

In a sense, there's nothing new about Internet courage. People have been abusing one another under pseudonyms since Benjamin Franklin. But what is new is the sudden ubiquity and reach. And ease.

If one is a student of history and/or human nature, one has no right to be surprised that the technology has been turned toward these ends. Yet somehow, one always is. It calls to mind Wile E. Coyote in the old Warner Bros. cartoons — not only perpetually unable to catch the Road Runner, but also perpetually shocked when he fails.

You always think the new technology is going to liberate something shining and profound in humankind. And sometimes, it does. But it also, invariably, becomes a medium by which we release the malignant droppings of our lizard brains. Instead of liberating our best, it liberates our worst.

Gauzy TV commercials and futurist essays, you see, tell lies of omission. Every year, there's an upgrade. Every year, there's a shiny new doodad. Every year, the hardware changes. Every year, it is supposed to make us better.

But the only piece of hardware with the power to do that lies between the ears and its upgrades are the work of a lifetime.

Technology will not make us better. There is no app for that.