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Blogs and the Survival of Civilization

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Daniel Henninger of *The Wall Street Journal* is looking at the explosion of Web logs (or “blogs”). His analysis is that “the world of blogs may be filling up with people who for the previous 200 millennia of human existence kept their weird thoughts more or less to themselves.”

Furthermore, the Web seems to be filled with those Henninger describes as “disinhibited.” In other words, these people have lost their inhibitions on the Web — and especially in their blogs. As he explains:

Disinhibited vocabulary is now the normal way people talk on cable TV, such as on “The Sopranos” or in stand-up comedy. On the Web and on the street, more people than not talk like this now. What once was isolated is covering everything. No wonder the major non-cable networks are suing to overturn the FCC’s decency rulings; they, too, want the full benefits of normalized disinhibition. Hip-hop, currently our most popular music form, is a well-defined world of disinhibition.

More:

*Intense language like this used to be confined to construction sites and corner bars. Now it is normal discourse on Web sites, the most popular forums for political discussion. Much of this is new. Politics is a social endeavor. The Web is nothing if not “social.” But the blogosphere is also the product not of people meeting, but venting alone at a keyboard with all the uninhibited, bat-out-of-**** hyperbole of thinking, suggestion and expression that this new technology seems to release.*

Civilization requires a certain level of trust and a set of manners that determines what is and is not acceptable speech or behavior. Right now, the blogosphere is something like a wild, wild, West with no sheriff in town. There are few rules and a great deal of anarchy. Bloggers are often “disinhibited” and worse.

Yet, it seems that the rise of the Web log represents a fundamental shift in the way our society receives, communicates, and processes ideas and information. The Web log is not going away anytime soon.

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