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## Blogs and the Survival of Civilization Reconsidered

Friday, April 28, 2006

Glenn Harlan Reynolds, creator of the popular Instupundit blog, thinks that Daniel Henninger is all wet when it comes to his criticisms of the blogosphere [see below]. Writing at TechCentralStation, Reynolds disagrees with Henninger's assertion that the blogs are feeding "disinhibition" in the culture at large.

Don't blame the Internet, he asserts:

*Pardon me for sounding rude, but what, exactly, does this have to do with the Internet? The "let it all hang out" ethos predates TCP/IP. And cable TV and hip-hop were around long before the Internet had much effect on American culture. And the truly defining moments of culture-shift are pretty old, too: Black-power salutes at the 1968 Olympics, the appearance of televised cursing on Norman Lear's All in the Family, the abandonment of court decorum at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open. And it seems to me that it's pretty hard to blame the Internet for what's on TV now, too. Instead, it seems to be a general cultural phenomenon — the same thing that has people attending church, or dining out, in shorts and flip-flops. Disinhibition isn't just for the Internet. It has become general, and the notion of behaving better when in the public eye has taken quite a beating. Henninger's focus on the Internet misses the point: His own examples suggest that if people are behaving badly on the Internet, it's because they're behaving badly everywhere.*

Reynolds grants Henninger his point about disinhibition — the loss of all inhibitions in the use of language, invective, etc. But, Reynolds sees this problem writ large across the society, not just in the blogs.

Both men make valid observations, but one is hard pressed not to see the blogosphere as raising the stakes in the disinhibition sweepstakes. Perhaps the best approach is to acknowledge the disinhibition problem in the culture at large, while recognizing that the blogs represent a developing technology and medium of communication. They are here to stay — that much is now clear. Over time, the most responsible bloggers are likely to draw the most readers.

Now, how do we address this problem of disinhibitionism?

HT: Justin Taylor

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