are not critical to the success of the organization, departments whose leaders are politically weak, and departments in which influential people are cynical.

Departments that are not critical to the success of the organization seem likely to be more cynical than others. This is because such departments will be at the end of the line for receiving financial and technical resources, and will have little real influence on top management decisions. While such an allocation of resources may be rational from a strategic standpoint, top managers will rarely explain their actions in this manner. Instead, they will try to pretend to the members of such departments that they are a vital part of the organization, and that they will be treated better once conditions improve. They may talk about the importance of this area in their speeches, and even be sure to include a member from this area when committees are formed. However, these gestures will eventually be understood by people in such departments for what they really are -- symbols in place of substance. Some discussions of leadership (for example, by Jeffrey Pfeffer) actually recommend this type of symbolic leadership. While it may be a matter of opinion in some cases whether the attitudes of cynical employees are justified, in this case they certainly are. People in such departments are really getting "shafted."

A department with a weak leader will in many ways be similar to one that is not critical: it will not receive many resources and will not have much influence on decisions. In addition, such leaders will not have access to information that would make sense of top management decisions. Thus they will be as "in the dark" about the direction that management is taking as the members of their departments. This will in turn make it difficult for the members of their department to have any confidence in what management is doing. Members of other departments, however, whose leaders are more powerful politically, will be much more knowledgeable about management's actions, and as a result less likely to interpret them in a cynical manner.

Departments in which influential people are cynical are also likely to have a higher than average level of cynicism as a department. We know from previous research that attitudes can spread throughout social systems through a process known as contagion. We also know that some people are more influential in social systems than others, so that their opinions matter more than those of others. Here we are simply applying this knowledge to the question of cynicism. If the influential person or persons are cynical, than it is likely that their cynicism will eventually spread to some degree to the department as a whole.

Cynicals Individuals

Our third set of propositions refers to individuals. Given a certain average level of cynicism at the organizational or department level, why are some people in a department likely to be more cynical than others? Here again we have three propositions, dealing with direct experience, personality, and cultural differences.

Probably the most obvious explanation of organizational cynicism at the individual level is direct experience. This corresponds to the "cynics who are right" idea that I discussed earlier. From this perspective, cynics begin to believe that management will consistently fail to meet their expectations simply because they have never met them in the past. Perhaps management has made decisions that have led to their friends being laid off, or projects that they have spent a lot of time on being killed. Or perhaps the never seem to get the resources they need to get their work done. I once interviewed a computer programmer who said that if there were three of him he could not complete all the work management expected him to accomplish. He was one of the most cynical people I ever met.

An interesting question regarding this source of cynicism is whether cynicism is transferred from one organization to another. In other words, if someone becomes cynical about the management of one organization, what happens if they take a new job in another organization? Does their cynicism come with them to the new job, or do they start over with the new management? Once again, this is a question for research.

You have probably already thought about the possibility that individual differences in organizational cynicism are a function of personality. In fact, psychologists have long been able to measure this attribute of personality. It does not refer of course to people's attitudes about the management of their company, but rather to life in general. It seems likely, however, that people who are generally cynical will also tend to be cynical about their organizations. Thus one potential explanation for cynicism in organizations is simply cynical *people* in organizations.

If this were the best explanation of organizational cynicism, however, we would not expect to find similarities in cynicism among the people in a given department or organization. Rather, we would expect that such individuals would be randomly distributed throughout the organization, with no department having a greater number than any other.

Another possibility, more subtle but also in our opinion more likely, is that cynicism as a personality trait interacts with people's direct experience. In other words, people who are cynical by nature will react more strongly to experiences that may lead to cynicism than those who are not predisposed in this direction. Thus an experience that one person may see as an indication of management's dishonesty or incompetence, another person may see as simply bad luck.

Finally, we believe that employees who are from a different culture or subculture from management are more likely to be cynical. This seems particularly important since so many contemporary organizations are multicultural. There are at least two reasons why cultural differences may lead to cynicism. First, employees from a different culture or subculture are likely to simply have different expectations of management. For example, Americans expect a certain amount of friendliness from managers, even managers who are several levels above them. This expectation would not be shared in other countries, where managers are expected to be somewhat aloof. American employees who worked for a manager from such a culture could easily become cynical, based on expectations that the manager never dreamed of.

A second reason why cultural differences may lead to cynicism is that employees from a different culture may misunderstand management's statements, thus forming expectations that managers did not mean to convey. For example, in some cultures it is considered rude to clearly say "no" to a request, so managers may say something like "it will be difficult", which may be taken to mean "yes". Therefore cynicism may be the result of either different expectations based on cultural differences, or misunderstandings based on cultural differences. This sort of problem could also exist *within* a given country, for example between people from New England and California in the United States, perhaps between Paris and Provence in France. I would be interested in hearing your ideas about this...

Conclusion

In conclusion, where do we go from here? In the immediate future, we plan to conduct

more interviews, to learn more about the nature of cynicism, and how it evolves. Along with additional reading, this should help us to refine both our definition and our propositions. Once these are more firmly established, we will be able to pursue a more quantitative study, in order to begin to test our propositions. We would like to conduct a study with a very broad sample of people and organizations.

This concludes the ideas about cynicism that I wanted to share with you today. I hope that you have found our ideas interesting, but more importantly, I hope that you can help us to develop them further. Perhaps you are even interested in working with us on this topic, to give our research an international dimension. In any case, I have raised a number of questions during my talk, which I hope will stimulate some lively discussion. Thank you very much.

II. DEBATE

Cynicism, you said ?

Several participants, in turn : *(Prior to the meeting, several participants checked with their dictionaries or philosophy books to study the origin of the term "cynicism." We provide here a synthesis of their comments, many of which were similar.)*
Your presentation raised some interesting questions, but the use of the term cynicism poses some problems. You define it as a reaction of frustration, due to unmet expectations. But according to our sources, cynicism is something different.
The prototypical cynic is Diogenes, who lived in his barrel near a pack of dogs (the word cynic comes from cunos, which means dog in Greek). He lived in the third century BC, during the time when Greece was heading toward its decline under the reign of Alexander. Diogenes said that the philosophies of the time had as their goal to condition people, and that they led to social hypocrisy. For him, the only true philosophy was that of the individual. He wanted to be totally free, and claimed to be returning to nature in an expression of distrust for social conventions, public opinion, and the moral standards of the day. When Alexander said to him, *"What can I offer you?"*, Diogenes told him, *"Get out of my sunlight."*
Cynicism is therefore not the attitude of withdrawal that you are proposing, but rather an aggressive or insolent attitude: "I consider myself clearly superior to you." What you are describing is instead frustration or skepticism.

James Dean : As I mentioned, the term cynicism is difficult to define. It could be that your definition doesn't correspond to our culture.

Int. : Your definition seems to refer to what Philippe d'Iribarne said: the American ideal is that of pious merchants who, arriving in a new land, wish to found a democratic society according to a model of commercial relations governed by a set of conventions assuring the fairness of exchanges; the word "fairness," which is important for Americans, is impossible to translate into French. There is in the same manner a contract between people and an organization, between managers and subordinates, which each must faithfully honor. From this perspective, an employee who withdraws into himself is not honoring his contract, and is behaving badly.

Int. : It seems to me that one must tie your definition of cynicism back to a certain American style of management, which calls for a strong allegiance among employees to the objectives of the organization. This style is proclaimed, for example, in the book In Search of Excellence. If the demands are too great or the objectives unattainable, this produces stress in the individual, which could lead to depression or cynicism. Have you studied the correlation between the increase in cynicism and the development of this style of management?

J.D.: I am planning to do so when we have more precisely defined our concepts. I do agree, however, that a certain style of management can indeed lead to cynicism. For example, when managers first read In Search of Excellence they were very enthusiastic, and told their employees, "We're going to accomplish great things together using these methods!" Their employees believed them, and their expectations were therefore very high. But nothing much came of it. Eventually the managers forgot about this book, and other books followed, which were themselves quickly forgotten. In the US we talk about the "flavor of the month". For example, the downsizing fad is already passé. I think that this leads to cynicism among employees.

Int. : I would be ready to accept the term cynicism, and to try to make from it a concept detached from the specifics of a particular culture, but I find your notion of cynicism too rich. I noted in the course of your talk a number of terms, each with its own nuance: defeatism, defense against anxiety, demotivation, disillusionment, frustration, nonparticipation, lack of recognition, hostility, resentment, continuous outrage, etc. You use a number of different terms.
   It seems to me that there is a disturbing unevenness in your conception of cynicism. Your initial definition is a disappointed expectation. But then your talk evolved toward another register, that of a response to a given situation. For example, the impossible workload of a programmer would lead to a cynical attitude? In behavioral psychology, one would say rather that this would lead to a depressive attitude.

Int. : In your examples, the people seemed passive: they criticized, and they had no confidence in either the managers or in the organization, but they submitted themselves to it. Cynical attitudes are on the contrary active, virulent, even anarchist.

J.D.: In America, employees submit themselves because of their own precarious situation: there have been many layoffs, and the job market is very bad.

P.Mayer : I find your work interesting because it tries to give a definition that goes beyond cultural differences. It seems to me therefore that it is a work of a truly scientific nature. Cynicism would be the result of the experience of a person who, over a certain period of time, loses confidence in Man. Like Diogenes, he loses faith in universal values: the Other is dehumanized or instrumentalized.
   But I also think that your concept is too broad. The experiences that you are talking about can in effect produce other things than cynicism. But then cynicism may be interpreted as a lack of intelligence in certain situations: people should realize that they have misunderstood the situation. Rather than calling into question other people and becoming cynical, they should become more experienced, more clever, more aware of what is going on.

J.D.: That is indeed possible; I hadn't thought of that.

A Crisis of Coexistence

Int. : You speak of the attitude of the employees of an organization toward management, but not of the attitude of the managers toward the employees. Aren't there also managers disappointed by the behavior of the employees, that is, cynical managers? There is necessarily an interaction between the attitudes of the two parties, since it is in fact a crisis of coexistence that you are talking about. But it seems to me that you are essentially espousing the employees' perspective.

J.D.: I chose to speak to you about cynicism among employees, but there are certainly also many cynical managers.

Int. : Have you ever wondered whether it isn't sometimes useful to have cynical managers, to purge the enterprise of a problem of social cohesion, to move it away from being immobilized? Have you ever discussed this possibility with any managers ?

J.D.: No, because the term cynicism has a strong negative connotation in the United States, so it would be difficult to get in to talk to a manager by asking him, "Tell me about your cynicism!".

T. Globokar : I studied the management of a French enterprise in Slovenia for four years, where the differences between the French and the Slovenians led to some difficulties in living together. So one sees various reactions such as disappointment and bitterness, but cynicism seems to me to be the ultimate reaction. I wouldn't go as far as you in saying that disappointment leads to cynicism.

J.D.: I am being more precise than that: cynicism is not simply when one is disappointed, but when one no longer expects anything from management or from the organization.

Int.: By the way, wouldn't a cynical attitude be appropriate when confronting situations that are very uncertain? Wouldn't an organization that has cynical managers have a greater likelihood of success in a complex and changing environment than one in which management was trying to apply "good" management methods?

J.D.: That could be; it would be a sort of adaptation to the situation. In such environments, one must maintain some distance. A manager who did not become cynical would risk being disappointed his whole life.

P.Mayer.: Painful experiences don't necessarily lead to cynicism: a philosopher said that they lead to the pessimism of the mind and to the optimism of the heart. In the most desperate situations one rediscovers in a certain way one's humanity and finally one manages to get out of it, whereas the mind would lead one to conclude that all is lost.

Int. : Saint-Exupery said: "One can only see with the heart : what is essential is invisible to the eyes." And I would like to add, to cite Marcus Aurelius, that what is important is not to change the world, but to change one's way of seeing the world.

J.D.: Thank you; your comments will help us very much in clarifying our concepts.

COMMENTARY by James Dean

I would like to provide a few final words of commentary to help clarify some of the issues that were raised by my talk. Obviously most of the questions had to do with the definition of cynicism. This is clearly a complex problem, and the reactions to my definition by my French colleagues demonstrates that multiple perspectives are possible. I would like to emphasize, however, that my definition of a cynic is not simply someone whose expectations have not been met by his or her organization, i.e. someone who has been disappointed. (If this were the definition, we would all be cynics!) A cynic, within the organizational context, is rather someone who no longer expects much from management or the organization. In other words, cynics expect to be consistently disappointed, and their attitude towards their organization derives from this expectation. This is a serious condition from the point of view of the organization, and I agree with Ms. Globokar that cynicism is probably the ultimate, not the first, reaction to the disappointing behavior of management.

A related set of questions had to do with the "passivity" of cynics. The Greek Cynics were clearly very active in provoking the people around them, but the participants in this session saw my definition as suggesting that cynics in organizations are passive. Actually, my definition does not specifically comment on the behavior of cynics, but rather focuses on their attitudes. It is likely that some cynics are in fact active in speaking out about the shortcomings of their organization, but it is also likely that others are not, for the reasons I discussed. The relationship between cynical attitudes and behavior is a research issue that my colleague and I intend to pursue. I think, however, that it would be overly restrictive to define cynicism in organizations in terms of such behavior, if for no other reason than that cynics who are openly contemptuous of management would probably not remain in their organizations very long.

A final issue that I would like to touch on is the idea that cynics may simply be people who were formerly naive, as suggested by Mr. Mayer. In other words, their expectations were unrealistic, but their experience has led them to form more realistic expectations. I am sympathetic to this perspective. In fact, I did not mean to suggest that cynics are some sort of tragic heroes who are mistreated by evil managers, although I am afraid that my remarks were interpreted in this manner. It is certainly possible that people who are cynical had unrealistic expectations, or have interpreted management's behavior unfairly, or are simply predisposed to these types of attitudes. One of the things that makes this area so interesting, like the study of organizations in general, is that the same situation can be seen in so many different ways.

I would like once again to thank Michel Berry and his colleagues at the Ecole de Paris for inviting me to speak with them, and for the stimulating discussion we had together.