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Eunoia on the Internet?: Usenet Newsgroups and the Subversion of Rationality

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USENET NEWSGROUPS AND THE SUBVERSION OF RATIONALITY

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Abstract:

Using Edward Damer's discussion of effective argumentation principles and Douglas Walton's discussion of argumentation dialogues, I consider arguments from several Usenet newsgroups, the largest collection of Internet discussion groups. In unmoderated newsgroups, participants can engage in open discussions and debates. However, with no central authority, the argumentation in many Usenet groups often degenerates into anarchy.

Presenting examples where participants ignore standards of rational conduct and subvert attempts at goal-directed argumentation, I raise questions about the rhetorical nature of an unstructured discourse community. I also consider what the examples reveal about spontaneous argumentation and electronic communication.

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Introduction

In his introduction to *The Uses of Argument*, Stephen Toulmin qualifies his forthcoming assertions about the limits of formal logic: "The purpose of these studies," he writes, "is to raise problems, not to solve them; to draw attention to a field of inquiry, rather than to survey it fully; and to provoke discussion rather than to serve as a systematic treatise" (1). Like Toulmin, I do not offer a systematic treatise, but I hope to provoke discussion by drawing attention to the methods and spirit of argumentation in Internet-wide Usenet discussion groups.

Usenet: History and Components

Usenet was started in the early 1980s as an extension of ARPAnet, the precursor to the Internet. Originally, Usenet included approximately 15 discussion groups, most of them devoted to UNIX programming and software concerns (Harrison 7-9). Almost 20 years later, with over 20,000 different groups, Usenet is now the largest collection of discussion groups on the Internet. These groups cater to both professionals and lay people, with forums such as sci.astronomy.research and rec.outdoors.fishing. In Usenet, participants can interact with others from across the street and around the world.

Lauded Benefits of Usenet

The Internet, including Usenet, has spawned a culture and vocabulary all its own. People who only read but do not post to various Usenet lists are "lurkers," the term conjuring up images of sneaky individuals who live on the outskirts of the social group. Those who post to Usenet groups with the sole intent of angering others are known as "trollers": Chumming for arguments, they send in offensive "flame-bait" messages. "Flame-baits" often result in nasty, sprawling arguments over any number of topics. These ongoing arguments are known as "threads."

Usenet, like the larger Internet itself, offers what many describe as a purely democratic forum. In the faceless (and in many cases anonymous) arena, variables such as race, gender, age, and income seem to have nothing to do with the ongoing discussions. Proponents of the Internet laud Usenet as a liberating medium. In a current commercial promoting MCI's Internet-access package, as children from various socio-economic backgrounds are shown, the voice over intones, "On the Internet, there is no race"; "On the Internet, there is no gender"; and "On the Internet, there are no infirmities." The Internet is, at least as far as MCI is concerned, a level playing field, one where all participants can find their niche and flourish.

Usenet proponents argue that the forum encourages contact with others in the "global village": "It is a global network," Harrison writes in *The Usenet Handbook* (4). "With sites on all seven inhabited continents," he adds, "you can exchange messages with a student in Chicago, an engineer in Paris, or a computer researcher in Moscow" (4). According to Harrison, participants can "get free software," "talk about . . . favourite hobbies," and even "get advice on ... finances" (1). Better yet, they can "discuss technical topics ... with wizards who don't mind sharing their experience and helping others" (2).

Usenet participants interact in an open, unstructured forum. Most groups do not have a moderator, and few standardized procedural rules exist. Usenet proponents maintain that this is the medium's most positive aspect. "Nobody can tell anybody else what to do," Hahn and Stout write in *The Internet Complete Reference* (162). "This lack of central authority," they remark, "is what gives Usenet its charm, and is what distinguishes it from other discussion group systems ... where there are Rules and People-in-Charge" (162-63).

Interestingly enough, while Hahn and Stout laud the lack of "Rules" and "People-in-Charge," they recognize related, negative aspects of Usenet. The unstructured forum, they mention, does allow personal attacks, offensive messages, and commercial solicitations. However, Hahn and Stout optimistically conclude, "as you will see, when there are no rules, most people chose to cooperate" (163).

Unfortunately, when there are no "Rules" and "People-in-Charge," cooperation often seems the last strategy for most Usenet participants. Certainly, many Usenet discussion groups contain productive, beneficial, and challenging dialogues. However, after reading and participating in a variety of Usenet groups for approximately six years, I do not find the majority to be the overwhelmingly positive and enlightening forums proponents say they are. Too often in Usenet newsgroups, ethics and rationality give way to petty bickering and mean-spirited, counter-productive attacks.

Discussion of Method

First, a qualification: I make no claims about the exact mathematical frequency or statistical significance of the argumentation types discussed. Many Usenet discussion groups are productive and challenging forums; however, when Usenet argumentation turns from cooperative dialogue and moves toward combative dialogue, it does so in

predictable ways.

While studying Usenet argumentation, I closely followed a handful of Usenet groups for approximately two months. Groups too specialized to be understood by the lay person were ruled out: for example, sci.math.num-analysis and sci.physics.accelerators. Groups with silly or bizarre foci were also ruled out: for example, alt.society.underwear and alt.revenge. Aside from my decisions about relevant groups, there really was no "method to my madness." I simply logged in to a particular group from my original list, picked up a "thread," and followed the ensuing discussions. In none of the groups was I hard-pressed to find relevant examples. In fact, more often than not, the most significant problem I faced had to do with narrowing down the examples of unethical or irrational argumentation.

Damer and Walton

In *Attacking Faulty Reasoning*, Damer is concerned with the "construction of good or fallacy-free arguments" and "the description and treatment of the numerous ways that arguments can go wrong" (172). *Attacking Faulty Reasoning* includes a summary of productive argumentation guidelines, entitled "A Code of Conduct for Effective Rational Discussion" (172-86). Damer addresses such fundamental principles as "The Fallibility Principle," "The Charity Principle," and "The Burden of Proof Principle," for example. Damer's work is relevant to a discussion of Usenet argumentation, for each of these principles, in addition to others addressed in the work, is commonly ignored or subverted in Usenet discussions.

Also relevant to a discussion of Usenet argumentation is Walton's *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation*. Walton presents several contexts of argumentation dialogue, contexts corresponding to Usenet argumentation styles. Walton defines dialogue as "a sequence of exchanges of messages or speech acts between two (or more) participants" (3). In dialogues, participants have certain responsibilities: They must cooperate and work toward fulfilling not only their own goals but also the goals of the other participants (3). "The basic reason any argument can be criticized as a bad argument," Walton explains, "always comes down to a failure to meet one of these obligations" (3).

Walton's first dialogic context, the personal quarrel, is "characterized by aggressive personal attacks, heightened appeal to emotions, and a desire to win at all costs" (3). Rife with *ad hominem* arguments, a quarrel "frequently represents argument at its worst" (4). The second context is the forensic debate, perhaps one of the most regulated types of dialogue. Although the debate is "a step above the personal quarrel," Walton groups the two types of dialogue together because in both contexts the basic purpose is to win a verbal victory over an opponent (4-5). The third context is the persuasion dialogue, also referred to as the critical discussion. In a persuasion dialogue, participants prove their claims via internal and external proofs (5-6). Inquiry-based argumentation, the fourth dialogic context, is a type of dialogue in which the goal is to acquire information. Inquiry is "a cooperative rather than an adversarial context of dialogue" (7). Negotiation is the fifth type of argumentation dialogue. In this context, the method is bargaining (7). Participants trade concessions, with the objective for each being self-interest or "making a good deal" (8).

Walton addresses three other types of argumentation dialogues especially relevant to Usenet argumentation. In the information-seeking dialogue, "one party has the goal of finding information that the other party is believed to possess" (8). In action-seeking dialogues, participants wish to bring about specific courses of action in others (9). In educational dialogues, participants impart knowledge to others (9). These last three are cooperative dialogues:

Members recognize each other's needs in their efforts to arrive at common goals.

Usenet Argumentation: Examples

At least four common patterns of counter-productive, ineffective Usenet argumentation exist. Viewed against the backdrop of Damer's codes of conduct and Walton's types of argumentation dialogues, these patterns in many ways exemplify Usenet argumentation as a whole. Again, not all Usenet dialogues match these patterns. The relevant examples I offer are "pathological," archetypal deviations from the norm, deviations that challenge our standards of ethics and rationality in electronic forums. (With each example, all identifying information, aside from the names of the discussion groups and the participants' first names or nicknames, has been removed.)

Pattern # 1: Personal Attacks, not Solicited Information

When Harrison claims that Usenet allows participants to "discuss technical topics ... with wizards who don't mind sharing their experience and helping others" (2), his conceptualization of the forum's purpose corresponds to Walton's discussion of information-seeking dialogues (8-9). Unfortunately, while many Usenet participants attempt to utilize the forum thus, often their requests are met with scorn or ridicule. For example, in a discussion from a popular classical music list, rec.music.classical, one participant's attempts at information-seeking dialogue are quickly brought down to the level of a quarrel, with the respondent "hitting out" at the original participant.

(See Figure [#1](#).)

The original participant, identified as Shane, posts a message to the list, asking for help concerning the background music to the DeBeers "Diamonds are Forever" television commercial. He even points out that he has searched for over two years.

Rather than receive a helpful response, however, Shane is met with a sarcastic jab. Reposting Shane's question, a second participant, Jeremy, responds by explaining that the music is available on a release entitled "Semi-Classical Music for People Who's (sic) Attention Spans Are 60 seconds and only Listen to Background Music Played During Ads Made to Glorify Greed and Status Symbols." Jeremy's witty retort does nothing for Shane. Shane does not find the information; worse, he becomes the target of another Usenet participant's derision. Clearly, this is hardly a mature or productive use of Usenet.

(See Figure [#2](#).)

In another example of a personal attack, one from alt.home.repair (a do-it-yourself discussion group), Rob asks for input concerning his rights in relation to a contracted home sale. "Specifically," he writes, "do I have the right to hire a licensed, bonded and insured contractor to do some minor work on the house I'm having built?" Although he even politely ends his message with "Any insight to this topic would be a great help," Rob is met with sarcasm: "Rights?? As long as Clinton is in office you have no stinkin rights!" his anonymous respondent charges. Again, an innocuous query is answered by a useless, derisive attack. This time the attack is aimed at President Clinton, not at the original participant; however, the outcome is the same. Rob's respondent has used the forum as a chance to lash out at another individual rather than offer helpful, relevant commentary or information. Such attacks are common in Usenet.

Pattern # 2: English Grammar Arguments

One of Damer's central principles in *Attacking Faulty Reasoning* is the Relevance Principle. Damer explains, "one who presents an argument for or attacks a position should set forth only reasons or questions that are directly related to the merit of the position at issue" (179). Most simply, this principle refers to the boundaries of argumentation dialogues: Extraneous issues do not belong. Granted, in an unstructured forum such as an unmoderated Usenet group, it is unreasonable to expect all participants to discuss only the specific topics at hand all the time. Participants often use the newsgroups to discuss seemingly unrelated topics which arise in the ongoing dialogues. However, often the extraneous dialogues take a particularly nasty turn, including not only irrelevant issues but also mean-spirited attacks. Participants frequently criticize one another's grammar rather than focus primarily on the central arguments or relevant proofs themselves.

(See Figure #3.)

In one example, taken from the Usenet list alt.tv.real-world (devoted to a popular program on MTV), participants argue over the placement of a comma. Concerned with who called whom names, one participant demands, "Btw [by the way], what the hell is that comma there for?" After offering her own personal attack ("I'm not interested in rehashing the same argument, with a person devoid of any rational, logical thought"), the second participant is unable to let the minor criticism pass without comment. She is compelled to discuss her performance in past English classes, not to mention provide a terse (and, ironically, inapplicable) discussion of restrictive phrases. She also writes, "If you don't know why I used a comma, I suggest you pay better attention in your English courses." Defending her wounded pride, she adds

> I paid attention during my High School English classes. No wonder I've never failed an English exam, nor gotten less than an A, in any of the many English courses and classes, I've taken.

Not only has the discussion's focus strayed far from the original topic—a television program—but it has also fallen to the level of the ridiculous.

(See Figure #4.)

In another example of arguments over English grammar, this one from a bicycling discussion group (rec.bicycles.off-road), the original participant had requested information about a bicycle company's other holdings—corresponding, again, to Walton's information—seeking dialogue. Although his original question went unanswered, somewhere in the dialogue another participant told him to "quit while your (sic) behind." Of course, such an irrelevant and minor mistake cannot pass without commentary in Usenet. What follows is a typical didactic message, one that points out the original participant's error and proceeds, in the course of the explanation, to reveal several more errors of its own. One participant even insults the other with the phrase "illiterate idiot" as they continue to correct the ongoing grammar mistakes. This, in turn, alters the focus of the discussion, leading to, as we see by the subject line changes, a debate about "The English Language." Again, the attacks and arguments over grammar have nothing to do with the original participant's query, but such petty arguments flourish in Usenet.

Pattern # 3: Trolling and Racism

Included in Damer's code of conduct is the Burden of Proof Principle. One of the most important in

argumentation, this principle maintains that the party setting forth the claim must also provide relevant supporting evidence (176-77). In numerous instances, this central principle is ignored in Usenet argumentation. Because anonymity is so easily achieved on the Internet, especially in Usenet, unsupported and inflammatory claims are common.

(See Figure [#5](#).)

In one example, taken from alt.music.rush (a group devoted to a popular Canadian rock band), the President of the "Southern Defense Initiative Corporation" argues that all "Southern Patriots" should boycott the hotel chain Holiday Inn. The reason? Holiday Inn has "responded to pressure from the malcontent NAACP" by removing state flags with Confederate symbols. The Usenet participant charges that Holiday Inn and the NAACP "label Southerners who resorted to self-defense as racists, bigots, and oppressors"; therefore, Southern Patriots should sleep in their cars if they have to, "never in a Holiday Inn." No real proof is offered in support of the outrageous and misdirected claims. Usenet has provided a forum for an individual to disparage a hotel chain and the NAACP, with racist charges that are irrelevant to the particular newsgroup's focus.

(See Figure [#6](#).)

In another example, taken from alt.culture.ny-upstate, one participant, "Rad," charges that Jews "rule the Western World." Rad writes, "They are a tribe of Middle Eastern parasites who never created anything but fables (Christianity, Marxism, Freudism, et al)." In typical inflammatory Usenet fashion, the participant offers no acceptable evidence to support his claim. (Perhaps this is not surprising. The idea of "acceptable evidence," in relation to such preposterous charges, is itself ridiculous. The same holds true for the previous example concerning Holiday Inn and the Confederate flag.)

(See Figure [#6](#), cont.)

Unlike the Holiday Inn example from alt.music.rush, however, in alt.culture.ny-upstate the racist charges do not go unanswered. Several other participants join in the discussion: Doug calls Rad a "racist goon"; a third participant then criticizes Doug for taking "the bait hook line and sinker." Rad is a "known troller," he explains to Doug, someone who likes to see what he can stir up by "posting controversial/offensive stuff in the groups." The third participant admonishes Doug not to give Rad "the satisfaction" of a response. It is too late, unfortunately, for Rad's baseless, racist charges have received more attention than they deserve in any forum.

Pattern # 4: Control of the Discourse Community

In the previous examples, a pertinent theme was control of the discourse community. Though no participant explicitly argued for "ownership" of the forum, Rad's inflammatory message challenged participants' senses of boundaries: What belongs in the ongoing dialogues? Although unmoderated Usenet groups lack a central authority, participants often spend a significant amount of time explicitly debating what topics and discussions are relevant to the larger group.

(See Figure [#7](#).)

In one example, taken from alt.tv.real-world, several participants hurl insults back and forth as they attempt to establish "who started it." With such futile goals, it is inevitable that other participants would begin to question the

discussion's relevance to the group's focus. One frustrated participant declares that he will no longer respond to "off-topic threads." This, in turn, elicits a standard charge in Usenet discussions of a group's focus and central authority. The participant asserts that he and his peers "have a right to post whatever we want." "If you don't like our posts," he insists, "then you're out of luck." In response, the other participant contends "Whatever is posted is open territory. I have a right to express my opinion and I'm going to do it."

(See Figure <u>#8</u>.)

In another example, taken from alt.home.repair, one participant's original question about the necessity of a permit for electrical renovations goes unanswered. Instead, several other participants discuss an individual's rights in relation to his social responsibilities. As is the case with the previous example, the newsgroup's boundaries become an issue for the participants. The first participant refuses to respond to "ravings" that he feels are inappropriate to the group; the other participant responds with the now-standard "what is appropriate for me to post on this newsgroup is for me to decide, not you." Again, as participants argue over what discussions belong in an unmoderated forum, they continue to insult one another in the process.

Conclusion

An individual's intellectual and social conduct was a central concern for classical rhetoricians and philosophers. *Arete* ("excellence" or "moral virtue") and *eunoia* ("goodwill") are discussed by both Isocrates and Aristotle, for example. In *Antidosis*, Isocrates maintains that reason and goodwill are of equal importance in social contexts. He writes, "the power to speak well and think right will reward the man who approaches the art of discourse with love of wisdom and love of honor" (52). One wishing to persuade others, Isocrates observes, "will not be negligent as to the matter of character; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish a most honorable name among his fellow citizens" (52). He continues, "the stronger a man's desire to persuade his hearers, the more zealously will he strive to be honorable and to have the esteem of his fellow-citizens" (52). Isocrates concludes, "an honorable reputation [manifested via *eunoia*] not only lends greater persuasiveness to the words of the man who possesses it, but also adds greater luster to his deeds" (52). In Isocratean rhetoric, *eunoia* and *arete* are "more zealously to be sought after by men of intelligence than anything else in the world" (52).

Aristotle discusses the intellectual and social character of the individual in his *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Early in the work, he acknowledges that a central *pistis* is the speaker's *ethos*. *Ethos* is such an important proof, Aristotle notes, that it "is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in the persuasion" (39). "We believe the speaker through his being a certain kind of person," Aristotle observes, "and this is the case if he seems to be good or well disposed to us or both" (77). In Aristotelian rhetoric, a virtuous *ethos* is of primary importance.

Contrasted, however, with both Isocrates's and Aristotle's estimations of the importance of *eunoia* and *arete* is Aristotle's recognition of some of our more ignoble intellectual and social habits. In *Nichomachean Ethics*, as he discusses the disposition of the good man, Aristotle observes that human beings are generally more inclined to seek revenge than to forgive (129). The observation, no doubt, is pessimistic, but it is borne out in Usenet well over two millennia after Aristotle's time. While intellectual and social integrity are still virtuous attributes, they seem rare in Usenet argumentation. When one Usenet participant feels slighted by another, revenge is all too easy to achieve. Quarrels receive undue emphasis in the electronic forum, while negotiation, information-seeking,

action-seeking, and educational dialogues are not the norm.

Usenet could be—like so many proponents want to think it is—a democratic, enlightening, and challenging communication forum. No other medium allows immediate interaction with thousands of people from around the world. In Usenet, we can exercise our essential human traits: our language and reasoning abilities. Unfortunately, though, racist messages, mean-spirited personal attacks, and irrelevant, petty squabbles prevail. Certainly, such dialogues are not unique to Usenet argumentation contexts. They are common in a variety of contexts. However, several aspects of Usenet seem to encourage such strategies.

Usenet discussion groups offer faceless, anonymous forums in which participants can and often do resort to whatever communicative strategies they feel will help them "win" at the time. This aspect was summarized best in a recent New Yorker cartoon. In the cartoon, two dogs sit at a computer terminal. As one of the dogs looks at the other, he says, "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog" (Steiner). The joke is double-edged: On the Internet, an individual's physical and socio-economic attributes are of secondary importance. Unfortunately, on the Internet, especially in Usenet, participants can be as much of a "dog" as they want to be: stirring up trouble, calling names, and shouting out opinions, with little, if any repercussions.

In other communicative forums, participants are responsible for their actions and words—responsible, at the minimum, in an ethical sense. In adherence to Damer's code of conduct for effective, rational argumentation, for example, they have responsibilities to those around them. While advancing their positions—while presenting their arguments and proofs—they must also listen to their peers' concerns and questions. They must reconsider any points when challenged. When participants resist or ignore the contextual procedures and pressures, their fellow participants can and will exert pressures on them to recognize the group's implicit and explicit standards.

Freed from such social constraints, or participating in an electronic discussion group in which the constraints or procedures are themselves still evolving, participants conceptualize Usenet argumentation not as a co-operative, goal-directed activity, but instead as an adversarial, combative activity. Other participants are hardly more than disembodied email addresses. And relationships in Usenet are transitory. While individuals do come together to discuss common topics and interests, and while individuals may gain one another's respect or admiration after weeks or months of participation, if the argumentation takes a turn for the worse—as it so often does—anyone can leave the group at any time. The forum rarely, if ever, notices the change. With new messages, new arguments, posted hourly, the chaotic discussions continue unabated.

Figure #1

Subj:Re: DeBeers Commercial Music[rec.music.classical]

>> Shane wrote:

>> I have been searching for over two years for the composer of

>> and the piece for the background of the DeBeers "Diamonds Are

>> Forever" television commercial. Do you know what it is?

Jeremy writes:

It's the Allegro ma non Adagio from the Concerto Grossisimo by Vincenzo Malaproponzo. It's available on a Sony CD entitled, "Semi-Classical Music for People Who's Attention Spans Are 60 seconds and only Listen to Background Music Played During Ads Made to Glorify Greed and Status Symbols."

Subj:Re: DeBeers Commercial Music

> Mack wrote:

> mean people suck!

There's a difference between vociferous criticism (or satire) and meanness --- a pity some people can't tell the difference! (back to text)

Figure #2

Subj: Re: What are my rights while my house is under contract?

[alt.home.repair]

Rob wrote:

> Hello,

> How can I find out what my rights are toward a contract on a

> sale of a house? The house will be finished sometime in May.

> Specifically, do I have the right to hire a licensed, bonded

> and insured contractor to do some minor work on the house I'm

> having built? Any insight to this topic would be a great help.

Rights?? As long as Clinton remains in office you have no stinkin rights! (back to text)

Figure #3

Subj:Re: RW5 Flora On-Line [alt.tv.real-world]

As I'm not interested in rehashing the same argument, with a person devoid of any rational, logical thought, I'll

just comment on one tiny thing.

>> Nowhere in my statement was I trying to LEFT anything, in

>> fact I was pointing out how wrong your justification for

>> calling people names, was.

^

> I didn't call anyone names. Btw, what the hell is that comma

> there for?

Don't even try it Tracy, because, in this, you're going to lose. It's pathetically funny, in a way, that *you* of all people dare comment on someone else's grammar, when you butcher a word like promiscuous, to an almost unrecognizable degree.

If you don't know why I used a comma, I suggest you pay better attention in your English courses. The reason is, what is otherwise known as, an adjective phrase. When an adjective phrase (prepositional or verbal phrases functioning as adjectives) is non-restrictive, you set it off by using a comma.

I paid attention during my High School English classes. No wonder why I've never failed an English exam, nor gotten less than an A, in any of the many English courses and classes, I've taken.

Next time you nitpick, at least have something to pick at. (back to text)

Figure #4

Subj: Re: What companies do Trek own?[rec.bicycles.off-road]

Kristan wrote:

> Maybe you should quit while your behind.

You illiterate idiot! Will you please go back to school and learn how to use the word "your" properly. Every one of your posts misuse it. In the above quote, are you talking about your rear end or what? It's YOU'RE behind, you idiot, not YOUR behind....sigh.....

>> Kristan wrote:

>> Maybe you should quit while your behind.

> You illiterate idiot! Will you please go back to school and

> learn how to use the word "your" properly. Every one of your

> posts misuse it. In the above quote, are you talking about your

> rear end or what? It's YOU'RE behind, you idiot, not YOUR

> behind....sigh.....

Isn't it ironic how proper netiquette specifies NOT to flame for grammar/spelling? If you want an English Professor to review every one of your posts and do spelling, grammar, punctuation, placement corrections on every word just say so, it can be done. You must be quite a loser to flame for something stupid like that, did the guy run over your dog/mother or something?

Subj:Re: the english language

>> Dana wrote:

>> You illiterate idiot! Will you please go back to school and

>> learn how to use the word "your" properly. Every one of your

>> posts misuse it. In the above quote, are you talking about

>> your rear end or what? It's YOU'RE behind, you idiot, not YOUR

>> behind....sigh.....

It's "Every one of your posts misuses it"--"Every one" is singular!

> It's "Every one of your posts misuses it" - "Every one" is

> singular !

everyone and every one are totally different. (back to text)

Figure #5

Subj:Boycott Holiday Inn[alt.music.rush]

BOYCOTT HOLIDAY INN

There was a war. The South was invaded. Homes were burned, property destroyed, people killed, women raped. Most able-bodied Southern men responded, suffered wounds and death in a futile effort to defend what was theirs. A powerful British corporation, Bass PLC, bought Holiday Inns and now has responded to pressure from the malcontent NAACP by removing state flags that include Confederate symbols. They label Southerners who resorted to self-defense as racists, bigots and oppressors. To hell with them! Sleep in your car, never in a Holiday Inn.

Southern Patriots Pledge

WHEREAS, a British-controlled multinational corporation headquartered in Atlanta, Bass-PLC, owns the Holiday Inn system, doing business mostly in the South through franchisees, and

WHEREAS, this company has removed the state flag of Georgia from company-owned motels and pressured franchisees in the state of Georgia to do likewise because the flag incorporates the Cross of St. Andrew, a symbol from the Confederate Battle Flag, in response to pressure from the arrogant NAACP, and

WHEREAS, all patriotic Southerners resent this insult to our traditions and to the memory of Confederate soldiers and sailors who fought so gallantly for the independence of their country and in defense of their homes and families, and

WHEREAS, it is unconscionable that foreign interests are deriving revenue from the patronage of Southerners while defying our traditions and insulting the memory of our honored dead,

NOW, THEREFORE, believing that simple self-respect demands a response on our part to this gratuitous insult and foreign intermeddling in local politics, we the undersigned resolve never to darken the door of a Holiday Inn as long as this arrogant policy is maintained. We will drive all night or sleep in the car if necessary. We will demonstrate true Southern grit by eating peanut butter sandwiches, rather than partaking of Holiday Inns Sunday buffet. We shall punish these upstart Brits where it hurts - on the bottom line.
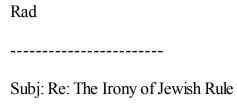
James -----, President

Southern Defense Initiative Corporation (back to text)

Figure #6

Subj: The Irony of Jewish Rule [alt.culture.ny-upstate]

From: Rad

Let's face it. The Jews rule the Western World, totally. But who are they and who are we? They are a tribe of Middle Eastern parasites who never created anything but fables (Christianity, Marxism, Freudism, et al). We Aryans created all of the useful knowledge of the ancient and modern worlds. And yet THEY rule US! Something is very wrong.

Rad

Subj: Re: The Irony of Jewish Rule

From: Bob

You need a (different) hobby. Or to get an education that will get you out of your present state in life where you blame others for your situation.

Subj:Re: The Irony of Jewish Rule

From: Rad

> Bob wrote:

> You need a (different) hobby. Or to get an education that will

> get you out of your present state in life where you blame

> others for your situation.

First of all "Bob", I wasn't talking about me, but the Jews. Secondly, I need no further education. I'm the last person you'd want to watch Jeopardy with. Or do you mean, by "education", credentials? Anyone can get those if they pay enough. Or perhaps you mean "political indoctrination". It's hard to tell. In any event, an ad hominem argument proves nothing.

Subj:Re: The Irony of Jewish Rule

From: Doug

Why the hell did this racist goon post this crap to a group with culture in it. Every time I think there is a glimmer of light seeping back into humanity, some asshole like this oozes from a septic tank. Some people can't seem to breath without hating something. (back to text)

Figure #6, cont.

Ever notice, the truly ignorant conjure hate so easily. Usually the hatred comes from their inability to adjust to their personal failures. They always blame someone or something else for their ineptness.

I notice this was cross-posted to two groups with "white" in the name and Rush - what a perfect fit - pure culture. : (I removed those cross-postings else every white supremicist malcontent will spew their racist blather.

I'm so sorry if I stepped on his "free speech" toes.

Subj:Re: The Irony of Jewish Rule

From: Larry

> Doug burst forth with:

> Why the hell did this racist goon post this crap to a group

> with culture in it. Every time I think there is a glimmer of

> light seeping back into humanity, some asshole like this oozes

> from a septic tank.

> Some people can't seem to breath without hating something.

Subj: The Irony of Jewish Rule

Doug,

Apparently you haven't been monitoring this newsgroup closely for very long. Rad is a known troller, and you took the bait hook line and sinker. This person's hobby is to see what kinda shit he/she can stir up by posting controversial and offensive stuff in the groups... Idiots such as Rad thrive off your rebuttals and flames... Don't give them the satisfaction....

Subj:Re: The Irony of Jewish Rule

From: Jay

Yet another paranoid conspiracy theorist determined to blame his personal impotence on imagined forces of darkness. Nothing wrong here that medication and an extended course of treatment couldn't cure. ↵(back to text)

Figure #7

Subj: Re: A message for anyone who cares [alt.tv.real-world]

>>> Hello?!?!? Dan, Opps, I mean Mel...YOU are the one that

>>> keeps flaming back and forth between Tracy, et al...YOU are

>>> the one that keeps fueling the fire...YOU can't let a single

>>> flame, post, jab go by without making a comment ...this no

>>> longer is the RW board, its become the Mel board. I used to

>>> support you, but reality is setting in my friend...Maybe you

>>> need to take some of your own advise!

>> Christ! I don't even have time to trade pointed barbs with

>> Greg anymore. So, from this point on, all posts about

>> off-topic threads, sigs, trolls, or what this group is/should

>> be are going to be cheerfully ignored.

> Good!! Cheerfully ignore it, then. Me and DJ have a right to

> post whatever we want, whether it's about the show or how we

> feel about the newsgroup. And if you don't like our posts,

> then you're out of luck. Too bad. Get used to it.

And we have a right to post as well. Look. Until this ng becomes moderated there is no reason to carry on this discussion. What are you going to do? Whatever is posted is open territory. I have a right to express my opinion and I'm going to do it. ↵(back to text)

Figure #8

Subj: Re: Electrical Permit - Do I need one?[alt.home.repair]

>>> I won't respond to Chris's latest ravings, as I feel threads

>>> such as these are not really appropriate to this newsgroup

>>> and would belong better in a political forum of some sort.

>> In my experience, people who describe someone else's posts as

>> "ravings," without offering any supporting argument, are

>> simply unable to answer the posts.

> My apologies to the group, but I have to say something here.

> Chris, I am perfectly capable of "answering" your post, but I

> chose not to for one simple reason and I told you why.

Yes, you said my post was "inappropriate." However what is appropriate for me to post on this newsgroup is for me to decide, not you. You are, of course, perfectly free to post your opinion as to the appropriateness of my posts. However I'm just as free to ignore your opinion. That's how a newsgroup works, and I have no problem with it.

> People do not read or post to this group to get your (or anyone

> elses) idea of the way things should be. They are interested in

> finding answers to (mostly) basic questions about their home

> and it's parts.

Apparently some people on this newsgroup DO wish to debate the idea of the way things should be, since my posts seem to generate plenty of responses.

If you don't think my posts are appropriate, then don't read them. If you don't think a thread is appropriate for the newsgroup, then don't read it. But don't waste your time (and mine) telling me that my discussions are "inappropriate," because I couldn't care less what you think about it. I happen to think my discussions are extremely appropriate for this newsgroup, and I will continue to make them. ⏎(back to text)

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