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"Friend" is a Verb

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a holistic, ethical, and concrete theory of the role different types of technology ought to have in our lives, of the steps needed to make such an assessment—a framework that presents normative guidelines for engineers, designers, policymakers, parents, caregivers, and others concerned with how technology may or may not contribute to a good life. I have only recently been able to start developing this approach, and I would be very grateful for any criticism and constructive suggestions. At the very least, I hope that this preliminary and cursory overview is sufficient to convey its potential advantage and utility, and to start a fruitful discussion on the role of prudential value and empirical research in ethics of technology.

Acknowledgments

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Endnotes

1. Again, there is no room for a full critique in this paper, nor is that my main purpose, but I discuss this in more detail in Søraker 2010.

2. Although a full defence is beyond the scope of this paper, I presuppose a variant of Fred Feldman's "Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism," but one that is "confidence-adjusted" rather than "truth-adjusted." I defend this approach in Søraker 2010, and more systematically in a forthcoming publication.

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"Friend" Is a Verb

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> People linked together by friendship, affection, or physical love found themselves reduced to hunting for tokens of their past communion within the compass of a ten-word telegram. And since, in practice, the phrases one can use in a telegram are quickly exhausted, long lives passed side by side, or passionate yearnings, soon declined to the exchange of such trite formulas as: "Am well. Always thinking of you. Love."
>
> —*The Plague*, Albert Camus (1991, 69)

In the situation described in this passage, surely much of the problem follows from the very short form of the communication possible. Twitter exchanges seem luxurious, indulgent by comparison. But surely much of the problem follows from the format, regardless of length. "Mutual sympathy" is equated here with "flesh and heart," and surely we today agree with Camus that there is a kind of intimacy and connection far easier to establish in face-to-face interaction, or, more accurately, body-to-body interaction (Fortunati 2005, 53), than in writing, no matter whether that writing is limited to ten words. And yet, while the centrality of co-presence and body-to-body interaction might be of unquestionably central concern to erotic relationships, it is far less clear that it should be crucial to friendship. Why, exactly, does writing seem to us to be such a poor substitute for physically co-present interaction within the realm of friendship as well?

The Aristotelian tradition of thought on friendship had accustomed us to dividing friendships between those of virtue, of pleasure, and of utility (and to disparaging the latter two). This puts us on a path to view formal and final causes as determining of friendship—the most prominent distinction between them has to do with their ends, and the friendship of pleasure, concerned so much more with a passing experience than a lasting goal, seems cheap; a guilty pleasure. But friendships with all sorts of formal and final causes have efficient and material causes as well, and these cannot be ignored or discarded.

In terms of formal and final causes we might say that friendship may be based on shared concerns, mutual support in acting on personal and political commitments, principled disagreement and debate, a similar sense of human, shared interests, or common activities and pastimes. In efficient and material aspects, the basis of friendship is found in complaining about the soup, walking together silently, passionate debate, laughing about something unimportant, shopping, playing cards, drinking beer, sharing music, and being bored. Friendship is not a static fact, but a πραξις; part of the active rather than the contemplative aspect of living—and it must be enacted in order to exist.

We are all familiar with the challenges of maintaining a friendship over distances. The practice of friendship, when placed within the context of the longhand letter, must attempt to realize a portion of active life using tools proper to contemplative life. As Vallor puts it,

> Initially, the possibilities for sharing lives online look relatively impoverished if we grasp the distinction between sharing lives and sharing *about* lives; the former involves performing together the activities that make up a life, the latter involves communicating to one another information concerning our lives, without implying shared activity. (forthcoming, n.p.)

And not only is shared activity seemingly precluded, but the sharing which is possible tends towards reporting only those aspects of life which appear to us objectively meaningful, removing access to a large portion of what life is to each of us as it is lived, and what would have been shared in a life lived together. "Sharing *about*" can capture well something of the final cause of friendship—our common values, passions, interests, or humor—but it is hard to see how the written form could contain the material causes of friendship.

A life lived alongside another is disfigured when transferred into narrative: the trivialities of life are no longer a binding connection, but instead the subject of reportage, and the vibrancy of life can only be made again engaging through literary talent on the part of the letter-writer or the empathetic imagination of the reader. As Schopenhauer said, when we view an individual human life objectively in all its many and varied details,

> it is like a drop of water seen through a microscope, a single drop teeming with *infusoria*; or a speck of cheese full of mites invisible to the naked eye. How we laugh as they bustle about so eagerly, and struggle with one another in so tiny a space! And whether here, or in the little span of human life, this terrible activity produces a comic effect.

> It is only in the microscope that our life looks so big. It is an indivisible point, drawn out and magnified by the powerful lenses of Time and Space. (2007, 25)

Once we live apart from a friend, and share our lives only through the time-shifted asynchronous written word communicated at a distance, the magnifying lenses of time and space are no longer shared. Our own days are encountered through a microscope, and each moment is one whose passage we feel, no matter how unimportant its content. In speaking to the distant friend, however, we view our life as from afar, and we find ourselves answering simply "Not much" when asked "What have you been up to?" as if we were limited to the space of a telegram as in Camus's story.

There are certainly friendships that continue and strengthen in important aspects when this transition takes place—Briggle (2008) provides an excellent example of pen-pals who are *better* able to share meaningful and deeply personal thoughts due to their lack of a shared location. This can be expected to occur in proportion as the friendship has its basis within final and formal causes rather than efficient and material causes; within commitments and projects held in common rather than jokes, movies, and boredom; and, most broadly, within contemplative life rather than active life. But even the friendship based on common values or on intellectual exchange is still a friendship realized in moments lived and shared, and when fully abstracted into an exchange of letters it becomes a placeholder for and shadow of its true form.

Or, at least, this was the case until recently.

I began this section by asking why physically co-present interaction seemed to us to be so central to friendship, and why written interaction seemed to us to be such a poor substitute. Although this fits the way many often think about and talk about friendship, there are surely a great many Facebook users who do not see the dire consequences for friendship that theorists and commentators so frequently bemoan, and many today, markedly but not exclusively tweens and teens, see nothing strange about choosing to IM or text someone who is easily available in person. I don't believe this is because there's something wrong with "these kids today," or because we've lost the "true meaning of friendship," or because new social media have brought our society into "the shallows." I think it's because we're wrong to think of Facebook posts, texts, tweets, and many other forms of new social media communication as written language; or, perhaps less paradoxically put, that writing is increasingly an active and shared activity between distant persons rather than an act of individually composing and subsequently sharing meaning and information.

Changing Communications

Email has been much decried for the way in which the ease, speed, and weightlessness of email communication has resulted in a decline in emphasis upon spelling, grammar, formalities, and etiquette. Moving from email to other new media communications, we see this decline continue, as well as seeing a positive rise in norms of casual, creative, and informal usage, either through convenience (e.g., "ur" for "yours," or the foregoing of apostrophes, which the iOS virtue keyboard puts on a separate screen) or through individual or collective identity construction (as in the case of "l337" typographical conventions or speech patterns stylized after LOLcats, Y U NO guy, or innumerable other Internet memes).

We are not wrong to fear and lament the loss of habits of thoughtful composition and proper language use, even if there are, as I will argue, some positive aspects to this change as well. As the speed and frequency of writing has increased, writing as a practice has become increasingly more functional than thoughtful, and has moved from contemplative to active life. Heidegger even claimed that this process, which he saw at a far earlier stage in the mere act of abbreviating of words (1968, 34-5), threatens the very existence of meditative thought as we use words more and more as tools rather than as bearers

of meaning. The phenomenological changes that bring about this danger, through our loss of wider perspectives and our increasing incapacity to step back and consider things carefully and as a whole, bring writing within the realm of the trivial, functional, and immediate. The momentary writing of new social media loses the slow and deep aspects of traditional written thought, but gains the immediacy and vibrancy of momentary speech.

Along with this change in the form and experience of writing, the subjects of communication have undergone a similar alteration. The over-sharing and micro-reporting of the stereotypical constant texter or tweeter exemplify the most mindless and unimportant form of sociality. And yet, it is technologies such as these—and for exactly this reason—that are able, finally, to recreate at a distance those "microscopic lenses of time and space" which allow two people to have the shared experiences that form the material and efficient causes of friendship. This destroys the distance that results in the report, "I didn't really do anything today," when we have been busy from dawn to dusk with meaningless errands. Through constant tweets and texts, we can be bored and frustrated constantly alongside one another—indeed, the tweeter may very well bring a lived experience of boredom to all his friends, much to their annoyance. As obnoxious as this may be, it does indeed replicate the element of friendship most easily lost in distance.

Here we see a resurgent orality in writing itself—a kind of *secondary literacy* based in and taking its characteristics from orality; a kind of distorted mirror image of Ong's secondary orality. Secondary orality is "superficially identical with that of primary orality but in depth utterly contrary, planned and self-conscious where primary orality is unplanned and unselfconscious" (Ong 1977, 298). While secondary orality is oral language derivative of written language, secondary literacy partakes in various and undifferentiated mixtures of literacy and resurgent orality. Some new social media writing is composed with care and concern for meaning, support, and precision in expression, and is altogether in line with our pre-digital expectations for the written word. Some is entirely contextually bound and written extemporaneously from within an ongoing conversation. Most, of course, is some unknowable admixture between the written form and this resurgent orality, and many of the conflicts which take place in new social media can be traced back to different proportions of literacy and orality adopted by those in conversation. One user's thoughtful and respectful discourse is another's tl;dr, and both serious communication and sarcastic or absurdist banter fit within the norms of new social media writing.

"Le Twittre," Penny Arcade, 4/23/2008
http://www.penny-arcade.com/comic/2008/4/23/

Facebook Friending

The flexibility and multiplicity of communication structures in Facebook form a platform for the practice of friendship which is able to provide the active experience of proximity seen in texting and tweeting, while providing scalable avenues towards more robust forms of communication and sharing. As Baym makes clear in her discussion of media multiplexity in personal relationships, closer relationships are conducted over more numerous media (2010, 132). Facebook, as a communications platform, can be used in very thin, one-dimensional forms of communication, but its capacity for a variety of different sorts of communication leaves multiplexity as an open possibility within all relationships conducted in part over Facebook.

Status updates supply the opportunity to be present with the other in quotidian trivialities, but do so in a minimally invasive general broadcast rather than a specific communication that might obligate the other to respond. At the same time, the publication of interests, personal details, notes, postings, and videos allows others to hear from one and learn about one's current interests and concerns, and for one to share with others without having to decide to communicate with anyone in particular. In general, it is a pull-oriented interpersonal communications platform. Rather than the "push" of information outward in the letter, phone call, email, or SMS, a great proportion of the communication that takes place is generated as static content and "pulled down" by viewers of personal pages.

In these ways, the Facebook page is a venue for allowing others to get a sense of the texture of our day-to-day lives, without explicitly inviting anybody to follow it day-by-day. This certainly has its negative aspects, such as the now well-established practice of Facebook stalking, but it also means that there is, in effect, always an open door for our connections to get to know us better.

Targeted communication within one's network is also always a possibility. Messaging allows for private or personal responses to public conversations, or for conversations requiring intimacy or seclusion—and within this slower, more email-like communicative channel, longer-form writing with a lesser resurgent orality can take place in, as it were, a quiet side-room from the buzz of the friend feed. But more active forms of direct communication are also possible. The "like" button functions much like a head nod or an encouraging "uh-huh" in body-to-body communication. Cuonzo (2010) argues that part of the function of virtual gifts is a kind of post-linguistic social grooming, in keeping with Dunbar's gossip hypothesis (1997). The purpose, then, of sending someone a flower in a Facebook application, or poking or throwing a sheep at them, is simply to re-establish contact and revitalize a social bond. These things are in some sense meaningless, of course, but so is much of the small talk we engage in regularly, and both serve the same social purpose.

All this, however, approaches Facebook merely as a communications platform. In addition to this, Facebook is able to provide a platform for asynchronous shared activities. To some extent, this is clearly possible through the other communications technologies discussed previously—I may certainly send you a video by email which we can then share our thoughts on, in the same way as I might send you a letter recommending visiting a certain museum—but the multimedia integration of Facebook walls and applications allows for a

weightless, immediate, and intuitive approach to distant shared media experiences. Furthermore, the embedded display of linked visual media on the one hand, and the small text-entry windows on the other, both encourage that communications tend to become an asynchronously shared experience of media along with a comment, rather than a written message containing a link to some content referred to. The integration of applications allows collaborative or competitive games and projects to create even more concrete and interactive asynchronous shared experiences.

This is where I disagree with Vallor's otherwise excellent article, "Flourishing on Facebook." Vallor characterizes our actions in new social media as "communicating to one another information concerning our lives" and "providing the kinds of informational and emotional reciprocity that maintain the *will* to live together with our friends" (forthcoming, n.p.). I find instead that the writing that takes place in new social media, in line with the idea of resurgent orality, is better characterized as a shared activity rather than mere information sharing. Just as in a conversation in person, what we enjoy is not the information but rather the back-and-forth, the playfulness of banter, and the closeness and connection with our friend, so too do we in new social media often find our conversations to be more about activity than about content. As with in-person conversations, the content itself certainly wouldn't always (often?) merit the time we spend on it—but that it is time spent with friends does.

Similarly, I see no reason to describe the performance of reciprocity as going no further than a demonstration of the will to live together—is there not enough reason to call it a way of actually living together asynchronously and at a distance, at least within a limited scope of activities? If I post another picture of baby sloths on the wall of a sloth-obsessed friend, I am not indicating something we would do together. The sending of sloths and lolruses is itself a practice within our friendship. If I listen to a lo-fi Mountain Goats video posted by another friend, I do so with the understanding that she listened to it just as I am now, and through my experience of the song I understand more about her experiences and aesthetic sensibility. Every posting can be an invitation to others to encounter the posting as if alongside ourselves, and in this way we can have a meaningfully robust asynchronous version at a distance of many of the everyday material causes of friendship: watching TV or a movie, discussing the news or an article, shopping together, playing Scrabble, and so forth. Through the limited forms of cellphone and camera photos and videos, we can even, in a limited and thin way, invite our network to visit our family, or keep up to date on our vacation (or a party) as it happens. Now, Vallor is concerned specifically with complete friendships and friendships of virtue, so she has other reasons to dismiss these activities as relatively trivial to her primary concern, but I think it important nonetheless to recognize that new social media provide us not just with a means of communication but a means of living together, and, as Vallor well recognizes, friendships of virtue usually come about as a deepening of relationships initially established in the pursuit of utility or pleasure.

Old Friends, New Media

To see how new social media are relevant to the possibility of deepening relationships towards virtue, consider the difference between making contact with old friends via Facebook versus via email, telephone, or letter.

In friending someone, there is a very minimal social commitment. Users often seem to use friending as a means of recreating former social groups, and will friend those with whom they have no immediate desire to communicate, but just want to check in on, touch base with, or keep in touch with. This

surely has some negative aspects—users tend to accumulate friends who they know and care very little about—but the lowered expectation allows people to establish connections with those they are very much out of touch with.

The case of the old friend to whom we have little to say exemplifies the most characteristic strengths of Facebook as a communications platform and as a platform for asynchronous shared activity. In this kind of relationship, contact would be unlikely in other media, for we would not have sufficient initial desire and purpose to motivate the investment of time and feeling requisite to reestablish a meaningful relationship. The low commitment of friending allows this contact to be established, which then, through status updates and news feeds, gives us a sense of who our old friend has become, and of what the course of her life now consists. We may find we share interests, commitments, and projects—either those that once bound us together, or others that have arisen in the intervening period. We may find we have more in common than expected, or we may rediscover, for example, that shared sense of humor which had always been the only thing we had in common.

And, on Facebook, a shared sense of humor and fun is enough to re-establish a relationship—and, even more remarkably, a relationship that can grow. Simple activities with scalable levels of interaction, such as Facebook games, allow us to move smoothly from playing a game because the game is itself diverting to playing a game as a way of being together with a friend. Competition and chatting as we play allows a return to the quotidian moments of passing time which once brought us together, without the artificial attempt to reestablish a friendship using means foreign to the shared activities which formed an initial, now lapsed bond.

In these ways, Facebook is a remarkably well-suited platform for the activity of friendship. Where the connections forged are superficial, they allow avenues for growth and intensification. Where the messages and posts are terse and simple, they allow for conversations and shared experiences to emerge. Where the group associations and activities are thin and basic, they allow opportunities to raise awareness and recruit others to causes that may become passionate commitments.

To be sure, the movement of communications technologies from the realm of contemplative to that of active life presents cultural problems and dangers, but it allows the long-distance elements of friendship to become not a mere sharing of information about activities engaged in separately, but an active asynchronous sharing of activities themselves. This active component of new social media communications is both important and easily misunderstood, and as long as we do not grasp that communications here are not reportage and summary, but asynchronously shared experience at a distance, much of what happens in new social media will appear to be useless self-important triviality. We can call this the "sandwich problem."

Why do people talk about their sandwich? Why do people post pictures of lunch? Surely it is not because they are under any illusion that their sandwich is of significant objective importance. Neither, if we are to be charitable, can we assume that it is because the sandwich-sharer believes that he is of such great importance to friends and associates that the slightest and most uninteresting details of his life take on interest by association, like Catholic relics touched by saints. What, then, can be the motivation?

This will be ever a mystery to us as long as we believe that the point of the communication is the information it contains. The point is to invite friends to lunch. The sharer can then eat alongside his absent friends, who he knows to be experiencing

the appearance of his sandwich, as if sitting across the table. The friends, for their part, have been granted this window into the life of their friend, which they may either ignore entirely, or choose to reflect upon and, in so doing, revitalize their connection. If this kind of asynchronous, opt-in broadcast, mediated togetherness-at-a-distance displaced more robust forms of shared activity, this would certainly be a worry—but the point is that we can't even make sense of why people do this unless we accept that this is experienced as a shared activity of communion, rather than a communication of information.

"Friend" is a verb, now, thanks to Facebook—and it is well that this is so. While "friending" is the mere establishment of a connection on this social networking site, what is both most important and most surprising about Facebook is its affordances for friendship as an *activity*.

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Embodied Cognition and the Turing Test: An Uncomfortable (Re-)Union

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Abstract

For decades, the artificial intelligence community has questioned the validity and strength of the Turing Test as a way to evaluate the presence or absence of a mind. Given the recent surge of evidence for embodiment theories, the Turing Test has been considered largely irrelevant. However, conceptual metaphor theory, a strong theory of embodiment, ironically offers a way to save the Turing Test. In spite of the fact that the theory, as articulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1987, 1999) is explicit in its rejection of AI, it offers a strong linguistic basis for evaluating the presence of an underlying mind.

Keywords

Embodied cognition, Turing Test, embodiment, conceptual metaphor, cognitive semantics, artificial intelligence

It is almost impossible to over-estimate the impact that Alan Turing's 1950 paper *Computing Machinery and Intelligence* has had on the artificial intelligence (AI) community. Turing's historic paper set the stage for a sort of "put up or shut up" moment in the field, challenging those who spend their time working out what it might mean for a machine to exhibit genuine intelligence, and setting the bar for AI theorists indefinitely. And while Turing almost certainly never intended for his Imitation Game (what has come to be known as the Turing Test) to be an operational definition (that *only* and *exactly* those things that pass it count as intelligent), the test took on a life of its own over the sixty-plus years since Turing proposed it. In fact, I know of almost no one in the field of AI theory who defends the test *as written* (excepting maybe Daniel Dennett, whose defense will be discussed below), and yet it remains the benchmark that everyone almost-embarrassingly references, seemingly dismissing it as overly simplistic while using the same breath to grudgingly admit that no machine or program has yet passed it. It is this apparent contradiction that I intend to discuss here, while offering evidence and argument that the Turing Test is overdue to be re-examined as a potentially valid test for artificial intelligence.

Despite the Turing Test being generally the most talked-about and well-known test for AI, most discussion in the literature has remained critical. Particularly in light of what I will call the Embodied Revolution in the fields of AI and cognitive science, the Turing Test has been pushed even further from prominence in recent years. As more and more researchers embrace the claims of embodiment theories, a purely linguistic test begins to look less and less viable as a candidate for a true test of intelligence. By "intelligence," I include the concept of mind or consciousness that is the true goal of AI. (It isn't clear to me what intelligence looks like in the absence of a mind, since arguably we have many machines that are already intelligent in that sense and yet we do not believe we have achieved true AI. Searle's (1980) distinction here between Strong and Weak AI is relevant, and I'm interested only in the notion of Strong AI here.) In what follows, I will give the reader a brief background of AI's history, including the role played by the Turing Test, spending some time on the Embodied Revolution and what it has meant to the field. Then, I will argue that Lakoff and Johnson's work on Conceptual Metaphor specifically (and ironically) offers us a reason to re-think this move away from the Turing Test. Ultimately, it seems as though one can reject many of the assumptions of what Haugeland (1986) called "GOFAI" (Good Old-Fashioned AI), including that human thought is primarily symbol manipulation, and still accept that the Turing Test is a valid test of human-like intelligence.

Historically, AI has gone through a number of research paradigms. Different philosophers have carved this history up differently, but one can see fairly clearly that there have been at least three major approaches to the field, all of which overlap one another chronologically at some point, and all of which remain active research projects today. We often use the term "GOFAI" to describe the earliest work in AI, that which is based on the Physical Symbol System Hypothesis of Newell and Simon (1976). In their words:

> A physical symbol system has the necessary and sufficient means for general intelligent action. By "necessary" we mean that any system that exhibits general intelligence will prove upon analysis to be a physical symbol system. By "sufficient" we mean that any physical symbol system of sufficient size can be organized further to exhibit general intelligence. By "general intelligent action" we wish to indicate the same scope of intelligence as we see in human action. (116)

It's not difficult to see how the Physical Symbol System Hypothesis approaches the problem of intelligence in AI much the same way Turing did, in so far as the focus remains firmly on the symbolic representation of information. Although Turing wanted to limit the test to only digital computers, the