

Re: Reflections from Coe: Looking In The Mirror Again...

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- *From:* brian@xxxxxxx (Brian Tung)
 - *Date:* Tue, 8 Aug 2006 16:32:59 -0700 (PDT)
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Greg Crinklaw wrote:

Brian, I disagree. As I see it the primary reason there is so much juvenile posting on newsgroups (including trolling) is due to the lack of accountability. Using a real name means that the poster is laying his/her real life credibility on the line every time he/she posts. And while that may not mean that everyone would behave themselves, I do believe that if posters used their real names more there would be less childish antics.

As I've said here before, I stand behind my stupid statements 100%. Why should others get away with being able to say anything they want, no matter how hurtful, obnoxious, or stupid, because they are hiding behind an alias?

Consider the post you just responded to. It was absolutely outrageous. In fact, it could be considered libelous. But we have no idea who made these ridiculous accusations or why. Was he serious? Pulling my leg? Trolling? There is no way to know. So why give this person any respect at all? As you see from my response, I chose not to. As far as I'm concerned anyone who uses an alias to post here is someone with very little credibility.

Would I respect Rod Mollise as much if he posted under the pseudonym "SouthernComfort?" My personal answer is no. I'd still respect him, because, heck, he's Rod, but not quite as much...

Consider as well that the names you mentioned as regular posters here are very likely real. Unlike you, I have no doubt about that. And add yourself to that list as well as others such as Chris Peterson.

I also think it works the other way around. I know I'm personally far more likely to be rude to someone hiding behind an alias than someone using their real name. It's just plain easier to rip "dumbastargazer" a new one. ;-)

The only exception I can think of is Starlord. He uses an alias but does not hide behind it. We all know him, alias or not. But that's one

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exception to what seems to me a pretty hard and fast rule.

It's been said that people say hurtful outrageous things on newsgroups that they would never say face to face. I believe that's true. And I also believe that signing your real name is a step away from that unfortunate and ugly reality.

So once again I'll make a plea for real names and suggest that at least for some of us, it is very difficult to earn respect using an alias.

We may just have to agree to disagree, I suppose. I acknowledge that I'm making a pretty subtle point—one that practically speaking does not make a *lot* of difference, on Usenet at least. But I think it does make *some* difference.

With respect to Willie's post, I've seen him post, recently, lots of good on-topic material, which was why I was surprised by the one that started this thread. So I guess that's my point: Understandably, you're pretty hurt by that characterization. But unless you've been paying close attention, you might not have noticed that he had been using a pseudonym. So the question is, are you more bothered by the hurtful nature of the posting, or by the fact that he posted under a pseudonym? As the target of that post, you might feel differently, but it seems to me that for most people, it would be the former that would be the problem.

I also think that Starlord is a meaningful exception, and not just one that proves the rule, as the old saying goes. He is an exception precisely *because* he posts consistently. I think if other folks tried to forge a posting from him, without having read his posts here on SAA over the years, they would probably fail; we'd spot them a mile away. We've come to know what general kind of posts to expect from him.

All that being said, I do agree that people are somewhat less likely to act unreasonably when they sign their real name to a post, but I think it is not a requirement to do so. Suppose my name were in fact something different (that isn't actually true, except for the fact that "Brian" is a nickname I use everywhere, simply for convenience), and suppose I were to divulge that suddenly. I don't think that would invalidate the Usenet persona of "Brian Tung" that has accumulated over a period of more than a decade. It's possible that some folks might think less of me as a result, but personally, I think that would say less about me than it would about them—not negative, necessarily, but not someone I would want to know well.

All this by way of saying that accountability is not required to confer a sense of responsibility (nor does it always do so), and if I have to choose between the two, I choose the latter.

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The Astronomy Corner at <http://astro.isi.edu/>

Unofficial C5+ Home Page at <http://astro.isi.edu/c5plus/>

The PleiadAtlas Home Page at <http://astro.isi.edu/pleiadatlas/>

My Own Personal FAQ (SAA) at <http://astro.isi.edu/reference/faq.html>

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