



Routledge Research in Communication Studies

FRIENDSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

**A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO
COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION**

Tiffany Petricini



Friendship and Technology

This book explores the nature of technology—participatory media in particular—and its effects on our friendships and our fundamental sense of togetherness.

Situating the notion of friendship in the modern era, the author examines the possibilities and challenges of technology on our friendships. Taking a media ecology approach to interpersonal communication, she looks at issues around phenomenology, recognition of friends as unique, hermeneutics in a digital world and mediated communication, social dimensions of time and space, and communication ethics.

Examining friendship as a communicative phenomenon and exploring the ways in which it is created, sustained, managed, produced, and reproduced, this book will be relevant to scholars and students of interpersonal communication, mediated communication, communication theory and philosophy, and media ecology.

Tiffany Petricini is an assistant teaching professor of communication studies at Penn State Shenango in Sharon, PA. Her work focuses on media ecology, phenomenology, and communication ethics.

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Computer-mediated Communication

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Introduction

Friendship as a Communicative Phenomenon

Human society and culture, from a media ecology perspective, have undergone major transformations over the course of human history. Media ecologists are concerned with the evolution of communication technologies and how they have shaped and been shaped by the environment. Currently, we are in the midst of an exponential leap in an exponential age. The arrival of electricity gave rise to a plethora of technologies which altered human communication. Measures implemented across the globe to slow cases of the Coronavirus have tested the strength of every relationship in our lives and have promoted a rapid shift to mediated communication. The distancing that has been mandated in some places and simply promoted in others is in direct opposition to the nature of togetherness that grounds all human relationships. This work will focus on friendship, although there are parts that are relevant and applicable to romantic and family relationships also.

For most of human history, philosophers have been investigating and pondering various facets of friendship and therefore this work is truly nothing new in the grand scale of human history. What has changed, though, is that the digital landscape seems to have affected the way that we live our lives with others. The popular literature that has focused on relationships and their demise at the cost of technology agree that we are in a dire place. This work, however, takes an alternative approach.

To start, it is important to situate this work within the larger corpus of humanity's very interesting and thorough investigation into friendship. Rake (1970) wrote, "Friendship is one of the eternally fascinating topics to which great minds of every age turn with fresh interest" (p. 3) and we see this even in the earliest written stories we have access to. One of the earliest exercises in grappling with the notion of friendship can be seen in Homer's *Odyssey*. There are several thorough works that have studied friendship over the course of human history; therefore this work will not go beyond the brief framework in this chapter. In his work *Friendship in the Classical World*, Kanston (1997) discussed friendship in Homer's work and also examined friendship in multiple works from as early as the eighth century BC to the fourth AD. Reisman (1979) also examined ancient works, including the Old Testament, to place the study of friendship into context historically. Plato discussed friendship in several

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of his works, including *Lysis*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*, and several contemporary scholars have interpreted Plato's work on friendship in more depth (Ferrari, 1992; Price, 1989; Reeve, 2006). Friendship was a major focal point for Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and of tertiary importance in the *Eudemian Ethics*, which will be taken up in more depth in later chapters.

Aristotle began his work on friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* by saying that friendship "is either itself a virtue or connected with virtue" and made the argument that friendship is imperative for human flourishing. Cicero would eventually, under the influence of Aristotle and Plato, write an entire work on friendship, *De Amicitia*. Also influenced heavily by Aristotle was Aquinas, who dedicated a large part of *Summa Theologiae* to friendship. Montaigne wrote his essay *On Friendship* in the mid-1500s, and Shakespeare, too, at the turn of the sixteenth century, was working with friendship themes. Several contemporary scholars have examined these themes in Shakespeare's works (Bloom, 2000; Waithe, 1986; Cox, 2008).

Upon researching nearly any contemporary scholar, one will find some type of work related to the nature of friendship, including Gadamer, C. S. Lewis, Foucault, Ricoeur, Derrida, Levinas, Arendt, and Nietzsche, to mention only a few. The notion of friendship is historically situated, thus it requires attention in each era and has prompted questions throughout human history. Our time is no exception. Changing cultures and redefinitions of basic human institutions have led us to our current moment, in which we are experiencing a loud and continuing debate on the effect of technology on our lives. Advancements in science have allowed us to understand our past and present in new ways. Technology, too, has opened the door for new possibilities of encounter. Throughout the ages, friendship has been consistently recognized as a human good that facilitates human flourishing, and as we are in an age of virtue contention, questions about the navigation of competing goods and how they relate to friendship are pertinent.

Cultural Transformations

Related to cultural shifts and the redefinitions of human institutions, many friendship scholars have recognized the unique challenges of our post-modern world related to friendships. McPhee (1998), grounded in the work of Giddens (1979; 1981), noted we have a fragmented and undermined sense of community. Kinship, too, has "become fragmented and less relied on," which has elevated the necessity for friendship in our lives (McPhee, p. 98). Suttles (1970) wrote, "Friendships are especially valued in a population where social contacts have outgrown the bounds of kinship, neighborhood, age grades, workgroups, ethnicity, and social classes" (p. 96). Allan (1998) pointed out that various areas of our social lives have gone through historical transformations, like domestic life, work, employment, gender relations, community involvement, etc. Friendship research in the nineteenth century has tended to recognize the various different social possibilities for relations (Naegle, 1958; Kurth, 1970).

Brain (1976) argued that there is a need to understand friendship “at times when our ideas are becoming so fluid and changing,” particularly related to our “Western preconceptions of love and friendship” (p. 10). Culture and our institutions are evolving, and we have arrived at an era of virtue contention (Arnett et al., 2009; Fritz, 2014). This age is defined by disagreement on most topics, particularly related to the good life. Arnett et al. explained that “our confidence in one universal sense of the ‘good’ is no longer normative” (p. 1) and “goods are often in conflict in this postmodern era of difference” (p. 4). They added that “the application of those goods is then negotiated and enacted through discourse” and we see this played out in the form of debate in the literature associated with the negative and positive effects of technology on friendships and our ability to flourish (p. 4).

The Changing World of Technology and Friendship Ethics

Technological development has spurred radical shifts in the primary relationships we have in our lives. Shifts in communicative technology have thrust us into a world in which exposure to difference is commonplace. We are positioned to experience alterity regularly. The days of our very near ancestors seeing the same few people day in and day out seem hard to even fathom. Even in the 1980s, Gumpert and Cathcart noticed the revolutionary shifts in communication and technology. They wrote that “the new media have altered our patterns of communication just as surely as the ice age changed the contours of the land” (1986, p. 57). They added, “the modern electronic media have affected what we know, who and what we talk about, who talks to us, and who listens. Our knowledge and store of information have been immeasurably increased” (p. 9). Prior to the advent of technology, friendships were created and maintained with those with whom we were in close proximity (Adams, 1998). Technology made possible our ability to not only meet but maintain relationships at a distance. While the restriction of physical presence on friendship has now been removed, problematic romanticized ideals about friendships of the past are still pervasive. O’Connor noted that even if two people made initial contact in each other’s physical presence in the past, “maintaining already established relationships across distances was difficult because contact was infrequent, expensive, or unsatisfying” (1998, p. 157), and that “the assumption of physical co-presence made some sense in the technological context in which these territorially-bound theories developed” (p. 157). Bakardjieva (2014) explained that post Web 2.0, in the world of social media, we are seeing friendship being redefined and challenged “on grounds of linguistic, cultural and ideological differences” (p. 270). This is no surprise from a communication ethics standpoint.

Technology Use and our Friendships

Friendship is deeply connected with human flourishing. A debate has been playing out over the last several decades related to the ways in which

technology has affected friendship. Scientific advancements have shown this to be not just philosophically sound but also empirically so. Many medical disciplines have turned to the study of friendship in the last decade to make sense of the various ways in which friendships affect us and are affected by the world. Johnson & Dunbar (2016) showed that there is a correlation between pain tolerance and the size of one's social network. In another study in 2015, increased social network size was correlated with a decrease in depression (Hill et al.). In older adults, social relationship activities were linked with a decrease in cognitive decline (James et al., 2011).

We are physiologically and emotionally affected by the quality and quantity of our friendships. Not only do we agree that it is important to have and maintain friendships, but that lacking friends in our culture is often a source of stigma and shame (Rubin, 1986). Rubin also highlighted the concern caregivers have for childhood friendships, that is, that parents are concerned with their child's ability to make friends. Signs of a child struggling to make friends is a developmental warning to parents and educators, and a possible alert that the child may be struggling with flourishing. Friends provide us with a plethora of developmental support. Friends guide us through human development and help young adults transition from family life into full-fledged members of civil society. There are many other ways that friends provide support, including companionship, stimulation, physical support, ego support, social comparison, and intimacy and affection (Ginsberg et al., 1986).

Today, technology use is standard and part of the everyday personal and professional lives of most people in the Western world. According to a 2019 Pew Research Study, nearly all millennials own a smartphone. Roughly half also own tablets, and about 80 percent of millennials have broadband internet access in their homes. Gen Xers have similar statistics, and the majority of baby boomers have smartphones, tablets, and broadband access. The silent generation trails behind with under half owning smartphones, tablets, and broadband internet. A staggering near-100 percent of millennials use the internet regularly, 20 percent of whom go online from their smartphones only.

While there are multiple reasons that individuals go online, many are social media users. Eighty-six percent of millennials use social media (Pew Research Center, 2019). The majority of social media users visit Facebook regularly, although other options for social media include Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Obar & Wildman (2015) noted the difficulty in defining social media and likened it to a "moving target." The pair noted four areas that all forms of social media share:

- 1 They are Web 2.0 technology.
- 2 They depend on user-generated content.
- 3 They consist of individuals who are moderated by a larger organization.
- 4 They "facilitate the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals/groups" (p. 9).

Aichner & Jacob (2015) reviewed multiple types of social media and even included blogs and product reviews. Kaplan (2012) differentiated mobile social media from standard social media forms. Mobile social media, he argued, have location sensitivities and time sensitivities. He distinguished four types.

- 1 Space-timers. Space-timer types of social media are those which are sensitive to both time and space. An example of this is Foursquare.
- 2 Space-locators. Space-locator types of social media are sensitive to space but not time. An example of this would be Yelp.
- 3 Quick-timers. Quick-timer types of social media are sensitive to type but not space. Twitter and Facebook news feeds are examples of this.
- 4 Slow-timers. Slow-timer types of social media are neither time nor space sensitive. Kaplan gives YouTube and Wikipedia as examples.

An important distinction in the above discussion is made with the mention of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is the term used to signify the major transformation of internet culture after the year 2000. Blank and Reisdorf (2012) have termed Web 2.0 “The Participatory Web.” Bakardjieva and Gaden (2012) explained that while the term lacks scholarly consensus, it is standard in popular rhetoric. The pair argued that social networking sites have opened the door for new horizons for our interactions and interpretations of others, particularly as participatory arenas that allow for creativity, civic engagement, and action.

The Pessimistic View of Technology’s Role in Our Friendships

It is no wonder then, that technology’s effects on friendship have become somewhat contested in our current moment. Some scholars have argued that technology has negatively impacted friendship and our ability to flourish. For example, one thread of research argues that technology has had a negative impact on friendships or that mediated relationships are of poorer quality (Valkenburg & Jochen, 2009). Turkle’s (2011) popular work, *Alone Together*, argued that technology is driving us inward at the cost of our relationships, and her more recent work *Reclaiming Conversation* (2016) focused on the decline of interactions as technology has played a more central role in our interactions. Ledbetter (2017) identified several approaches to understanding well-being and online versus offline friendships. One, he explained, is the “time displacement approach.” These frameworks are pessimistic and contend “that online communication detracts time from more meaningful face-to-face interaction.” The second type is the “rich-get-richer approach,” which Ledbetter explained is when “social internet use augments the benefits of offline interactions, especially for those who are socially adept” (p. 101).

Postman (2011) argued that technology run amuck is destroying our very human nature and social relationships. In her work, Bennett’s (2016) purpose was “to discover if (and how) *eudemonia* can continue to be associated with the digital exchange of information and images, otherwise known as contemporary

friendship” (p. 245). Working from Elull, Bennett argued that technology diminishes face-to-face communication. She wrote, “The quick, unobstructed access to one another has morphed in short order from something used occasionally into the dominant mode of communication, often eclipsing the natural reaction to have a conversation or spend time together” (p. 248). She concluded that “media distance us from the other” (p. 255).

Cocking and Matthews (2000) also take a negative view of the effects of technology on our friendships. They explained that the ability to share one’s experience online is limited. They wrote, “Though we think internet ‘friendship’ is quite inferior to non-virtual friendship, we do not think that it is necessarily bad in itself and indeed for some people, it clearly provides an important good” (p. 224). However, the pair found technology interferes with the ability to flourish in the sense that “to the extent that my Net ‘friendships’ replace friendships I might well have had non-virtually, this will subtract from the good of friendships” (p. 224). In addition to the loss of face-to-face relationships, the pair also argued that the second problem associated with friendship and technology is related to the lack of hermeneutic cues, which I will address in a following chapter. They wrote:

We claim that what is lacking here is not merely a partial, or marginal set of factors, but a significant global loss and distortion of the real case. What is distorted and lost, in particular, are important aspects of a person’s character and of the relational self ordinarily developed through those interactions in friendship. (p. 231)

McFall (2012) was skeptical about the effects of technology on our friendships. From his perspective, technology can help with virtue friendships that were formed outside the mediated realm, but “character-friendships cannot be created and sustained entirely through technological mediation” (p. 221). The problem, McFall argued, is related to the “perceptual and communicative elements” of virtue friendships that “cannot wholly be mediated technologically” (p. 224). Particularly, he noted that this is due to the lack of shared activity.

The Optimistic View of Technology’s Role in Our Friendships

Other scholars are much more adamant that technology benefits our friendships. In her work on relationships and social media, Chambers (2013) argued that new scholarship is indicating that social media and the internet have created “important sites for cultivating personal relationships” (p. 4). Munn (2012), focusing solely on massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), addressed the shared activity argument, and while he agreed that “shared activity is a core element in the formation of friendships,” he added that “friendships can form in immersive virtual worlds as they do in the physical world” (p. 1). For him, particularly, MMORPGs allow for two individuals to share activity in an online space. Elder (2014), following an

Aristotelian orientation, argued that “fulfilling friendships may occur via social media because social media allows friends to share distinctly human activities such as conversation and exchange of thoughts, mutual development of ideas, making art and playing games” (p. 287). Briggles (2008) took a balanced approach and recognized that many of the arguments making the case for technology as problematic or detrimental for our friendships often fail to address the numerous issues associated with friendship in a non-virtual environment. He wrote that “offline relationships can be constrictive and insincere” and that mediated communication “mitigates this problem by promoting the courage to be candid” (p. 71). He added that online communication attracts a deliberativeness absent in many oral communications.

Soraker (2012) charged us with considering whether “actual and virtual friendships differ when it comes to enhancing our subjective well-being” (p. 209), and one aim of this project is to enter the conversation through a phenomenological and philosophical framework. The hope is to bypass issues surrounding the psychosocial goods of friendship that narrow us into the deontological and utilitarian frameworks and instead approach friendships in the technological age from a communicative standpoint. Friendship is extremely deserving of our time and effort as communication scholars. As Rawlins (2009) contended, friendship reaches and impacts every part of our society and world. Sigman (1998) claimed that communication “produces and sustains” all human relationships and Rogers (1998) also emphasized communication as the production center for relationships.

Grounding Friendship in the Philosophy of Communication Tradition

This book takes a realist approach with a bias toward the optimistic view. I cannot ignore the various ways that technology has impacted relationships in a positive way at every level, but at the same time, I remain glued to literature that keeps me grounded and mindful about the pitfalls of technology and negative effects. The purpose of this work has been to understand the effects of technology on friendship as experienced, informed by an attentiveness to the philosophy of communication. Particularly, this project aimed to explore the intersections of media ecology and the philosophy of technology, rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and ethics. This is a task well-suited for the communication discipline. While there is a significant amount of communication research in the quantitative and qualitative scholarship, works in the media ecology, philosophy of communication, and communication ethics tracks are lacking.

In *Explorations in Media Ecology*, there has been only one published article featuring friendship. Bennett (2016) examined the “inefficiency of friendship” grounded in the work of Ellul. There is a rich field of scholarship that examines the role of technology in friendships, yet media ecology scholars have seemingly overlooked this important element of our lives. Bennett noted that in

our historical analyses we must conclude that the meaning of friendship has shifted. In the interpersonal communication realm, Walther's (1992) Social Information Processing (SIP) theory examined the effects of technology on relationship development. He suggested that despite our lack of nonverbal cues in the mediated setting, relationships actually do develop, although they do so at a much slower pace. In fact, individuals actually adapt their communication patterns for the various mediums available. Walther extended this work later to create the Hyperpersonal Model (1996). He argued that computer-mediated communication can actually become hyperpersonal—quickly and intensely personal and very intimate beyond that of normal “face-to-face” settings.

Hyperpersonal communication, Walther explained, can be more socially desirable (1996). His model shows that we do tend to draw from stereotypes more via mediated-communication and over-attribute certain characteristics. In that same year, Parks and Floyd (1996) presented their research and showed that it was not a question of whether relationships could develop—they *were* developing. Walther and Parks, in a 2002 article, added to their earlier work and reviewed multiple theories. They showed several benefits related to utilizing communicative technologies in relationships, including improved mental health and well-being, access to more resources, more expertise, more support, and the possibility to engage with others who are interested in the same things we are, rather than those who are close to us. Fleming and Baum (1986) highlighted the different types of support that friendship can offer, including emotional, tangible, and informational.

While there is a substantial amount of research on technology and relationships, and technology and friendship, there is little research at the phenomenological level on the shifts that technology has caused in the experience of friendship. Friendships are hybridized in various ways, to be discussed later, but at the contemporary level, the questions that have guided the literature in friendship have centered on whether mediated friendship is possible, authentic, or beneficial. In her work, Bennett (2016) grappled with understanding if friendship in our time is “qualitatively different” and that is one aim of the research that will be presented in this book (p. 245).

Defining and Conceptualizing Friendship and Related Terms

One possible reason for such a lack of attention from the various humanities-grounded communication traditions is the difficulty of concretely defining friendship. First, there are different kinds of words to describe different kinds of friendly relations. Second, the areas of central agreement throughout friendship literature are often ambiguous. Third, friendship varies at both the macro and micro levels and is both a personal and social relationship. In addition to the historical shifts, defining friendship is also elusive because as Scult (1989) pointed out, “there is no clear ‘object of investigation’ and therefore nothing to focus on as we work our way around the hermeneutical circle” (p. 204). Here, he is responding to the point that “friendships are ... extremely delicate and complex attempts at human bonding” with no “defined nor any agreed-upon

institutional rules or conventions” (p. 203). In attempting to define friendship, one standard approach is to focus on what friendship is not. For example, friendship is separate from kinship, although the two share several attributes. Allan (1979) explored the way in which our roles shape our expectations about particular relationships. He explains that kinship is institutionalized and formal, but friendship is not. In the case of family, we have bloodlines or pedigrees and family is institutionally protected in Western culture. Laws are in place that explicitly define the boundaries of kinship, but none define friendship.

Typological Differences and Areas of Ambiguous Agreement

Several scholars are quick to point out that there is a difference between friendship and friendly relations and that we currently have many words to approach friend-type relationships (Gareis, 1999; Bakardjieva, 2014; Kurth, 1970). Scott (2014) noted, “For the exacting language user, terms such as *acquaintance*, *casual friend*, *close friend*, and *best friend* offer the promise of differentiation” (p. 432). The dimensions of friendship determined by La Gaipa’s (1977) research are best friends, close friends, good friends, social acquaintances, and casual acquaintances.

Technology has only complicated the issue, as now “friending” is a verb in which online social media profiles are linked, but no affection exists between the two. There are several agreed-upon elements that help us approach an estimation of what friendship is or can be. Rawlins, in his work *Friendship Matters* (1992), showed us that friendships persist in both public and private, are voluntary, maintain a spirit of equality, have a mutual involvement for shared social reality, and contain some type of affective ties. Thomas (1993) highlighted that friendships have relatively little structure and the central features are “voluntary self-disclosure, reciprocity, positive mutual regard” and autonomy (p. 63). Suttles (1970) explained that liking is likely to occur when two are similar in status. Dreher (2009) described several common features of friendship:

- 1 It is done of both party’s own free will.
- 2 There is normally no sexual element.
- 3 There is unlikely to be physical attraction, unlike in a love relationship.

Like Rawlins, Suttles argued that friendships are voluntary, personal, and generalized. Emmeche (2019) acknowledged the central elements of friendship, adding that similar interests, common experiences, affection, and care are imperative. Ginsberg et al. (1986) argued that intimacy and affection are central to all friendships across the lifespan and that these two qualities are what differentiate close and distant friends.

Contextual Variations of Friendship

Another problem with definitional attempts is related to the fact that our friendships are contextually dependent. They vary by culture, gender, age, and

many other factors (Gudykunst, 1989; Liu & Yang, 2016; Fritz, 1997). Rawlins (1992) discussed the changing nature of friendships over the course of the lifespan. Childhood friendships are centered on coordinated play and grounded in proximity. As we develop, he explained, our friendships shift from momentary physical playmates to friendships grounded in mutuality and understanding. Allan (1998) wrote, “Changes in friendship patterns develop across the life-course as people’s responsibilities, commitments, and opportunities alter” (p. 72). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle recognized the changes in friendship over the course of the lifespan and associated this with changes in the underlying ends sought (e.g. pleasure, utility). Westmyer (1996) noted, “Friendships can exist between older and younger people; differences in sex do not necessarily constitute an obstacle for friendship, socio-structural boundaries can be overcome by friendship and, moreover, friendships between individuals with completely different cultural backgrounds are conceivable” (p. 411). Dreher (2009) pointed out that friendship defies barriers based on age, sex, socio-structures, and culture. In all of these categories, while the literature shows that typically friends are similar in the above categories such as gender, age, and culture, they are not limiting, and individuals of different ages, sexes, and cultures can and do become friends. Despite cultural and temporal variations, friendship is universal (Brain, 1976).

There are various different typologies in the literature of friendship. Much of the literature on interpersonal relationships following the boom in studies in the 1970s and 1980s is applicable to friendship, although there are differences when compared to romantic relationships. Using Altman and Taylor’s Social Penetration Theory (1973), Rose and Serafica (1986) noted that this theory can be applied to different friendship typologies related to affection. The pair explained that the four stages of development, including orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange, can be applied to casual, close, and best friends. Exploratory affective exchanges, Rose and Serafica noted, involve friendly and relaxed interactions but exclude intimacy. This is related to casual friends. Affective exchanges include intimacy and “mutual understanding” (p. 276). This, the pair explained, aligns with the notion of close friends. Finally, stable exchanges achieve greater intimacy than affective and the ability to predict a friend’s behavior. The pair argued that this is relevant for best friendship. Despite this work and the very good work dedicated to applying general interpersonal research to friendship studies, there is still much work to be done and many distortions, gray areas, and unknowns.

Friendship as a Relationship, Process, and Role

Traditional paradigms of friendship cannot identify one standard definition that can account for all of the above variations, ambiguous arenas of agreement, and variations from person to person and place to place. Literature has tended fall into one of three themes. Some threads of research paint friendship as a *relationship*. While friendship is a relationship, these perspectives tend to objectify the nature

of friendship and cause a shift in our thinking. We conceive of friendship as a tangible thing that we can hold and possess. As such, it creates an idealized notion of friendship at both the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, it creates unrealistic views about expectations for others and fails to recognize the dynamic nature as friendship. At the collective level, it leads to romanticized notions about friendship that are inattentive to the historical moment.

Other theories frame friendship as a *process*, many times a developmental process. While I do not reject the excellent research that examines the developmental life stages and the various types of friendship, and appreciate that this approach overcomes the static-orientation of the relationship views of friendship, these views are problematic because friendship as process seems to invoke an expectation of a final form. A third thread imagines friendship as an achievement and, like the above, the finality of friendship in these paradigms precludes the possibility for change and the reality of the dynamic nature of friendship. In these accounts, friendship must be earned, fought for, or won. Friendship is much more than a trophy, an end, and these accounts endanger the good of friendship and instead quash the important element of particularity within the friendship itself.

Another thread of scholarship paints friendship as a *role*, particularly in the realm of sociology. Roles are social categories with which we identify that guide our behavior and expectations about the behavior of others. We glean information about our roles from cultural messages and from our own personal experience. In 1953, Indian sociologist Govind Ghurye wrote that friendship is a “social category.” The role of a friend differs from that of a relative or romantic partner due to its voluntary nature. Ghurye wrote:

The qualities and virtues postulated in the pattern of friendship behaviour thus fulfil some of the higher needs of human nature and extend one’s personality. Marriage and family rooted in many more instincts than one or two remove the risk of self-centeredness, but leave no choice to the individual. (p. 153)

Friendship, one researcher argued related to women but applicable to all, even can offer “relief from the strains of other role performance” (Jerrome, 1984). While cultures tell us what a friend is and how we should be, at the same time, specific behaviors within the friendship are negotiated as the friendship grows (Jerrome, 1984).

Friendship is often closely linked with intimacy and reciprocity, and this is investigated later in this book. There are situations in which intimacy is not needed despite reciprocity within relationships. Meyrowitz (1986) noted that there are “many formal reciprocal roles” that “rely on lack of intimate knowledge of the ‘other’” (p. 309) and he discusses the formality of dating that dissipates as intimacy increases between a couple. Reciprocity and behaviors are not static, and role expectations and behaviors, too, are shifting as new technologies emerge.

While there are multiple connections between the communication and sociological traditions, such as Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective, that are relevant to the study of friendship as a role, at the core of this project is a communicative ground. In an ontological analysis of the nature of social roles, social roles were ultimately argued to be discursive (Masolo et al., 2004). In a later chapter, the work of Goffman and Meyrowitz will be drawn into the conversation to explore the notion of interiority and particularity, and Alfred Schutz plays a prominent role in the chapter on encounter. Despite recognizing that friendship has particular negotiated meanings, norms, and practices that coincide with an understanding of social roles, this book frames friendship as a communicative phenomenon.

Friendship as Communicative Phenomenon

Friendship as a communicative phenomenon recognizes that each friendship has a unique story. Friendship, in general, is part of an ongoing human conversation that will always need to be revisited. To overcome the above problems noted when framing friendship as process, role, achievement, or relationship, this work frames friendship as a communicative phenomenon. Friendship is created, sustained, managed, produced, and reproduced via various forms of communicative work and practices. Framing it in such a way allows us to work through the different areas and recognize the historically situated and evolving nature of friendship. Also, it follows a long tradition which begins with Aristotle.

The Communicative Work of Friendship

Friendship as a communicative phenomenon involves various kinds of communicative work. For one, there is the communicative work of *identification*. Rawlins (2009) showed us that we use language to identify our friends, and we typify characteristics of what we anticipate as being associated with a "friend" and apply it within our everyday encounters with others. Within these friend types, we have very different types of communicative work. Helm (2010), for example, argued that among types of friendship, the major differences are grounded in the conceptualization of the friendship itself that the two have (which may even be implicit). Westmyer (1996), too, recognized the differences at the communicative level related to types of friendship. She explained "friendship is primarily symbolically constructed, i.e. that it is formed by means of constructive processes based on a collegiately shared symbolism with a repertoire of culturally defined categories" (p. 408). As we frame friendship as a *communicative phenomenon*, then, the necessity for categorization of types diminishes. Rawlins (2009) focused on storytelling and dialogue as essential activities of friendship. Whether explicit or implicit, communication is the base from which all friendships emerge. Sigman (1998) pointed out that it is solely through communication that relationships, in general, are produced and

sustained. Thomas (1993) highlighted that unless we interact with another person, it is impossible to know if a friendship is even possible. Rogers (1998) agreed that communication is formative in relations.

Rawlins (2009) argued that “friendships emerge among the personal, relational, and cultural narratives of our lives negotiated within a host of stories already in progress” (p. 47). He continued, “friendships are ongoing narrative achievements reflexively shaping our identities, convictions, participation, and possibilities” (p. 47). Rawlins’ work grounds friendship in the communicative realm. This book follows his work to argue that friendship is a *communicative phenomenon*. Part of this project is to examine how it is that this identification can take place sans reification. Rawlins explains that “we produce the category of ‘friend’ in our daily lives through the people we choose to describe by that term (and negatively through the people to whom we refuse to apply it)” (p. 25).

Framing friendship as a communicative phenomenon allows us to avoid the difficulties encountered in attempting to define the essence of friendship in addition to the earlier problems encountered in different types of friendship. Framing friendship as a *communicative phenomenon* also allows us to attend to the current work from a historically mindful perspective, a process that is essential to projects within the philosophy of communication. Arnett (2010) wrote:

Philosophy of communication engages particulars contingent on a particular situation, a particular moment, and a particular public contribution to public opinion. Philosophy of communication does not give us unquestioned assurance; it is tested by public opinion offered as a philosophy of communication road map that details the particulars and temporal suggestions for engaging those particulars. (p. 58)

A goal of this project is to offer a road map that explores the particulars of friendship and temporal suggestions for engaging those particulars.

Laas (2018) argued that definition work is problematic as it draws us away from the ethical and practical implications of friendship, noting that “real definitions, like other kinds of definitions, are linguistic entities, and as such are unavoidably historically contingent on the definer’s circumstances, goals, and theoretical commitments” (p. 123). Rather than center on the definitional characteristics, homing in on a communicative framework allows us instead to dedicate the inquiry at hand to uncovering the qualitative differences at the phenomenological level with an overall goal to understand friendship practices in our current moment.

Operating from a communications framework that places Aristotle as the seminal friendship scholar, this book assumes that friendship is necessary for human life. For Munn (2012), a central element of friendship is “shared activity” (p. 1). Elder (2014), drawing from Aristotle, argued that the hallmark of friendship is the shared life, specifically, a communicative life. He wrote that friends share “especially reasoning together by sharing conversation and

thoughts, and communal engagement in valued activities” (p. 287). Meilaender (1981) explained that for Aristotle, the emphasis was on choice. It is this grounding of friendship in choice, then, that places friendship in the middle of deliberative work and communicative action. Aristotle (2003) wrote that friendship “is a thing most necessary for life since no one would choose to live without friends” (1155a). Rawlins operates, too, from an Aristotelian tradition. He explained that “in close friendship, we desire good things to happen to our friend because we care about this particular person. The activities encompassing personal friendship occur for the most part in private settings out of public eyes and ears” (2009, p. 5). He continued that “for Aristotle true dyadic friendships also involve *mutual well-wishing*, which includes reciprocated concern and actions to benefit each friend. They jointly experience the gratifications of their friendship” (p. 5). It would be difficult to find anyone who would argue that friends do not improve our lives in general, even if a pair of friends are doing bad acts.

Staging friendship as a communicative phenomenon also offers the possibility for exploring the epistemic, ontological, and metaphysical confirmation of being that can reside only between two people. Branden (1993) explains that through friendship, there emerges a “psychological visibility” that is a “metaphysical experience” (p. 66) and helps separate friendship from kinship and romantic ties, in the sense that friendship as emerging communicatively and maintained through communication places it in a different tier. Kinship and romantic relationships have biological underpinnings. C. S. Lewis (1960) wrote that true friendship is difficult to come by. He explains, “Friendship is—in a sense not at all derogatory to it—the least *natural* of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary” (p. 88). Thomas (1993) explained that there are also communicative differences between friendships and parent-child relationships in addition to the biological elements. They are related to the “manifestation of choice,” there is no authority of one over the other, and an “enormous bond of trust” (p. 49).

Aristotle (2003) discussed the nature of relationships like husband and wife and son and father—he said that they are different because the “work” is different. He wrote, “because the work, and therefore the excellence, of each of these is different, and different therefore are the causes of their feeling Friendship” (1171a). All relationships require communicative work, but for friendship, the relationship is produced and maintained solely through communication.

Another central notion related to communicative work and friendship is tied to *sharing with*. Soraker (2012) wrote, “If we break the somewhat abstract notion of friendship into constitutive elements, one clear indication of the value of friendships comes from the value of having someone to share with” (p. 215). The idea of *sharing with* is a central theme within this book. The sharing of time, space, place, experiences, thoughts, conversations, feelings, etc. will all be explored. For Soraker, sharing with is grounded in communication. Soraker wrote, “research indicates that one of the most significant determinants of well-being lies in the ability to share one’s positive and negative experiences with

others” (p. 215). Liu (2010) advocated from an Aristotelian perspective to show that *shared activity* is a necessary component of friendship and “this activity has a phenomenal character perhaps more akin to sense perception than to intellectual apprehension” (p. 585). Munn (2012), too, interpreted shared activity as central to Aristotle’s conceptualization of friendship. This shared activity will be developed throughout this work. *Shared activity* is a *sharing with*, particularly grounded in the communicative world.

In addition to the *sharing with* component of friendship, another important communicative element of most interpretations of friendship is *for the sake of*. Cooper (1980) wrote, “To wish for someone else’s good for his sake entails (perhaps means) wishing for his good *not* as a means to one’s own (or anyone else’s) good” (p. 310). Munn (2012) wrote, “mutual caring is the idea that each friend cares for the other and does so for the sake of the other, not themselves” (p. 2). We act not because it is reciprocal, nor for the sake of the friendship, but for the friend in their particularity.

Friendship as a communicative phenomenon opens the door for rhetorical and communication ethics approaches, adding narrative as another element of communicative work in friendships. Narratives play significant roles in developing our character. For various reasons, storytelling between friends is a key component in shaping who we are as persons. Rawlins (1992) wrote that “in telling each other our stories, friends co-construct the ongoing personal and social significance of our endeavors, setbacks, accomplishments, and hopes” (p. 47) and this, too, connects with the *sharing with*. Friendship as the highest virtue, and the path to all other virtues, is also manifested through the practice of communicative virtues. Sokolowski (2002) wrote:

The ability to engage in friendship, the virtue of friendship, requires that we possess the other virtues, both the individual virtues and the virtue of justice. We have to be morally good in all the other ways in order to be able to enjoy true friendship. If we are intemperate or cowardly, for example, we will find that our intemperance or cowardice will prevent us from even thinking about someone else’s good, or they may make us think wrongly about what is good for our “friend.” (p. 260)

The project ahead embraces the tradition of the unity of contraries. It explores the various ways in which specific parts give rise to revelations of the whole related to friendship.

Chapter Overviews

Encounter: Persons and the Origins of Friendship

Chapter 1 begins from the point this introduction ends, examining friendship as *a communicative phenomenon between persons that is created, sustained, managed, produced, and reproduced via various forms of communicative work in which the persons do*

good things for and with the other. All human relations begin with meeting. Alfred Schutz, Austrian phenomenologist, places intersubjectivity at the center of all social relations. Numerous scholars have worked with and from Schutz's work, particularly drawing attention to the importance of his work in understanding communicative action. The chapter also utilizes the work of Polish philosopher Joseph Tischner in humanizing the phenomenological arguments grounding encounter. At the end of the chapter, I briefly bring to the forefront the work of two contemporary scholars that use Schutz's work—Bakardjieva and Zhao.

We take for granted that others exist and that they exist in the way that we exist. We also take for granted that their bodies exist. Our world is peopled. When we encounter the bodies of others in our world, they are given to us in their *originary presence*. However, their consciousness is not presented but appresented. In the paradigmatic communicative setting, one's spatial presence is used as a source for entering or penetrating their subjective experience as well as their givenness in speech. *Encounter is the communicative phenomenon in which persons enter into a communicative common environment.* As such, it is not dependent on the face-to-face setting and can occur via technology.

Particularity and Personhood: Humanizing the Friend through Voice

Chapter 2 explores the tension between encounter and particularity. We have the potential to encounter hundreds if not thousands of others on any given day. Friendship emerges from a tension that arises between encounter and *particularity*. Particularity is *the reciprocal recognition of the other's unique consciousness (interiority) through voice within a context of belief.* Voice, in the context of this project, is *the expression of one's interiority.*

The chapter will begin by drawing from Schutz and discussing how we come to know both things and persons. It merges into a discussion of Ong's work on voice and human consciousness to help bridge a communicative gap in Schutz's work. This chapter draws from the work of Walter Ong to place the recognition of particularity in the communicative realm and as essential for friendship. Corey Anton proposes a triadic structure of intentionality, and using this, the conclusion is drawn that particularity arises when we mundanely dwell in the voice of our friends, in their givenness. Particularity, also, is not dependent on the face-to-face setting and can occur via technology. I advance the idea that friendship formation requires an intentional directedness at a particular interiority that must occur for friendship to form and be expressed through language. It concludes with an examination of the implications of technology on the development of particularity.

Dialogue and Digitization: The Language of Friendship

Dialogue and digitization and their role in friendship are the topics Chapter 3 explores. In the last decade of his life, Walter J. Ong explored the nature of hermeneutics in a digital world. Throughout his career, he was concerned with

depersonalization. Ong's work was influenced by Martin Buber's philosophy. While there is no explicit connection between Alfred Schutz and Buber, there are some basic tenets of their work that may arise from their Jewish upbringing. The voices of all three philosophers unite to inform this chapter, specifically to show that the other in friendship emerges as a result of a unity of contraries, specifically between dialogue and digitization.

Through the work of Ong and Ihde, I argue that our experience of others at the existential level has been radically altered due to communicative technologies (Petricini, 2019). We experience others through hermeneutic filters, limited by our interpretive abilities. Human thought is binary and "breaks down" the other. Language is hermeneutic and dialogue is the "building up" of the other. Dialogue is imperative for friendships in that it is the practice from which particularity arises, and that it is necessary for the co-creation of meaning of the friendship itself. In our digital age, the presence of the other can be hermeneutic and as such, mediated communication is more conducive to depersonalization than spoken. While mediated communication creates more challenges, it does not make friendship impossible.

Time and Space: Altered Dimensions of Friendship

The next chapter begins with Giddens' argument that social systems have been extended in time and space. For most of human history, friendships were limited to those with whom we were in close proximity. As communication technologies have evolved, our perceptions and experience of time and space have changed. Friendship is connected to time in two ways. Friends must share the same historical moment. Second, friendship is extended duration, perceived as continuous duration although experienced as fragmented and discrete.

Zhao's work specifically advocated for extending Schutz's notion of presence to compensate for changes in technology, arguing that presence can be achieved via technology in various ways and exploring the way in which temporal and spatial immediacy is altered via cyberspace. Zhao proposed that "in the online world mutual knowledge is derived from the biographic narrative people supply about themselves that describe who they are and what they have been through" (2004, p. 147). This content then supplies the stock of knowledge necessary to achieve the sense of presence in which we are "growing older together" with others in the normal face-to-face setting.

Traditionally, friendship has been linked to space, although research indicates that lack of shared space is not a barrier. Through the social dimensions of time and space, intimacy surfaces. Intimacy depends on communicative choices. Specifically, the choice to communicate, to communicate with *you*, of how to communicate, and to communicate in a way that is unique to our friendship. The chapter will differentiate between physical and phenomenological distance at the end and the implications for intimacy.

Sunaisthesis: The Synecdochal Activity of Friendship

The final unity of contraries to be examined—sunaisthesis—will be discussed. It is the activity in which two friends become a “we.” To explore how this affects us, the chapter begins by building the case that our response to friendship loss suggests that friendship is more than just two individuals existing side by side. It explores the effects of technology on friendship dissolution, then transitions to Aristotle’s work on friendship. Sunaisthesis is central to Aristotle’s work on friendship; therefore, it is the center of all of his political philosophy. April Flakne argues that the translations of Aristotle’s term were inaccurate. Interpreting both *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, she argued that the term derived from *suzen* (the shared life) and *aesthesis* (perception). Sunaisthesis is *living, perceiving, and doing together*.

Chapter 6—Conclusion: A Virtue Ethics Approach

Friendship is a requirement for the good life. Teleological and deontological frameworks are not as well suited for the task of examining the effect of technological practices on our friendships as virtue ethics and communication ethics approaches. An attentiveness to historicity, the particulars, and the communicative practices that inform the goods of friendship are explored. Each chapter theme has a related discussion and conclusion related to the overall notion of virtue ethics.

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1 The Phenomenology of Encounter and its Relationship to Friendship

All human encounter is communicative. Even if we never exchange words with another person, due to the intersubjective nature of our lifeworld, all encounter presupposes a communicative world. To be human is *to be* with other humans. Therefore, a relevant starting point for our investigation into the communicative phenomenon of friendship is at the beginning of all human relationships, encounter. As a starting point to all human relationships, however fleeting, encounter is essential for friendship. An awareness of the existence of the other is the foundational starting point. This awareness is brought into being through communicative work and performance. This chapter will draw heavily from the work of Alfred Schutz, who inspired a plethora of works on human relationships. Through these works, I will show that corporeal presence is not required in today's world for encounter, and so, as the fundamental step to friendship formation at the phenomenological level, encounter is our first step in all human relations and not only can, but does occur in many various mediated settings in today's world.

In this chapter, we begin by examining the nature of all human relationships with an overview of the phenomenology of Schutz. Tischner's philosophy is then visited to supplement the work of Schutz. The foundation of human encounter as natural, ever-present, and mundane is built and followed by implications for our new technological realm. Two modern Schutzian philosophers are engaged—Bakardjieva and Zhao—to discuss how Schutz's phenomenology of relationships can be extended to incorporate our new media. In the first section, we will begin by highlighting the elements of simple meeting.

Encounter and Relationships

All human relationships start somewhere. They start with a simple meeting. From the most ephemeral social relationships to the deepest personal intimacies, all relationships require two people somehow coming together. If you were to look up the definition of encounter, you would find several different meanings. Merriam-Webster posted that the term encounter comes from the Middle English term *encountren*. Early usage of this term in the fourteenth century had negative connotations, as in a meeting with an enemy. It is

believed that the Middle English term was developed from the Latin *incontra*. The prefix *in* in combination with *contra* (Latin for against) certainly supports an interpretation of the term in which we might find ourselves in a meeting with someone or something *against* ourselves. An alternative interpretation that supports the context of this work would imagine the definition of finding ourselves in an unexpected meeting with another unique person, as *apart from* our self.

While encounter is the foundation for all human relationships, this book is specifically about friendship. There are plenty of works that examine romantic relationships, family relationships, and professional relationships. There are even more recent works that examine brief ephemeral encounters, which also have significant value to human flourishing. Not all encounters need to develop into more complex relationships and, in fact, encounter in and of itself, without any deeper relational development, has its own benefits. Gillian Sandstrom's research investigates interactions with strangers. She explained that there is a tendency to focus on interactions between family and friends while ignoring the weak ties and interactions we have with others. Her 2014 study concluded that the social and emotional well-being of individuals is related to the interactions that we have with individuals we do not know well and strangers. Similarly, in their work on social networks, Christakis and Fowler (2009) also found that weak ties have surprising influence in our lives and in the process of information gathering. Our lives are richer when we have positive encounters with others we do not know well, or at all.

In the introduction, the focus was on the positive effects of friendships in our lives and the task now is to explore encounter in the context of friendship. While many scholars have provided helpful frameworks to examine friendship, two scholars in particular are helpful in illuminating the connections between encounter, friendship, and technology. In the next section, I will explore the phenomenology of encounter and the implications for friendship.

Phenomenology of Encounter

In the introductory chapter I noted why a phenomenological approach is helpful and useful, particularly through the lens of philosophy of communication. Diving through the phenomenological accounts of encounter opens the door to understanding how encounter can be viewed as a communicative phenomenon and will help situate a larger understanding of friendship and technology. Walter J. Ong, a seminal media ecologist to be discussed in more detail in later chapters, in the collection of essays titled *In the Human Grain*, wrote "human encounter takes on a new importance because of its starkness. Outside nature, all men are alone—but they are all alone together" (1967, p. 133). This statement captures the existential loneliness endemic to human beings, and it captures the value in all human encounter—visibility and the recognition of existence. For Ong, our era was considered "the age of man's encounter with man" (p. 136), and we can now encounter others with such

regularity that it is almost absurd to think of a time in human history in which we were not constantly exposed to otherness.

Several contemporary scholars are working through Schutz to investigate pressing inquiries in today's world. Grinnell (1983) showed that Schutz, through his systematic analysis of social relations "arrived at the originating point involving intersubjectivity" (p. 185), and this chapter will follow that tradition. Carrington (1979) pointed out, through Schutz, that all social relations are essentially based on the possibility of communication. Barber (2018) noted that Schutz's work influenced formative scholars in multiple disciplines. Sociologist John O'Neill's work on the lived body experience drew from Schutz (O'Neill, 1974). Schutz was a close friend of the phenomenologist Aron Gurwitsch, bonded by their intellectual inquiries and refuge from World War II (Grathoff, 1989). Lester Embree, a phenomenologist and student of Gurwitsch, has published numerous works about and influenced by Schutz (Embree, 1988; 2013; 2015; Embree & Barber, 2017). Schutz was extremely influential for the work of sociologist Harold Garfinkel, father of ethnomethodology and his student Peter Berger (Psathas, 2004). Berger would go on to work with Luckmann, another student of Schutz, to write *The Social Construction of Reality* (1996). Natanson's phenomenological and philosophical works were also influenced by his teacher, Schutz (Natanson, 1986).

Knoblauch, specifically, has opened Schutz's work to the world of communication studies (2001; 2013). Phenomenologists have typically neglected Schutz's work on communication (Knoblauch, 2013). Bakardjieva (2005; 2014) has worked through Schutz to advance an understanding of social relationships and friendships in the internet age. Zhao is a major Schutz scholar who has expanded Schutz's works and advanced his theories in our modern digital age related to time, space, and knowledge in social relationships (2004; 2015; 2006; 2005; 2007; Zhao & Elesh, 2008). Informed by the above secondary literature, this chapter also draws from Schutz's major works. *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, originally published in 1932, is Schutz's first major work. It also draws from all four volumes of *Collected Papers*.

In addition to the work of Schutz, there is a small but fascinating thread of scholarship into the phenomenon of encounter that follows the work of Josef Tischner. De Calmels wrote that Tischner was a Polish philosopher and Catholic Priest who was quite taken with Husserl's work through the works of Roman Ingarden. Tischner begins with the notion of primary experience, somewhat like Schutz's originary experience, as we will soon see. De Calmels writes "to have a primary experience of another human being is to have an encounter, and [Tischner] proposes recasting Husserl's old catchphrase 'back to the things themselves' into 'back to other human beings'" (2017, p. 4). Workowski (2011) explained that Tischner was influenced by major Jewish philosophers including Levinas, Rosenzweig, and Eckhart. Tischner's work in the phenomenology and philosophical scholarship of our times has, unfortunately, been completely overlooked. His voice textures and complements other prominent philosophers like Schutz. This chapter draws from two of

Tischner's primary works, *The Phenomenology of Encounter* and *The Offroads of Encounter*, which were published along with several essays related to his work in an issue of *Thinking in Values* (2011).

Schutz and Intersubjectivity

To show how all encounter is communicative, the starting point will be with tracing the phenomenological underpinnings proposed by Schutz. Schutz began his explanation of our basic human experience grounded in Husserl's claim that we, in our material bodies, are the center of all inquiries into consciousness. We cannot remove thought from the physical person who experiences thought. Schutz explained that "the personal self rather than the thought has to be treated as the immediate datum" (1970a, p. 57). This personal self, then, does not doubt, in its everyday life, its existence nor the existence of the surrounding world. Schutz writes that we "accept as unquestionable the world of facts which surrounds us as existent out there" (1970a, p. 58). This is the natural attitude. The world in which we operate on an everyday basis, the world in which we plod through life without pause to question or doubt the existence of self and others, is our everyday lifeworld. We may choose to suspend our belief in these existences for a moment, also known as "bracketing," but in doing so we cease to be flowing in the usual stream of our consciousness of the natural attitude. All of our relations with other human beings begin with this starting point of the natural attitude of everyday existence. Other people exist, out there in our everyday world.

If an individual suspends his or her belief in existence, and stops to reflect on existence itself, the regular natural stream of going about the day, the natural attitude, then ceases. Instead, we are not *being* in the same way that we were prior to suspending our belief in existence. The natural attitude is marked by a particular lack of attentiveness to possibilities of realities, in order to live with others. Schutz (1970a) wrote, "*Attention a la vie*, attention to life, is, therefore, the basic regulative principle of our conscious life" (p. 68). Particularly, Schutz argued that there is a "plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements" and he called this "*wide-awakeness*" (Schutz, 1970a, p. 69). He wrote that "only the performing and especially the working self is fully interested in life and, hence, wide-awake" (p. 69). For Schutz, to be able to live fully requires us to be inattentive to the possibility that life is not real, and in our everyday being we are able to live fully—that is, we are wide-awake.

When Schutz argued that our taken-for-grantedness of the existence of others is part of our everyday existence, this is essential for our understanding of his project. Our world is naturally intersubjective. He wrote, "If we retain the natural attitude as men among other men, the existence of others is no more questionable to us than the existence of an outer world" (1970a, p. 163). He added, "the world of my daily life is by no means my private world but is from the outset an intersubjective one, shared with my fellow men, experienced and interpreted by others; in brief, it is a world common to all of us" (p. 163).

Gurwitsch, in the introduction to *Collected Papers III*, wrote, “We do not, each one of us, experience the life-world as a private world; on the contrary, we take it for a public world, common to all of us, that is, for an intersubjective world” (1970a). Natanson wrote in the introduction to *Collected Papers I* (Schutz, 1973) that “‘the common-sense world,’ ‘world of daily life,’ ‘everyday world’ are variant expressions for the intersubjective world experienced by man within what Husserl terms the ‘natural attitude’” (p. xxvii). This is not only the center of our investigation of friendship, but this is the center for all social action. Natanson wrote that within the natural attitude, all persons make sense of their worlds, themselves, and others (Schutz, 1973). We live in a peopled-world, and in this peopled-world, even our friendships are often without question. In addition to taking our world for granted, we also take it for granted that the others we take for granted also take their worlds for granted. Gurwitsch called this reciprocity of taken-for-grantedness a “thoroughgoing reciprocity” and explained that this was the reason we “can act and work” with others at all (Schutz, 1970a, p. xiii). This acting and working with others includes communicative action and work. Encounter, too, is taken for granted.

Tischner and Horizon

It is taken for granted that individuals will encounter others in the everyday lifeworld. It is a part of natural human being. In fact, to not encounter anyone at all for days on end would be quite lonely and odd and not part of the everyday human experience. As this text is being edited, it is now one year into the beginning of the Covid crisis and one of the major themes present in most conversations about Covid is loneliness. Encounters are events. De Calmels argues that an encounter “is an event” in which “the experience of another can reach the highest point of intuition” (p. 8). Specifically, the encounter of the other entails the revelation of the other’s experience to us.

Tischner provides an excellent entry to understanding how encounter is an everyday event in which the other’s existence is revealed to us. Earlier, drawing from Schutz, I noted that in our everyday world we exist with others. Being-with-each-other is a natural occurrence. For Tischner, De Calmels wrote that “the encounter marks a breach in the space of being with another, but the encounter appears not as an opening to be fought, on the contrary it appears as a possibility to start anew” (p. 8). Continuing on, De Calmels wrote that “the encountered other is transcendent, existing radically beyond me. In the encounter the face becomes perceiver, and it is given to us within a particular horizon which illuminates and lets us see the face” (p. 8). As mentioned earlier, the encounter is the only way in which it becomes possible to experience the essence of human being—being with others. It is in the moment of encounter in which we are able to experience alterity.

Tellenbach (1991) noted the primacy of encounter. He emphasized that “encounter is a prominent form of connection” (p. 249). He wrote, “From the

man-sided phenomenon ‘encounter’ we are referring to the more primal phenomenon ‘connection’” (p. 249). There are two simple types of connection according to this train of thought. Tellenbach explained that one is “functionally founded” and the other is “functionally unfounded” (p. 249). The difference between the two is related to reciprocity—one type of connection is dependent on reciprocity and the other independent of reciprocity. A leaf can be connected to a tree. It can be there as a result of the leaf growing on the tree, or perhaps it fell from a different tree and landed on a branch and became frozen or stuck in sap on the tree where it now is connected. In both, there is a connection but only in one does the leaf serve the tree. Tellenbach wrote of a reciprocally dependent connection that “it exists from the very nature of the relation” (p. 249). While this is a connection, Tellenbach explained that the reciprocity of encounter that exists between two human beings has unique characteristics. He wrote:

for the relation of something to something else, for all the reciprocity of being related, is not essentially a “relationship.” We only find a relationship when one *person* stands in relation to another *person*. Relationship is always a *relating-of-oneself-to-another*. The one and the other are always essentially *persons*. (p. 249)

Encounter is inherently relational, and in the very essence of the nature of the Latin roots of the word that were discussed previously, we see that encounter is an event in which we come into stark awareness of the other both as like and apart from us.

Reciprocity in this sense does not, however, mean that the other even notices us or our existence. We can encounter another human being without them realizing we are there. Tellenbach wrote that “encounter is an essential, that is, real fulfillment of the relationship of one person to another” (p. 249). Here, this really ties in the notion of intersubjectivity. All encounter is reciprocal in the way in which it is contextually dependent on other beings. When we say that we encounter others as part of our everyday existence and that we take them for granted, it is important to note that human beings are more than mere objects or things in our everyday lives. Tischner noted that in encounter there is no objectification nor is there personalization. He wrote:

As a result of the encounter, I learn that the other is not “being-for-me,” and that I am not a “being-for-him”; we are free; the *fare* resists possession. But nor are we “beings-in-themselves,” like the Leibnizian monads without windows. We are open onto each other. We encounter, we long for encounters, we carry memories of encounters with us. (2011a, p. 62)

In the space between being-for-others and being “in-ourselves,” Tischner explained, we instead can “be through-each-other” (p. 62). We are unable to

even be without being through-each-other because the very nature of human life is such that being is only being-through-others. Above, we discussed the role of reciprocity and relation. Now, we will move on to an important consideration in encounter—repetition.

The Role of Knowing and Repetition

Repeated encounters inform our stock of knowledge in such a way that we can say that we might “know” another person. Encounters involve various layers of knowing, but not necessarily a particular knowing.

Schutz (1976) wrote:

In the pure We-relation I apprehend only the existence of a fellow-man and the fact that he is confronting me. For a concrete social relation to become established, however, I must also know how he is oriented to me. In face-to-face situations I gain knowledge of this specific aspect of my partner’s conscious life by observing the concrete manifestation of his subjective experiences in the common stream of the We-relation. (p. 27)

The pure We-relation noted above does not at all require any reciprocal recognition of the other confronting me. While we may not know the particularity of the person we are encountering, we certainly know *about* them enough to recognize the *like* and *against* of the other that confronts us. Maines (1989) argued that there has been a “transformation of modal ways of knowing others based on the social organization of information” (p. 195). He pointed out that there are two ways of knowing others—categorical and personal knowing, and showed how friendships involve both types. Maines showed that “in small preindustrial communities, continual copresence without personal knowing was for all practical purposes impossible” (p. 196). In today’s world, it is possible to have repeated encounters with another person and yet never “know” the other person. “Knowing” someone takes us beyond encounter, into the next chapter.

Our knowledge is ever-changing, dependent on our interactions and experiences and social transformations. Schutz writes “it must be emphasized that the stock of knowledge is in a continual flux,” and “it is clear that any supervening experience enlarges and enriches it” (1976, p. 75). Most of our knowledge is derived socially via language and all of our knowledge serves as a map from which we navigate our world. There is a difference between *knowledge of*, *knowledge about*, and *knowing* when referencing the other. Knowledge *of* implies our basic awareness of another’s possible existence. I can know of a person whom I have never met, or I can know about them, yet I may not know them. When I have *knowledge of* I have a mediated awareness of their existence. For example, I might know of my best friend’s friend but not know

about them or know them. I might encounter them on Facebook even as a suggested friend. Knowledge *about* implies more certainty about the existence of another person. If someone says “I know about them,” they might mean “I have basic demographic facts about them” or even “I’ve heard stories and can predict what they will do, but have never shared a communicative environment with them.” Again, I may encounter this person via a friend suggestion for my best friend’s friend, whom I know quite a lot about through my best friend.

In each of the above, I have taken a Thou-orientation. Failure to share a communicative environment will not open a We-relation. Knowledge *about* assumes knowledge *of*, but having knowledge *about* another does not imply that I can understand them. Ultimately, being able to say we “know” someone means that we have some degree of accuracy related to our ability to anticipate their “in-order-to” motives. Schutz (1976) wrote, “Above all, I cannot understand other people’s acts without knowing the in-order-to or the because motives of such acts” (p. 12) and for this knowing of our friends, specifically, a sense of history within their life is required that transcends encounter.

Even if we have a good ability to anticipate someone’s motives, it does not necessarily mean that we are friendly with them. Schutz explained that there are multiple layers of understanding. All of our understanding of others is understood from our “own lived experience” (p. 175). What complicates this more is the idea that human beings communicate with and without intent. To have a degree of accuracy, and for friendship to develop, we need to have *repeat encounters*. That is, encounters need to continue through time, and occur more than once. We cannot, for example, be friends with someone in the future. In addition, there has to be a degree of reciprocity of recognition—we need to encounter them and they need to encounter us. Our knowledge informs our way of navigating our world, the objects within that world, and the people embedded in the world. Our knowledge also informs our expectations of our friends.

With this in mind, no matter how we encounter others, we draw from our stock of knowledge to understand who they are and how they are. Whether it might be the bus driver with whom we exchange a polite, “How are you,” or an online troll, we anticipate generalized patterns of communicating as well as expectations about who they are.

Technology, Corporeality, and Encounter

In the above section, the goal was to lay the framework for encounter as an opening—a shared communicative environment. In order to understand why physical presence is no longer necessary for encountering the other’s presence, the next section will overview the work of Schutz and Tischner and their work on bodily presence and encounter.

Schutz and Originary Presence

Above, it was noted that we take for granted the existence of others as well as the fact that we will even encounter others regularly. Related, another part of our natural attitude is the taken-for-grantedness of the actual *bodies* of the other, and there is a particular relevance here to the inquiry into the ways in which technology has affected friendship. At the time of Schutz's work, and later in the extensions of his work with Luckmann, the media that shaped their phenomenological theories were radically different from today. Then, the primary way that one encountered another in the routine of everyday life was in their physical presence. All relationships were bound by space for most of human history. So although Schutz often seems to have given primacy to the face-to-face situation, as we will see, his emphasis was truly on the communication that occurs between two people rather than their physical existence.

In 1973, Schutz and Luckmann highlighted the nature of nonverbal expressions in the communicative process. Nonverbal expressions are culturally dependent and require us to draw from our learned experience of the meaning of such expressions to interpret meaning. The stores of meaning we hold in our memory Schutz called our *stock of knowledge*. When we are in the presence of another person, we assign meaning outside the realm of their intentional expression in nonverbal gestures by interpreting it grounded in our *stock of knowledge*. This is a reciprocal process. He wrote, "simultaneous with *my* lived experience of you, there is *your* lived experience which belongs to you and is part of your stream of consciousness" (p. 169), and you have your lived experience of *me*. He wrote,

All interpretation of this world is based upon a stock of previous experiences of it, our own experiences and those handed down to us by our parents and teachers, which in the form of "knowledge at hand" function as a scheme of reference. (1970b, p. 72)

All of our experience is embedded in a larger historical context which shapes what it means for us to know.

Our histories and ways of knowing, while shared and developed in relation to others, are still unique to us. Schutz (1970a; 1970b) used Husserl's notion of *originary presence* as a starting point. Other human beings are both bodies in space and subjective, experiencing beings. They are both things and persons, or in Buber's terms, *Thous and Its*. While the body of another person is presented to us in *originary presence*, their subjective experience is impossible to apprehend from the outside. Understanding *things* is quite different from understanding *persons*. Schutz (1973) noted that in the world of things, grounded in Husserl, "the 'Other' also appears as a corporeality, but as a corporeality which I apprehend as a body, and indeed as a body of *another* by a process of apprehensive pairing" (p. 125). Schutz, though, departs from Husserl when he places the way that we understand and experience others as part of our everyday

natural attitude. He explained that we come into understanding others by drawing from our stock of knowledge, which is derived from interacting with others.

Schutz wrote, “their psychological life is not given to me in originary presence, merely in co-presence, it is not *presented* but *appresented*” (1970a, p. 25). In the paradigmatic communicative setting, that is, the face-to-face, one’s spatial presence is used as a source for entering or penetrating into their subjective experience. Until this is confirmed though, through speech, we cannot be certain that our interpretations of those specific expressions are correct. We can never be ultimately certain that our interpretation is correct. The interpretive process relies on our stock of knowledge, grounded in our language system that has been learned. Even when we encounter others within their spatial existence, meaning their physical bodily presence in a face-to-face situation, the body in space is in some ways irrelevant—the focus is on communication. Language, specifically, is the system of making meaning of our entire lifeworld, not only our own world but the world we share with others and all cultural objects. Schutz, working from Husserl, wrote:

A book is an outer object, a material thing. I see it as it appears to me, here on my desk, to my right, etc.; but reading it, I am not directed toward it as an outer object but toward the meaning of what is written therein: I “live in its meaning” by comprehending it. The same holds good for a tool, a house, a theater, a temple, a machine. The spiritual meaning of all these objects is appresentationally apperceived as being founded upon the actually appearing object which is not apprehended as such but as expressing its meaning. And if we listen to somebody, we do not experience the meaning of what he says as something connected with the words in an external way, we take the words apprehensively as expressing their meaning, and we live in their meaning by comprehending what the Other means and the thought he expresses. (1973, p. 314)

Our bodily presence is not required for the making of mutual meaning and all meeting is the co-production of meaning in some way.

When I said above that the body is irrelevant, I want to be particularly careful and mindful of the work of my admirable colleagues on the lived-body experience, especially that of minorities. Their bodily presence is not irrelevant. The focus, in the situations of hate speech, prejudice, and discrimination based on the physical characteristics of particular people, is on incorrect and problematic assumptions on the *meaning* of their characteristics. For most of human history, the response has been to depersonalize and dehumanize differences, and this has even fueled rhetoric that surrounds encounter as a hostile event. Encounter, as noted before, is inherently humanizing. We encounter the other, both like and different from us.

Schutz stated that with “mutual understanding and consent a *communicative common environment is thus established*” and he added that within this

communicative common environment, the subjects “reciprocally motivate one another in their mental activities” (1973, p. 315). Schutz wrote, “It is, moreover, supposed that the mutual appresentational comprehension of events in the Other’s mind leads immediately to communication” (p. 315). He continues that “for each partner, the other’s body, his gestures, his gait, and facial expressions, are immediately observable, not merely as things or events of the outer world but in their physiognomical significance, that is, as symptoms of the other’s thoughts” (p. 16). In this explanation, Schutz is drawing the significance of bodily presence. His point about being able to ascertain the symptoms of thought is important, but it is not the role of the body that deserves primacy here, but instead, the role of communication.

It is important to pause here to make clear that encounter does not require at all a recognition of the unique individual with whom we share the communicative event. In our everyday interactions, we may meet the mailperson, the bus driver, the teacher—and while we interact with them and are able to understand them and comprehend them, there is no necessity at all to recognize them as unique beings. Schutz (1976) outlined the specific way in which we encounter others in a face-to-face situation. He explained that, first, “I must consciously pay attention to a fellow-man, to a human being confronting me in person” (p. 24). This, specifically, he called an “awareness”—a “*Thou-orientation*” (p. 24). He wrote:

The *Thou-orientation* is the pure mode in which I am aware of another human being as a person. I am already *Thou-oriented* from the moment that I recognize an entity which I directly experience as a fellow man (as a *Thou*), attributing life and consciousness to him. (1970a, p. 185)

The face-to-face situation, Schutz explained, takes for granted the *Thou-orientation* (1976). Each and every time we communicate, doing so requires a belief in the other as “an entity which I directly experience as a fellow man” (1970a, p. 185). If we did not believe them to be a fellow being capable of comprehending us, we would not reach out communicatively for a response in the first place. This is an encounter. Encounters are moments in which we reach out communicatively to others. If we revisit Schutz’s discussion on attention, remember that to be in “an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements” means to be *wide-awake* (1970a, p. 69) and that “only the performing and especially the working self is ... wide-awake” (p. 69). Encounter emerges through performing and working among others, specifically, communicative work. It does not require a face-to-face situation. While a face-to-face situation presupposes this situation, through language I can confirm that the other whom I encounter in a mediated setting is human (at least for now, in our age, where no meaningful artificial intelligence has been known to pass the Turing Test).

Tischner and Face as Horizon

De Calmels explained that “an encounter is to be ‘face to face’ with someone” and added that “it enables us to gain an intuition of another human being’s fate, which reveals a truth about the other” (2017, p. 4). By face to face, often in this field we are describing an “in-person” scenario, in which we share the same geographical space. However, De Calmels noted this is not exactly what Tischner had in mind. De Calmels wrote that Tischner

applies a phenomenological method proposed like a plan: first, a discussion about the essence of the encounter; next, a description of the face by comparing it to a veil and a mask; and finally the challenges of seeing or reading the face. (p. 4)

Face is metaphorical, not physical. Tischner’s account of face provides for a communication ethics framework that extends Schutz’s notion above and can illuminate a path for encounter occurring “face to face” in a mediated sense.

Face for Tischner is delivered in the encounter, and it is not a physical, tangible thing but instead a horizon that demands an ethical response. This might ring true with readers familiar with Levinas and it should—Levinas influenced Tischner a great deal. De Calmels explained that encounter is horizon and has horizon. She explained, “in consequence, the horizon of encounter is a horizon for encountering another and also oneself,” then added, “this horizon shows projected possibilities and opens up new ones. It is the occasion to encounter oneself in a new way” (2017, p. 8). In this sense, encounter is always revelatory. It reveals a horizon of experiential alterity and sameness.

Tischner called this horizon in encounter agathological. While the contraries of alterity and sameness have been noted above, Tischner also imagined the horizon as spanning good and evil. He explained that encounter is “an opening up of the agathological horizon of interpersonal experience” (2011a, p. 44). He added that

the agathological horizon is where all the manifestations of the other and of myself are ruled by a certain logos—the logos of good and evil, of what is better and what is worse, or rises and falls, victory and defeat. (2011a, p. 44)

Drawing from Levinas, Tischner showed that “the true horizon of the encounter is the ethical horizon” (2011a, p. 48). However, he noted that encounter is not a situation in which one can plan in advance the good and the right thing to do. He wrote, “In encountering another, I do not yet know what I should or should not do, I do not know if I *should* do anything, or if there is anything that *can* be done” (2011a, p. 48). In encounter, without the particularity of the other, to attend to a communication ethics approach means

to recognize that we must wait for the call grounded in the recognition of particularity, which is beyond the horizon of encounter.

Embedded in each encounter is a consideration of arete—we might ask, what is excellence in encounter? Tischner translated arete not as “virtue” or excellence of virtue. He wrote that arete “is not a virtue among virtues, but rather the basis of virtue. This basis does not disappear where specific virtues reside, but permeates each one of them. Arete is the condition of any virtue being possible” (2011b, p. 67). Arete, specifically, “generates face” (p. 67). He explained that “as the face is the external appearance of man’s truth ... the face is born and revealed through a special function of self-aware freedom, which we will call the aretetic function which constitutes the face” (p. 67). We need to be cautious here in imagining “external appearance” in the visual field. Face is the revelation of otherness and self, and it is external in the sense that this revelation comes through the other. Tischner wrote that

[arete] is a condition that is both dynamic and that lends dynamism. It is a sensitivity to the agathological horizon of a human being, but also a dynamic readiness to actively respond to the axiological. It is valor in the deepest sense of the world. “Valor” suggests a participation in what can be gained by a victory. A victory is the fulfillment of a task, a responsibility, a service. (p. 67)

Tischner argued that arete has a telic function in encounter. Because arete is how face is generated, the telic nature of arete becomes evident in the presupposition of otherness that is foundational to encounter. He wrote, “Constitution presupposes choosing. Where there is no choice, there is no face” (p. 68).

Who We Encounter: Contemporaries and Consociates

For Schutz, the face to face is the paradigmatic form of all communication. Natanson, in the introduction to Schutz’s *Collected Papers I*, explained that this situation is “fundamental” for all of our social relations (1973, p. xxxiii). Schutz used spatial and temporal terms to make sense of how we form relationships with others. Contemporaries are individuals who are not face to face with us, but they do share the same historical moment. Consociates are individuals with whom I share a “community of space” according to Schutz. Natanson explained, “Consociates are involved in an on-going temporal flow, bounded by common spatial limits” (p. xxxiii). By nature, we also share a community of time with anyone with whom we are within a spatial community.

When we make reference to others in our language, we do so by using the terms “us,” and “we,” “them,” “him,” “her,” etc. In fact, research on semantic primitives has recognized that there is a word for “I” and “someone” in every language (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014). The recognition of the self and other is universal. One of Schutz’s major contributions to phenomenology was to

map the way in which our language expresses the way in which we actually live in and experience our world. He explains that we experience the world as “built around my place” in the world. We refer always to our place in the world. He then noted that our relationships with others are all grounded in our unique “place” in the world. He wrote:

Only in reference to me does a certain kind of my relations with other obtain the specific meaning which I designate with the world “We,” only with reference to “Us,” whose center I am, do others stand out as “You,” and in reference to “you,” who refer back to me, third parties stand out as “They.” (1973, p. 15)

The “we” and “us” do not exist independent of the “me” and “you,” however. We exist and can label these specific places in the world, the otherness of others and our own self, only because of our existence through others.

Contemporaries

As noted above, contemporaries are individuals with whom we share the same historical moment. Predecessors are individuals who came before us. Successors are those who will come after us. Schutz explained from the outset that we know contemporaries from past recollections. We apprehend the experience of our contemporaries, in a “They-orientation,” Schutz argues, as “anonymous processes” (1976, p. 225). We may also experience them in a “Thou-orientation,” he noted, when we apprehend their experience “within their setting in his stream of consciousness” (p. 224–5). When They-oriented, Schutz argued that we experience the other as an abstraction. Because of this, he argued that “my knowledge of my contemporaries is, therefore, inferential and discursive” (p. 225). In encounter, we lack the particulars to grasp their stream of consciousness (to be discussed in the next chapter). That is not to say we cannot recognize the other in encounter as a unique individual we are now facing. However, encounter exists in the moment in which a possible shared communicative environment has begun, not at which we have begun communicating. Conversation is the necessity for the particulars to emerge to create the Thou-orientation. It is helpful to imagine Buber’s I-It distinction here to differentiate between the They-Thou distinction in Schutz.

Mere contemporaries, Schutz explained, are “Others who are not face-to-face with me, but who co-exist with me in time” (1976, p. 37). When Schutz wrote these words, again, the most common experience with others was the face-to-face. Schutz did, however, note that our experience, even within primarily face-to-face experiences, were gradated. These gradations, he explained, were directly related to the communicative behaviors (both intentional and unintentional) that we could use to apprehend the other person. He wrote:

We may illustrate this point by considering the stages by which a fellow-man confronting me becomes a mere contemporary. Now we are still

face-to-face, saying goodbye, shaking hands; now he is walking away ... It is impossible to say at which precise moment the face-to-face situation ended and my partner became a mere contemporary of whom I have knowledge but no direct experience. (p. 37).

Schutz continued on to acknowledge that mediated communication degrades, in a way, the communicative behaviors with which we can come to understand the other. In this sense, he is not talking about lowering the value but instead related to the gradations of experience of the other. In this passage, he explained:

The gradations of directness can be also illustrated by the series ranging from a conversation face-to-face, to a conversation by phone, to an exchange of letters, to a message transmitted by a third party. Both examples show a progressive decrease in the wealth of symptoms by which I experience my partner and a progressive narrowing of the perspectives in which my partner appears to me. (p. 37)

To be able to be *with* someone, we need to be able to share this communicative environment. For Schutz, individuals that did not share a space together lacked the immediacy of communication that allowed for a comprehension of otherness. Then, it was not possible to participate in nor share time together. Schutz wrote that when the other leaves our community of space, "I know that he is in some Here and Now of his own, and I know that his Now is contemporaneous with mine, but I do not participate in it, nor do I share his Here" (p. 38). As we transition from the physical co-presence of being with the other, Schutz explained that again we experience gradations of otherness and togetherness that are grounded in our unique place. The less communicative behaviors we are able to apprehend, the lower "the degree of directness and the higher the degree of anonymity which characterizes my experience of others" (p. 41). Having shared space with someone but then being out of their immediate physical reach, though, would never return them to full anonymity. There are relationships that then emerge with others, according to Schutz, with whom we have shared space that are different from relationships with others whom we have never met.

Schutz also mapped these various contemporary relations that we could have with others. There are those which "are restorable to face-to-face situations," and "partners in the *former* We-relations of my *present* partner in a We-relation who are potentially accessible to my direct experience (your friend whom I have not met yet)" (p. 41). He wrote that there are individuals we will meet soon, those that we are aware of (both uniquely as my friend's friend I have never met or the Amazon worker who sorts the packages). He also even noted that a contemporary can even be a collective, also with various typifications. Schutz explained specifically that "mere" contemporaries are given to us:

The Other who is a mere contemporary is not given to me *directly* as a unique particular Self. I do not apprehend his Selfhood in a straightforward

and prepredicative experience. I do not even have an immediate experience of the Other's *existence*. I can only experience the Other in acts of inference by which I judge that the Other is such rather than otherwise, by imputing him certain typical attributes. *Whereas I experience the individual Thou directly in the concrete We-relation, I apprehend the contemporary only mediately, by means of typifications.* (p. 42)

To explain this, he talked about the various ways that we can encounter our contemporaries. First, he reminded us that we experience others as the same even when we are no longer in a communicative common environment with them. To show how we experience and understand this other, Schutz argued:

The act by which I apprehend the former fellow-man as a contemporary is thus a typification in the sense that I hold invariant my previously gained knowledge, although my former fellow-man has grown older in the meantime and must have necessarily gained new experiences. Of these experiences I have either no knowledge or only knowledge by inference or knowledge gained through fellow-men by indirect sources. (p. 42)

Important for our purposes especially, Schutz argued that "it is abundantly clear that all such knowledge of contemporaries points back to, and is legitimized by, an originary direct experience of a fellow-man" (p. 42). However, he did note that "I can also gain knowledge about my contemporary social world in other ways than the one just cited" (pp. 42–3). Cultural artifacts are how we do such. According to Schutz, when it comes to exactly how it is that we can encounter those no longer in our presence, that is, they share a historical moment with us but not space, he argued that we apprehend them sometimes through their tools and artifacts. We then interpret these. Schutz wrote that "such interpretations are by their very nature derivative. They consist of inferences based on and mediated by my experiences of fellow-men, either of particular fellow-men or of fellow-human beings in general" (p. 43).

One of the major differences is that in the face-to-face situation we experience a flow of consciousness simultaneously as the other experiences their flow, and we can confirm it. Thou-orientations, for Schutz, were a subset of a general They-orientations. Schutz argued that when we experience contemporaries, they appear as anonymous. For him, the We-relation could only manifest in the face-to-face. The We-relation was a double Thou-orientation, and it depended on "the immediacy of a shared vivid present" (p. 46). The reason for this, he explained, relates to the fact that we can ensure accurate and mutual understanding within shared vivid presents. When we are in the space of the "We-relation" we are able to confirm our "assumption that the way in which I experience my environment can be co-ordinated with the way in which you experience yours" (p. 55). In a They-orientation, this is not possible. One flaw with this understanding of the They-relation is that this is also not completely possible in the We-relation, to know for certain that we have

achieved an accurate interpretation. It is impossible to know exactly what goes on in the thoughts of the other. Each interpretation of the verbal expression of another requires a leap of faith that their words mean what they think. In order to be as close to accurate as possible, confirmation through words and speech, through voice, are necessary.

Consociates and Friendship

Schutz contrasted contemporaries with consociates. Consociates are those with whom we share a face-to-face relationship and “are mutually involved in one another’s biography” (1973, pp. 16–17). He continued that “they are growing older together; they live, as we may call it, in a pure We-relationship” (p. 17). As with contemporaries, we still draw on our typifications and stock of knowledge to understand the Other. We also cannot ever be certain of their complete particularity.

Schutz does not mention friendship specifically in many places, but he does mention it in several places when he discusses social relations. Friendship is part of a We-relation, and Schutz explains that we often understand particular “courses of acts as unities within larger (and more lasting) meaning-contexts” (p. 71). He argued that the “unity of” a “friendship” is “resolved in multi-faceted relations situated in social time ... which partly consists of living We-relations, partly of relations among contemporaries” (p. 71). Schutz explained that all friendships are fragmented and not continuous. We are not with our friend for all of the hours in a day. As noted in his iterations of contemporary experience, we experience our friends and then they leave. While they are in our presence, face to face, we are consociates, however. What we can conclude from this analysis is that “there are social relations that essentially can be constituted only in the immediacy of living We-relations” (p. 72). But, for friendship, Schutz does recognize something more. He wrote, “there are also chosen relations for which a certain intimacy and depth of lived experience are constitutive, for example, an amorous relation, a friendship” (p. 72).

He did not continue to explore this in more depth, but he did say, “Thus, apart from the originary structure of such social relations, the opportunities for the restorability of a living We-relation play an important role” (p. 72). The question is, “How long can one, for instance, be a father, a husband, a friend at a distance?” (p. 72). Although not explicitly referring to technology, Schutz mentioned that “Here, undoubtedly, the social transformation of time is of great importance” (p. 72). Schutz was living on the precipice of a great transformation, and his work has been extended by several scholars in the contemporary sphere.

Possibilities for Encounter in the Technological Age

Bakardjieva (2005) has utilized Schutz’s work to explore the relationship between modern media and social relationships. Technology has facilitated a

much greater circle of contemporaries. When we think about possibilities for encounter, the “number of types of contemporaries of whose existence I know in general, that is, whose existence I can infer on” is significantly larger than it has been in previous eras of human history (p. 101). In addition to extending the types of contemporaries, technology has also extended our reach. Bakardjieva recognized that we can be face to face with complete strangers, and based on Schutz’s work, it becomes difficult to sort out the difference between consociates and contemporaries and the Thou-They orientations that sway intimacy and directness.

Zhao (2004) specifically called for an update to the Schutz differentiation between the realm of consociates and contemporaries as a result of electronic technologies. Zhao labeled the new realm “consociated contemporaries.” In this passage he explained:

The use of electronic communications technologies extends human perceptual reach beyond the limits of human naked senses, resulting in the rise of a third realm—the realm of consociated contemporaries, where people interact face-to-device with each other in conditions of telecopresence. The emergence of this social domain in cyberspace reconfigures the structure of the lifeworld by providing individuals with an opportunity to establish We-relationships in a new type of shared meaning context. (p. 92)

Zhao clarified an issue in Schutz’s work related to We-relationships and intimacy. When we are face to face, in the sense of bodily presence with another individual, a mutual orientation is required as well as repeat encounters. Being face to face with another individual certainly does not lead directly to the intimacy of the We-relationship.

As communicative, encounter does not depend at all on the face-to-face situation and can occur across mediated settings. Imagining all of the possibilities for an encounter is a daunting task, if even possible. We have initial encounters in which we come into contact with the person for the first time, and we have repeated encounters, in which we have previously met the person and are encountering them again. It is undeniable that the majority of the relationships we have in today’s world are hybridized. Even spouses text message each other when apart. By defining *encounter* as *moments in which a shared communicative environment is possible*, we can account for those moments in which mutual understanding is never achieved nor desired to be achieved. We can also account for all of the various settings in which it is possible to encounter others in our modern world.

To exemplify this point, I will use Facebook. Facebook is currently the world’s largest social network with nearly 3 billion users. On Facebook, users can interact with both individuals they already have met face to face or with individuals whom they have never met in person. Facebook has been promoting their groups feature recently, encouraging users to connect with others

who have common interests. In addition to encountering others in groups, that is, having moments in which a shared communicative environment is possible, Facebook also makes suggestions to their users to “friend.” In these situations, there is a possible shared communicative environment. We are “encountering” others. Sometimes we might know the people who are suggested, and sometimes not, but in each case, a communicative common environment is possible. They are somehow within our communicative reach; therefore, we encounter them.

Some platforms are much more conducive to initiating encounters than others. Phone calls, for example, are relatively unlikely to be main centers for initial encounters, but they are not impossible. In fact, when we call to arrange a doctor’s appointment, for example, we are encountering another via telephone, and sometimes, if the person answering is new or the doctor is new to us, we are indeed encountering the person on the line for the first time. Popular rhetoric is full of stories of relationships that were spurred by accidental text, from young men being invited to Thanksgiving dinner to couples finding marriage with a text sent to the wrong number. Encounters are essential for all human relationships and can happen in any environment in which a shared communicative environment is possible.

It is possible for a Thou-orientation to never move forward to any other type of relationship. For example, if I am on a bus and outside the window I see a woman and a child walking and I am aware of them, even though I turn to them and recognize their existence, they have no possibility of reciprocating the attention I now give them. In this case, it would be a one-sided encounter. However, in the mutual recognition of each other’s existence, Schutz explained that “a social relation becomes constituted” (1976, p. 24). This, he considered the “pure” We-relation. Schutz placed a heavy emphasis on the We-relation in observing the bodily expressions of the other to confirm “phases of my own consciousness” with “‘corresponding’ phases of your consciousness” (p. 25). He argued that “I ‘participate’ in the conscious life of another Self only when I am engaged in a concrete We-relation, face to face with a fellow-man” (p. 26). But, immediately after, he moves towards a discussion of language and meaning. Schutz explained that

The We-relation, however, consists not only in the community of time, that is, in the synchronization of two interior streams of duration; it consists also in the community of space, that is, the bodily and thus exterior presence of fellow-man face to face with me. (p. 26)

In *Collected Papers III*, he again emphasized the face-to-face, but he writes that what ultimately characterizes the We is when “the partners are aware of each other and sympathetically participate in each other’s lives for however short a time we shall call the pure We-relationship” (1970a, p. 186). In the Thou-orientation, we can follow particular bodily movements by the other and

interpret them to gain insight into the psychological life of the other, but to do so presupposes a system of meaning—language.

To be “present” to another means to enter into a Thou-orientation in a way that is open to reciprocation. Again, this is an encounter—the possibility for a shared communicative environment exists. And none of it is dependent on one’s actual bodily presence within sight of another. All communication and experience of the other is mediated—“the experience of a fellow-man in a We-relation is, strictly speaking, also ‘mediated’: I apprehend his conscious life by interpreting his bodily expressions of subjectively meaningful process” (1976, p. 26). All social relations begin from this general process of an initial encounter.

In our world today, we encounter other human persons on a regular day-to-day basis. I encounter others from the moment I awake. My family surrounds me. While I drink my morning coffee, I encounter others as I scan my social media feeds and read breaking news stories from the night before. As I drive to work, I pass multiple others, driving to their various destinations, and I also encounter others who walk or bike. When I arrive at work, I encounter students and colleagues both in person and through my technology. Each person I encounter could be an opening, a potential friend. But, too, it just may be that the encounter I have is with someone I am already close to. No matter how brief my participation in their existence, my daily life is saturated with encounters, whether mediated or not.

Conclusion

Technology is reshaping our lifeworld and our relationships within it (Bakardjiev, 2005). This chapter has attempted to show that one way that the lifeworld and our relationships are changing is related to the basic level of human interaction, encounter. Technology is only expanding horizons for encounters, not destroying them. Popular but faulty rhetoric suggests that individuals are solitary and alone, slaves to their devices. They ignore possibilities for social relationships as they are stuck in their devices. The research, however, shows us that whether it be through blogging, chatting, singing, reading, or any of the other various means of communicating in our media-saturated environment, our possibilities for encounters are rich. In the next chapter, we will explore the tension of breaking past encounters with the recognition of uniqueness in a mediated environment.

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2 Particularity and Voice

Recognizing our Friends as Unique

Somehow, between two people that become friends, there is a shift where the pair are no longer mere strangers in encounter. Instead the pair identifies as “friends,” and they turn to the other as a friend, with specific behaviors that are more intimate than acts that we engage in with strangers. Strangely enough, some evidence shows that we are more likely to take our anger out on our loved ones (South Richardson, 2014). We like to believe that the closer we are with someone, the better we communicate. There is evidence that this is a commonly held bias in all of our relationships (Savitsky et al., 2011). It is not all doom and gloom, and as noted in the introduction to this work, there are a plethora of reasons that we seek friends and many benefits to having friends. This chapter proposes that there is an appetite for and true joy in the reciprocal recognition of uniqueness, and that this is one of the main reasons we seek friends in the first place.

The leap from strangers to friends occurs when two individuals recognize the unique interiority of the other. In *Collected Papers I*, Schutz argued that the “pre-dominant function of the face-to-face relationship” is to “experience one another in our individual uniqueness” (1973, p. 317). If this is true, then what does it say for the possibility of being experienced as unique in a mediated setting? This chapter attempts to uncover the answer to this grounded in a philosophical approach.

Rawlins indicated the importance of the friend’s ability to perceive “*the other’s own selfhood*” (2009, p. 31). When we are in the presence of our friends, we often drop the scripts that drive our interactions with others and reveal parts of our inner lives that the majority of individuals we connect with do not see. We also perceive the other’s own selfhood and experience the other’s individual uniqueness.

This chapter begins with a conceptualization of the term “particularity,” placing it in the communicative realm. It draws from several scholars. Initially, the emphasis in this chapter is on the work of Walter Ong, who has written extensively on interiority and the development of communication technology. In the second half of the chapter, the analysis shifts to the work of Josef Tischner and Martin Buber to examine the role of communication in revealing the interior. Particularity is essential for friendship. Friendship requires a

recognition of the particularity of the other. That is, I do not just see the other as human, as a horizontal opening, as discussed in the basic encounter chapter, but instead, I recognize this person for all of their uniqueness and individuality, as a specific person rather than just a person, and that they, too, do the same for me. It begins with where we left off in the previous chapter—encounter.

Interiority

Analogical Apperception and Transcendental Reduction

In the previous chapter, Schutz's basic premise that we encounter others as part of our natural state of being was explored. In order for friendship to emerge from encounter, it requires that we begin to develop knowledge of the other person—that we *know* them. There is a difference between knowledge about, of, and *knowing*, which is related to correctly anticipating the in-order-to motives of the other who confronts us. To be able to understand the in-order-to of the other, a history with the person is needed to be able to inform a sense of who the person is. Schutz and the notion of our stock of knowledge is important to address when thinking through the way we understand our world and the people and things in our world. We have a system of “common-sense constructs” that we have developed from our social world. For the most part, human beings are expected to behave in predictable ways. Even if we have never met the person we are encountering, society has developed a set of social scripts that allow us to interact with the other and anticipate certain behaviors, mostly communicative. Through the transcendental reduction or the epoche of the natural attitude, we are not actually reducing experience but reducing presuppositions about the world and experience (Ihde, 2007).

If we stop taking for granted the scripts we draw from when interacting with the other, the existence of the other, or any of the various presuppositions about the other, we are performing the *transcendental reduction*. Schutz explained that what results is simple stream of thought. If we are perceiving something, then we are perceiving it within the natural attitude. Perception presupposes belief. When we perform the transcendental reduction and question the existence of the chair, the perception of the chair stays within the natural attitude and we enter a space of reflective thought. To engage in *being* with the other, however, we are not in the reflective thought space. To perceive the other as given to us is to believe in their existence and in their participation in the everyday world as we expect.

To exemplify this, Schutz asked us to imagine a beautiful tree that is blossoming. Below is a passage to explain the connection between the ongoing flow of the stream of thought and the independent, physical tree as it exists, and our perception of the tree:

I perceive this blossoming tree in the garden. This, my perceiving of the tree as it appears to me, is an indubitable element of the stream of my

thought. And the same is valid for the phenomenon “blossoming-tree-as-it-appears-to-me,” which is the intentional object of my perceiving. This phenomenon is independent of the fate of the real tree in the outer world. The tree in the garden may change its colors and shades by the interplay of sun and cloud, it may lose its blossoms, it may be destroyed by fire. (1973, p. 106)

If we cease to believe in the existence of the tree, the tree itself does not fail to exist nor does my perception of the tree. Schutz continued:

The once perceived phenomenon “blossoming-tree-as-it-appears-to-me” remains untouched by all these events, and also remains untouched by the performance of the phenomenological reduction described above. A second perception may refer to the tree as it appears to me at that time, and may or may not be consistent with the first one. If it is, I may perform a synthesis, an identification of the two phenomena (or more correctly, of the second phenomenon actually perceived and the recollected phenomenon caught by the first perception). If the second perception is not consistent with the first, I may doubt either of them, or I may search for an explanation of their apparent inconsistency. (pp. 106–7)

In both of the perceptual moments above, perception itself and the intentional object (blossoming-tree-as-it-appears-to-me) are within the stream of thought of the natural attitude. These, Schutz argued, are not “influenced by the changes in the outer world” (p. 107). However, we certainly can and do modify perceptions that occur within our stream of thought without needing to perform the transcendental reduction. To explain how, Schutz drew from Husserl to differentiate between the act of perceiving itself and the object of perception, the *cogitare* and the *cogitatum*, the Noesis and the Noema (p. 107). If our “now” perception is different from our “before” perception because of something related to the act of perception itself, Schutz explained that this is a noetical modification. If the perception changes because of a change in the object, then this is a noematical modification. What Schutz attempted to show with this discussion is that our “now” perceptions are connected to past perceptions to explore the implications for the perception of human beings.

In the previous chapter, drawing from Tischner, face is envisioned as a horizon. It is impossible to know what will manifest in any given interaction until a communicative act occurs to make present that which is within the horizon. Tangible, physical objects that are not human beings have characteristics that are outside our immediate experiential abilities. If I look at the blossoming tree, I cannot see the back side of the tree. I cannot see the roots. My mind fills in the elements that I cannot see to shape the perception of the tree. It is unlikely, for example, that I assumed that this was a rootless tree. Schutz explained that the aspects of the tree that I am able to ascertain refer to the aspects that I cannot. He wrote, “the front side of the house suggests its back, the façade the

interior, the roof the unseen foundation and so on” (1973, p. 108). The unseen and unsensed elements combined are called the “‘inner horizon’ of the perceived object, and it can be systematically explored by following the intentional indications within the noema itself” (p. 108). In addition to this inner horizon that is referential, there is also a referential outer horizon—for example “The tree refers to my garden, the garden to the street, to the city, to the country in which I am living, and finally to the whole universe” (p. 108). Both the inner and outer horizon are referential here—and they are both, Schutz wrote, “concealed within the noema itself” (p. 109). When we originally encounter any object, it is given in experience in a unique way compared to the way in which we remember it. We have the originary experience of the object, the recollection of the object (retentions), and then the projected future (proten-tions) of the object.

The experience of a tree, a chair, a pen, etc. is quite different than the experience of a human being. These objects with their inner and outer horizons are experienced with no reciprocal noetical modifications that direct and change the current experience in time in the same way that human conversation can direct the stream of thought. In a later chapter we will discuss the nature of the *noosphere*, or the noetical space between two human beings. For now, the task is to understand how one person can attempt to grasp the inner horizon of another human being.

For Schutz, the answer was simply the reciprocity of perspectives confirmed through communicating with the other. By analogy, we apperceive the other grounded in our own experience. Particularly, for Schutz, this occurred when two individuals entered into a We-relationship. He used a table as an example. He wrote, “I may assume not only that the table in front of me is the same table which is in front of you but also that your experience of this table corresponds to mine” (1976, p. 31). We then confirm this with communication—with our words or our expressions. It is entirely possible, and it is very often the case, that our assumptions are wrong. In fact, stereotypes and prejudice and many of the issues that plague humanity are related to faulty and incorrect assumptions about others. This often happens when we lack information about others. In the next section, we are going to explore the inner horizon of the human being and the connections to communication and language in more depth, drawing from the media ecology tradition to understand issues with incomplete information about the other. For now, we will move on to a discussion on the development of interiority.

Interiority and the Evolution of Human Consciousness

Gronbeck (1991) argued that Ong’s greatest contribution could actually be the work that he has done to advance our understanding of human consciousness. In Ong’s works of consciousness, Gronbeck showed that Ong placed the development of consciousness directly within the development of communication. Zlatic (2017), an Ong student and friend, also highlighted Ong’s

importance in connecting the idea of self and consciousness to communications media. He wrote that Ong's personalism was derived from his life and interactions with others. What makes communication more than information sharing, Zlatich explained, is that in communication, interior is shared with interior. While this sharing can occur without any sharing of words, he noted the following:

There is a mysterious, sometimes unspoken, component of communication: an intentionality between inexplicable interiors that precedes language use. This understanding of communication rejects visualist classifications of objective/subjective, for to understand a person requires not objectification but encounter, an intersubjectivity of sharing of interiors that is best represented through sound, the material medium that unites two interiors. (p. 367)

Multiple scholars continue to draw from Ong, particularly in the media ecology tradition. In addition to his hundreds of works, he has roughly a dozen books in his corpus. Ong kept meticulous records and his entire collection is archived at St Louis University, where he earned his master's degree and returned to settle for his career. This section will draw from several of Ong's most influential works, including *Presence of the Word* (2000), *The Barbarian Within* (1962), and some of his articles. It will also draw from the work of Corey Anton, who has done work on interiority and Ong to extend Ong's phenomenological work and draw connections with the earlier discussion of Schutz. Through these scholars, I will show that *particularity is the reciprocal recognition of the other's unique consciousness (interiority) through voice*. Whereas encounter requires the possibility of a shared communicate environment, particularity requires it.

Sociologist Gerald Suttles (1970) noted the necessity for recognition of uniqueness between two people in friendship. He listed four essential characteristics of friendship in his work on friendship as a social institution, and three are relevant to this notion. First, he showed that in friendship "the other person in the relationship is positively evaluated as a person *qua* person rather than for incidental advantages that may accrue as a result of an encounter with him" (p. 98). Second, he added, "It is appropriate to appreciate the objective qualities, private property, or social characteristics of a friend only because they represent the person himself rather than for any universal value attached to them" (p. 99). Finally, he added that

the person who is a friend must be appreciated as a unique self rather than simply a particular instance of a general class. To suggest that a friend could be adequately or arbitrarily replaced by someone else who meets the same general criteria is usually felt to be antithetical to "true friendship." (p. 100)

Ginsberg et al. (1986) showed that even in childhood we can already recognize that not just anyone will do when it comes to friendship. We seek *particular* persons for friends.

To be able to recognize the other in their uniqueness is a form of communicative work. To move beyond encountering someone and typifying them, objectifying them as one body among many, we must perform a series of communicative acts. Anton (2002) wrote, “Common sense, as informed by modern science, tells us that persons and the world are things” (p. 185) and this is natural to our everyday lifeworld. Many scholars have commented on our tendency to objectify human beings, including Buber in his discussion of *Thou* versus *It*, to be discussed in the next section. Ong suggested, too, that this is in part due to the nature of human language. In *The Barbarian Within* (1962), he wrote that “at the heart of the linguistic situation” and “at the heart of all human operations of understanding” is a “twinning” (p. 42). This foundational process of human intellect is a setting apart. When we say “this,” this is “not that.” Ong wrote that “Man knows *compendo et dividend*” (p. 42). Ong called our setting apart binarism, and says it is “endemic in human intellect” (p. 43). In breaking down, we do objectify and dehumanize others, but this process is also how we come to know and understand others.

Coming to understand others is such a natural part of our lifeworld that Ong argued we have a sense for it, like sight and hearing and all of the other senses. Ong argued, “The paradigmatic sense of presence is the presence of one conscious human being to another” (2017, p. 24). Ong is very explicit about the idea that we have an actual sense of presence, a felt sense of other persons. He works through an example of a chair, to a plant, to a subhuman, to an animal to show that we as humans have very different senses of the presence of objects and things before us, and humans before us. What differentiates this full sense, as in what makes human presence feel so much different than the presence of all other objects in the universe, is reciprocity. Ong asked us to imagine the emptiness of an animal’s eye in understanding the problem with reciprocity. While to encounter another we need not ever have a reciprocated awareness, for particularity to occur reciprocity is required.

This mutual recognition is foundational for friendship or any intimate relationship. In his interview “Why Talk,” conducted by Walter Altree in 1973 (Ong, 2002a), Ong discussed the nature of our cognitive isolation and the role that communication plays in building intimacy. It is impossible due to our human limits to ever completely understand another without a doubt. The closest we can get to understanding how someone else feels will always be at best an estimation. This estimation is achieved through the interpretation of the communicative acts of the other. Ong writes:

Even a husband and wife never find out what it feels like to be the other. They try, they get awfully close. But no matter what, each of us remains isolated in his or her own consciousness, each one in his own little prison. (2000, p. 374)

The isolation, though, is also our grace. Ong notes that our ability to distinguish I from others, to set apart, is the foundation of our ability to communicate. Being able to understand difference allows for our individuation.

Words are at the fundamental level the opening of consciousness to the other for the sharing of interiority. All thought and all communication are only possible through relationships with others, and Ong says that all communication “goes on in a context of belief” (2002a, p. 265). All communication, no matter in which form, expects a response. When we speak to others, we are making a statement about our belief in their existence. Ong wrote that each communicative act we engage in with another is a recognition, a recognition of “a presence to whose word I can, in turn, attend and in whom I can thus believe through acceptance of what he has to say” (p. 265). In turning and communicating with another person, we believe them to be alive and capable of reciprocating. Anton (2012) stated that “*presence* and *interiority*” are key to understanding the basic fact of Ong’s phenomenology—that “persons ... are interiorities who are present in voice” (p. 74). We believe in their existence in each communicative action in which we partake.

Intentionality and Its Role in Interiority

For Anton, intentionality provides a pathway for understanding persons and the world that avoids the various problems associated with the objectification of other inherent in language itself that we see as problematic in other ontologies. Anton proposed an understanding of the triadic structure of intentionality that is useful here in an understanding of how intentionality gives rise to voice and interiority. Anton (2002) explained that the three components of intentionality are *intentios* (“intentional activities”), *intentums* (“their correlative intended objects”), and a peculiar proper (“specific intendableness”) (p. 187). Anton clarified that “When we consider some object, any object at all, our object is not in ‘the object itself,’ but rather in the object given its ‘intendableness’” (p. 188). He used a pen for an example, and here, I would like to substitute instead the word friend to show how this triadic structure is important to understanding the relationship between interiority, particularity, and friendship. On one hand, there is “an act of seeing, the object being seen, and the seeableness” of the friend. He also noted perhaps we instead think through the “touchableness” of the friend. In this case, there is the act of touching, the friend being touched, and the touchableness of the friend. He told us to “note that the thing seen and the thing touched are the same, and yet are manifested differently according to the differing manners of making contact” (p. 188). This, he argued, shows that “this intentional relatedness implies that any perceived entity in so far as it is perceived, is an entity *in its perceivedness*” (p. 188). A point that Anton made that is essential to the current project is that “‘intendableness’ cannot be reductively isolated to deriving either from the world or from the subject. It is, on the contrary, a dialogic constitution” (p. 188). In the everyday realm of encounter, the natural attitude, the mundane

then, drawing from our earlier point, we perceive others in a steady stream of thought, outside of reflective pauses. Anton would argue that “intentional threads, while pre-reflective, are taut such that the ‘intentio’ is absent and we mindlessly dwell in the ‘intentum’” (p. 189). The givenness of our friends is manifested via voice in a context of belief. We mindlessly dwell in our communication with our friends, their interiors given to us.

When we hear our friend, for example, rarely if ever are we focused on the hearing itself and instead “dwell in what is heard” (p. 189). We also do this with speech. We speak without attending to the fact that we are speaking. And, if we take this further, we can see that we listen without attending to the fact that a friend is speaking or that we are listening; we instead dwell on what the words make manifest, that is the interior of the other and especially their uniqueness. He also points out that we are not singularly experiencing one sense and no others, but instead, we can imagine that we dwell in the existence of our friend no matter how we encounter them, that is, what is primarily in focus as another speaks to us. In those moments in which we confirm our friend as unique, and they confirm us as unique, we hardly pause to utter, “Wow, you are unique.” Rather, in the process of the revelation of interiors, we recognize something special about the person—their voice. If we do pause to comment on their uniqueness, or even if we pause in the moment to label the other as “friend,” we have now reified our friend and/or their uniqueness.

In the previous chapter, when we discussed the different possibilities for an encounter, within these encounters communication was not a required component. While an encounter is communicative, it does not rely on the sharing of a communicative environment but only the possibility of a shared communicative environment. Also, communication does not necessarily lead to particularity. While all reaching out might be revelatory of *an* interior, it is not necessarily recognized as *this* interior. Voice is the revelation of *this* particular interior. Friendship requires mutual recognition of each friend’s interior.

Voice as Revelatory of the Interior

Voice is exterior for Ong, and all communication is a break-out of our own interior and an attempt to grasp the other (2002a). All communication is in a way a breakthrough into the other’s interior, but dialogue, specifically, leads to particularity. Ong notes that “this dialogue assures me also of the uniqueness of your consciousness and of its ultimate inviolability” (p. 270). Dialogue and friendship will be discussed later, but for now, the dwelling in the givenness is an important element to particularity that needs to be further addressed within the confines of human voice and sound. Anton has argued that voice for Ong “is not only the paradigmatic sound in the human world, but it is also a key phenomenon for understanding persons” (2012, p. 73). This leads to a series of questions relevant to our work on technology and communication media. Is voice only possible, however, through sound? If so, do secondary oral cultures

manifest the interior in the same way? Can someone who is present via the television reveal the same interior as they would in the face-to-face setting?

While Ong (2000) does not exclude the ability for the presence of interiority to be made clear strictly through sound, he does privilege sound. He wrote that “true interiority is communicative” (p. 117). Sound conveys more information about physical and psychological elements. While he noted sound’s ability to convey interiors in space, such as a cave, he does recognize that hearing is not the only way in which we can explore interiors of objects in general. He noted that both movement and touch can convey information about interiors. But again, there is a danger in placing the same weight in human beings as we would an object like a cup or a cave. Sound is the paradigmatic way voice has been heard for most of human history. Dance (1989) wrote, regarding sound’s primacy to paradigmatic human dialogue:

Ong senses that this initial utterance may constitute the primal means of knowing—of knowing other, of knowing self, of knowing outside, of knowing inside. This utterance of self may well be the primal noetic which allows the human being to make known to itself and to others its “I.” (p. 188)

Sound is particularly important in the “revelation of the other” (Dance, 1989, p. 186)—their interiority, their thoughts, their words. Soukup also recognized sound as revelatory of the interior and found it to be the grounding force of all social structures. Soukup wrote of the ability of sound to establish a sense of immediacy and simultaneity, although texting can now be nearly as simultaneous as spoken conversation if one’s physical skills and technological access allows.

Our senses form our place of being in the world, and Ong explained how sound, specifically, shapes our being. Ong wrote on the topic of simultaneity that “because it situates me in the midst of a world, sound conveys simultaneity” (2000, p. 130). Sound, he suggested, establishes a sense of the present in presence. When we are in actual physical presence, we share with the other an everything going on at oncedness. In addition to simultaneity, sound is also connected to human thought. Ong wrote that sound “has proved in all cultures the most immediate sensory coefficient of thought” (p. 140) and again, this is correlated with our interactions with others. There is a direct connection between thought and sound. Still, though, this does not mean that voice is only possible through sound.

Voice and the Givenness of Interiority

Ong asks us, when pondering voice, to consider what might happen when the speaker wears a mask. While for him the mask is related to Greek tragedy, a similar pontification might be “what happens to voice and belief when the other person is behind the screen?” Drawing from Heidegger, Buber, and

Lavelle, Ong showed us that the other's "sense of self remains outside my direct awareness, and yet I can feel its aura and know that there is some interiority with whom I am dealing" (2002a, p. 268). The contact we make with the other, is "mediated by exterior phenomena that implements commerce between interiors" (p. 269). Brook (2002) worked from Ong and agreed that "sight alone" cannot "deal with interiors" and that "other senses can help to reconstitute the interiority of experience" (p. 70). She continued:

Focusing on the other senses, the way we can and sometimes do use them presents the interiors in a way it could be argued is closer to them as given. That is, the encounter with interiors in the world which carries a veracity to the experience and to the interiors themselves. (p. 74)

Givenness is essential here for this idea and brings us back to the earlier discussion of Anton. When we add our voice to a communicative event, we are giving our interior. If we imagine an impersonal conversation, quite scripted, there is no revelation of voice and hence no true sharing *this* particular interior. We might stand next to someone in the elevator and comment on the weather. This is a manifestation of interior, but it reveals nothing really about the self and the words could belong to anyone. But the revelatory of voice moves us again from *an* to *this*. In our comments on the weather, if we move from a general script to a revelation about our childhood and a snowstorm we remembered, we then have added our *voice*. In such a conversation, it is possible that our revelation may not be noticed, nor may be reciprocated. It may be recognized, but not reciprocated. But, in revealing our voice, we are giving something away.

Soukup (2004), an Ong student and friend, wrote concerning belief that "electronic media include either delay or distance; they require both a belief in the interlocutor and a belief about the media" (p. 7). Soukup, related to electronic communication and interiority, explained, "In creating written words, a writer must also create an audience—not the immediacy of another interiority who will call forth the writer's interior, but an artificial, imaged person" (p. 9). He added,

Here, too, we come to *belief that*, for the writer creates a text as something separate from the writer's own interior and separate from any actual person. The possibility of writing exists in the imaged other, but gives up the possibility of an interactive response. (p. 9)

He further added that "The notion of response to a presence, to a voiced word, disappears and is attenuated to behavior" (p. 9). Later, again related to electronic media and the notion of voice, Soukup asked if electronic media invite us or summon us to belief. He explained that

they, like writing, are artifacts, objects separated from us; unlike writing, they speak with their own voice, although it is voice deferred. And, like

writing, these newer communication forms share in the faith that arises with the possibility of communication. (p. 10)

Because voice is the language of interiority, it can invoke these possibilities with any medium. Voice is what summons a belief in the other. Voice is not the sound of the other but instead the combination of words that are strung together to reach out from inside the other to meet us.

Belief, Love, and Confirmation: Taking the Leap

To give voice to one's interiority, to reveal oneself, requires a belief as mentioned before that there will be someone on the receiving end, who is like me, who will interpret my words as I hope them to be interpreted. It also requires a belief that out there, in our revelation of our interior, we have made the right judgment of this communicative setting and have chosen to make ourselves vulnerable. The uncertainty of the rhetorical situation requires a response from the other—either to confirm or disconfirm. Soukup (2004) explained that “the voice, as Ong notes, implies not only the self and interiority; it implies a divided self as well, for every speaker simultaneously takes on the role of listener” (p. 10). Soukup brings to the forefront the notion of rhetoric. He summarized Ong's 1967 essay *From Mimesis to Irony* and wrote, “Formal oral performances have both a particular audience situation and a particular rhetoric. This implies that each frame has its own rhetoric and its own rhetorical situation. The voice in its immediacy summons the hearer to belief” (p. 11). Continuing on, he wrote, “Rhetoric here fosters a shared interiority, a shared understanding of the world” (p. 11). He added that “the dramatic performance, in contrast, with its characters and masks summons belief through a rhetoric of imagination. This rhetoric calls forth roles, including the role of belief” (p. 11). Each medium then has a specific rhetorical situation that summons belief. There is a difference between performative and descriptive acts, Soukup noted. He wrote, “Each frame, each medium, adds something to the language and thus to the relationships that we humans enter” (p. 11). He then explained that

if the living voice summons us to belief through its immediacy, it makes a double claim: Whatever the locutionary status, a word of address summons us to belief in the other and belief that the other's locution has the status that it claims. (pp. 11–12)

He continued, “Another way to put this is that the locution's content (meaning) makes a claim on us to belief in the voice of the speaker” (p. 12). Then, drawing from *The Pragmatics of Human Communication*, Soukup pointed out that “every word of address does at least two things—it expresses a content and describes the relationship between speaker and hearer” (p. 12). In addition to belief about the person, Soukup also noted that electronic communication requires a belief “about the medium, its fidelity, its reliability, its transparency”

(p. 12). When we send a text message, for example, we *believe* that our message will be received, received as we want it to be received, and that *we* will be received.

Interior can be revealed through mediated means. Voice is projectable through mediated means. Reciprocal recognition, too, is possible through mediated settings. Just like walking onto an elevator, mediated communication can certainly be scripted and reveal nothing. However, in sending a message out there in which I reveal *this* interior, I am believing that it can be received and often, it *is* received. I might send a text message to a friend about a snowstorm, and that friend, hours later, can certainly respond in a way that recognizes my unique interior and our asynchronous communication can be a reciprocal recognition of the other's unique interior—we have entered the space of particularity.

Soukup (2004) explained mediated belief like this:

The frame again interposes an additional relationship message: not “Here is a content,” but “here is (1) a content at a distance, (2) a relationship with a person addressing you, and (3) a relationship to the frame that is far away from you.” (p. 12)

Ultimately, Soukup concluded at the end that electronic media can relay belief, but only through “layers of hermeneutic action” (p. 14). He wrote, “The more unlike the frame of utterance to the immediacy of voice, the more extended the demands for interpretation” (p. 14) and “The frames of secondary orality pose challenges that foster a hermeneutic of suspicion” (p. 14). The idea of the hermeneutic of suspicion and the increased need for interpretation in our media-saturated world move us to the next chapter of this work, where we will examine the interplay of digitization and dialogue. Zlatic wrote, “new media can promote personalist encounters in original ways” (2004, p. 31). Related to speaking, communication, and voice, Zlatic contended that “all speech is a cry, a call from one interior to another” and “all discourse, whether oral, written, printed, or digitalized, cannot escape this grounding” (p. 34). All discourse then allows for the call from one unique interior to the next.

Confirmation and Legitimization of Particularity

For some readers, the above may sound familiar. Martin Buber's work on dialogue was extremely influential across the globe, especially in the realm of communication and philosophy. Buber influenced Walter Ong, and in multiple works Ong makes specific reference to Buber and his writings. Several scholars have made connections with Tischner and Buber's work (Mizdrak, 2018; Woo, 2012; Gibinska, 2019; Gorzna, 2015). Two scholars have noted that Tischner was influenced by Buber, although he rejected elements of Buber's dialogic philosophy. Gibinska noted that Tischner found Buber's philosophy to be too subject-centered. Gorzna pointed out that Tischner drew from Buber in two of his works: *The Philosophy of Drama* and *The Controversy*

Over Human Existence. Gorzna also noted Tischner's move away from Buber's philosophy. She argued that Tischner's work was more concerned with a human telos in God.

Gorzna (2015) identified Tischner's philosophy as a "philosophy of hope." Like Tischner, Buber has often been drawn upon to inspire a sense of hope. This next section will examine the work of Buber on confirmation. The next chapter will dive into a deeper examination of Buber on dialogue and its relation to friendship and technology. I bring confirmation into this section, prior to an analysis of dialogue, because of its relationship to understanding the other.

Nathaniel Branden, a psychotherapist, argued that one of the central benefits of friendship is a recognition of one's own particularity which he calls *psychological visibility* (1993). He explained that in confirmation of our own being through our interactions with others, we experience a sense of joy. This joy is related not just to the visibility of our own consciousness but in the confirmation that life is possible. Branden wrote:

When we encounter a person who thinks as we do, who notices what we notice, who values the things we value, who tends to respond to different situations as we do, not only do we experience a strong sense of affinity with such a person but also we can experience our self through our perception of that person. (p. 70)

We find joy in the recognition and confirmation of self when we become visible as unique beings. We encounter thousands of others, especially in our technological world today, and the majority of them are not friends nor will ever become friends. But sometimes there are moments where we notice that the other person in our encounter seems to see the "real" us, and this brings us joy that we hope to hold on to. This visibility is the reason we seek intimate human relationships like friendship in the first place, Branden argued. In fact, not only do we find joy in it but we also crave it. We seek out the fulfillment of visibility through our relationships with others.

Ong explained that for Buber, dialogue was more than mere conversation. It went beyond a simple exchange of words between two people. Love is an important element in Buber's sense of dialogue. He wrote that "Love is *between I and Thou*" (pp. 14–15). Love, for Buber, had nothing to do with romance or individuality or any type of modern Western notions of love that most readers are familiar with. Love emerged via responsibility for the other. Buber wrote "Love is responsibility of an *I* for a *Thou*" (p. 15). Buber noted what Schutz, too, and the others noted in their phenomenology of otherness. Schutz explained that in the contemplative act of reflection on the other, we stand outside our stream of thought with them. In Buber's language, we move between *Thou* and *It*. It is impossible to remain oriented to another's particularity and uniqueness all of the time. He called the transition between *Thou* and *It* "the exalted melancholy of our fate" (p. 17). We have a responsibility, however, to receive the other as often as possible as oriented to their *thouness*.

When it comes to Buber, another important thread of his work is related to his notion of “the between.” Friedman explained that when it comes to Buber’s “between,” there is one seminal issue. Friedman explained it is “the duality of being and seeming” (2002, p. 98). We hope to be perceived in particular ways by the other, sometimes in ways that do not reflect how we really are. There is an *intended* projection of perception that physical objects in the universe that are not human cannot possibly project. In addition to our intended projection of perception of our being from the other, there is an actual perception of our being by the other. These two do not always match. We then have several possible perceptions by the other of our own being—how we hope to be perceived, how we *are* perceived, and how we really are. The word for friend and the thought of friend are neither the same sort of thing as the sensorily present friend. The friend as they wanted to be interpreted is also different from the friend as perceived.

Meyrowitz, the Media, and Particularity

A relevant thread related to the notion of being, seeming, and Buber’s investigation is that of Goffman and Meyrowitz regarding media and the perception and revelation of self. Meyrowitz’s major work, *No Sense of Place* (1985), investigated how electronic media, specifically television, has transformed society. He applied the work of Goffman and Goffman’s notion of the “onstage” and “backstage” self or roles. His main argument was that individuals in the world of television no longer have any public domain in which they can fulfill specialized roles. His arguments are important here because his work showed that media can and do affect the way we interact with and relate with each other, and this has an impact on our perception of others.

Meyrowitz wrote that all enactments of social roles are performances, “a selected display of behavior that cannot go on continuously and which must, to some extent, consciously or unconsciously, be planned and rehearsed” (p. 29), and because of this effort, there must be different arenas for different roles. At the time of writing, as with Schutz, Meyrowitz was responding to the media as it existed at that time. Published in 1986, Meyrowitz was most concerned with electronic media like television, in which someone could see the bodily presence of another as opposed to print media, where all that was available was textual communication. Drawing from Goffman’s differentiation between expression and communication, Meyrowitz made the argument that different media convey different types of information, particularly related to the other.

Alternatively, communication is “the use of language” and what separates it from expression is intent. Communication includes both written and spoken utterances (p. 94). Although developed in the golden age of television, Meyrowitz’s proposal still stands true regarding other media today. When we encounter others through different media, we experience them differently depending on the media used because the elements by which we can know them have changed. What is expected of us, in response, is also media

dependent when engaging with the other, and this affects our roles and our relationships.

It is easier to confirm others via some media compared to others. When one is confirmed, it is an event that jumps beyond the other/I, separate/similar dichotomic space central to pure encounter. For Friedman, “True confirmation means that one confirms one’s partner as this existing begins even while one opposes him” and continued that confirmation entails a legitimization of being (2002, p. 99). One is legitimized “over against me” and “as the one with whom I have to do in real dialogue” (p. 99). He noted that to be able to perceive the other in a legitimizing and confirming way requires an “imagining the real” (p. 99), and explicitly stated that this was not intuitive. He called it a “bold swinging into the other which demands the intensest action of my being” (p. 99). In this space we meet the particularity of the other. Friedman wrote that in this bold swinging

the realm of my act “is not the all-possible” but the particular, real person who steps up to meet me, the person whom I seek to make present as just so and not otherwise in all his wholeness, unity, and uniqueness. (2002, p. 100)

The other in receiving one’s particularity leaves behind the intended perception and instead receives the person in their unique givenness. Confirmation is only one component of dialogue, according to Buber, and will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter. Important to this chapter, though, is the way in which confirmation is the act of the recognition of the other’s uniqueness and existence. The person in their uniqueness is legitimized. This is essential for friendship. As is sadly the case in many familial and romantic relationships that are abusive, often one is disconfirmed in their humanity.

In *I and Thou*, Buber discussed the notion of potential and actual being. In actual being, there is the fulfillment of potentiality. Drawing from Buber, when we experience the other and legitimize his or her particularity, it is less of an experience of the other and more a fulfillment of their anticipated perceptions and our perceptions manifested in a now. Buber noted taking out specific qualities of the other, for example the color of the person’s hair or speech or goodness. He warned that when we do so, in suspending those given characteristics of the other like eye color or hair color, we cease to be with the other in a way in which we are experiencing them in their givenness. This, however, is problematic because it transitions the other from a Thou to an It. When we recognize the other as a Thou, and hence are co-being with them in recognition of their particularity, it is reciprocal. Friedman explained, “Confirmation is by its nature a reciprocal process” (2002, p. 146).

The Experience of Other in the Mediated Setting

So I now want to explain how, exactly, this is all relevant to the mediated setting. When we encounter another person, we have two predominant perceptions. There is the perception of them as they are, to the best of our ability

to ascertain from all cues present at the time. There is also the perception of them as they hope to be received. This is given to us. Drawing from Buber, the dichotomy of being and seeming emerges here. If we encounter the presence of another online, say through Facebook's "Suggested Friends" feature—they have created their profiles in a particular way. It is so common to create an imaginary perceiver online that Facebook even has a "View As" feature, that allows you to view your profile as if you were a stranger, a friend, or a friend of a friend. While we encounter these others in the space of a shared communicative environment, and we encounter them as given to us, we encounter their "seeming" presence as they want us to see them, as well as their "seeming" presence that is grounded in all of the various presuppositions we have about them grounded in our private stock of knowledge about life, human beings in general, or possibly even more specific information that friends have given us about them. Particularity cannot manifest, however, until we have actually entered into dialogue with them.

There are two more issues at hand associated with this. When we encounter another individual, we certainly can recognize them as someone that is unique. The first is that there is a difference between perception of this particularity and of particularity in general. We can understand that this person in our shared space, whether aware of us or not, has a unique individual particular consciousness that is independent of the entire rest of humanity that ever has, does, or will exist. We cannot, though, understand their unique particular being until we enter into dialogue. In Buberian terms, dialogue creates a space for a fulfillment of being that cannot exist in any other way. Dialogue can and does occur in the mediated setting, and this will be examined more in the next chapter. In this chapter, the goal has been to try to situate the notion of particularity within the framework of friendship and communication in the digital age. It is more than possible, through dialogue in mediated settings, to explore the unique particularity of someone online, and in fact, what separates a friend from a stranger online is this process.

Self-Disclosure in the Mediated Setting

A second and related issue at hand is that for friendship to occur, particularity needs to be reciprocal. In entering into the space of dialogue, friendship is fulfilled. Relation is fulfilled. Particularity emerges in this space. We jump into an intimate space where the two individuals reveal elements of their being that make them unique. The research realm is full of literature on self-disclosure and its role in relationship building. If someone reveals too much too fast, or too little, there are multiple consequences to relationships.

Altman and Taylor's (1973) foundational Social Penetration Theory proposed that relationships initially begin with conversations that cover a broad range of topics (breadth) and with repetition and reciprocity, gradually become more intimate (depth). There is a plethora of research that examines self-

disclosure, intimacy, and the implications of mediated communication on both. Derlega et al. (1993) defined self-disclosure as “what individuals verbally reveal about themselves to others” (p. 1). While the emphasis appears to be on the individual in conversations about self-disclosure, Holtgraves (1990) argued that truly the focus is on the development of intimacy as a result of the shared and reciprocal action of disclosure. He called it a “collective, emergent phenomenon” (p. 196). There are multiple facets of what make individuals unique, and even what drives them to share characteristics about themselves and it is in the manifestation of relationships that specific content is conjured.

Drawing from Morton (1976; 1978), in *Self-Disclosure*, Derlega et al. differentiated between descriptive and evaluative disclosure. Descriptive, they noted, is fact-related (such as biographical and demographic information about oneself) and evaluative involves “expressions of personal feelings, opinions, and judgments” (p. 5). The authors also differentiated between personal and relational disclosure, the first being disclosing information about the self and the second being grounded in disclosing information regarding either the relationship between the two (e.g., we are friends) or between the discloser and another person. The authors emphasize in their work the focus on the verbal disclosure of information about oneself and acknowledge the importance of the nonverbal on relational development.

Conclusion

The purpose of offering this brief glimpse of the literature in social penetration and self-disclosure at the end of this chapter is to make the case that no matter what the content or relationship, for friendship to occur there must be reciprocity in the revelation of one’s innermost self. When I initially began work on this text, I was asked a question about philosophical conversations between individuals that do not share time or space. For example, with currents that underlie the philosophy in this text grounded in Judeo-Christian thought, perhaps there should be a consideration of the Communion of Saints or “friendships” that scholars have with those before and after them.

For most of human history, referring back to Zhao and Schutz, it was impossible to have any type of “conversation” with those who came before us and those who came after us. There now is the possibility to read the disclosure of any number of individuals that existed before us and have since passed. Personal or relational, descriptive or evaluative—we have access to a plethora of materials that allow us to connect with people from the past. Anne Frank’s diary, for example, has sold millions of copies and has been translated into 70 different languages. It has been adapted to a play and film. There is no doubt that many, many people have been deeply moved by her journal entries. There are elements of disclosure within her diary that reveal her unique, particular, self. Interestingly enough, as of 2019, there were individuals that knew Anne Frank personally still alive. They met with students to discuss life during the Holocaust. But for anyone alive today to say that they are a “friend” of Anne Frank, who did not know her personally,

based on the necessity of the reciprocity of the revelation of particularity for the manifestation of friendship to occur, would be lacking authenticity.

This is especially relevant in today's world of blogging, vlogging, and any of the various personal media outlets that allow for individuals to share with the world their innermost thoughts and particularities. One issue here is that these media are mostly one-sided and as above, are lacking reciprocity. Although we share a possible communicative common environment, if we go back to Buber, there is no way to legitimize the other's existence without entering into dialogue. Also problematic is the differentiation between being and seeming. In these instances, we encounter here their *seeming* presence and it is not possible for us to engage with them in such a way that particularity can emerge—unless we enter into a space in which we do engage with them. It is important to note that there is a difference between being invited as an observer in the backstage area of someone's life and being a participant in that area.

Meyrowitz noted an important and relevant 1950s study that examined unidirectional communication. Media today exist on a spectrum from completely unidirectional (e.g. television news) to much more interactive possibilities like YouTube content. In these settings, the creators are able to view and even respond to comments by viewers. Horton and Wohl (1956) are credited with uncovering the foundations of “para-social” relationships. With television, for example, although the viewer and performer lack reciprocity, Horton and Wohl noted that there is a relationship that still exists that has traits of face-to-face relationships. In fact, the best actors are those who can make their viewers feel close. But the relationships are unrequited. The actors would hardly say that they have hundreds of thousands of friends. Instead, they are called fans. With blogs, vlogs, and other unidirectional media today, often we hear the term “followers” used to describe the masses. We would hardly say that the hundreds of thousands of “fans” or “followers” are “friends,” yet Facebook is a platform in which this becomes conflated. What is lacking, to be further explored in the next section, is dialogue.

The purpose of this section was to understand the nature of getting to know our friends, whether online, offline, or hybridized, for who they are in their uniqueness. We text, we call. We utilize emojis, share videos and gifs, and laugh and cry with them. We give them real hugs, and we send emoji hugs. Sometimes, these expressions are more public than others, but the line is not drawn due to the technology or who else sees, reads, or hears these exchanges. Rather, the line is co-created by the pair, and it cannot be understood as a solid and static two-dimensional object but as a horizon, which forever moves as the two walk together toward the future.

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3 Hermeneutic Presence

Dialogue and Digitization and the Implications for Friendship

One of the most pressing issues that Ong explored at the end of his life was the increasingly difficult problem of hermeneutics in an electronic world. His final manuscript, *Language as Hermeneutic*, was published posthumously in 2017. Of particular concern for Ong was depersonalization. Farrell, in the introduction to *Presence of the Word* (Ong, 2000), explained that for Ong, depersonalization refers to “situations in which we no longer advert to a person or are aware that someone is speaking” (p. xix). Farrell added that what Ong meant was that “we do not advert to the person behind the word, so to speak, the human voice from which such an utterance might come because the written or printed texts with words seem to detach them from a person” (p. xix). As mediated communication became standard practice and many of our regular interactions now occur through a screen, this aroused concerns about depersonalization and detachment.

Depersonalization is more than just an occurrence related to textual communication. Buber, in his work on dialogue, recognized that humans naturally flow from I–Thou orientations to I–It. It is a feature of human communication—one so problematic that Buber dedicated much of his scholarship to exploring it. One way depersonalization manifests with current technology is related to the reduction of the other as an information-giving tool rather than a person. Bakardjieva (2005) explained that we “suffer” through a series of reductions which include “intensity and spontaneity, of reciprocity and tangibility” (p. 65). As we will see later though, the association of reduction with loss is sometimes misplaced. In the previous chapters, we explored the relevance of the work of Schutz and Ong to inform this project. In this chapter, we will begin by reviewing some of the basic tenets of the work of Martin Buber on dialogue. Buber’s work greatly influenced Walter Ong, particularly Ong’s work on presence. His accounts of presence, belief, and voice were grounded ultimately in Buber’s conceptualization of dialogue (Farrell & Soukup, 2012). While Ong’s admiration for Buber is clear throughout his works, I have struggled to find a connection between Schutz and Buber. At the time of writing, I have found only one piece of literature examining common themes and connections between Buber and Schutz. Grinnell (1983) studied the use of the “Pure we” in Schutz and compared it to Buber’s “I–Thou.” A

commonality between the work of both is that “fundamental to both Schutz and Buber are the notions that intersubjectivity is tied to the lived presence of the self with other” (p. 185). Martin Buber was born in 1878 in Vienna. Schutz was born about two decades later in 1899, also in Vienna. Both were born into Jewish families. Both attended the University of Vienna, although Schutz studied law and was there about two decades after Buber, who studied philosophy. While there is no explicit connection, Schutz’s work on interpretation can inform our understanding of dialogue in this work.

The central concern for this chapter is not whether dialogue is necessary for friendship. It is. Nor is it whether dialogue is possible via mediated settings. It is. This chapter instead shows that while dialogue can occur online, there are several implications associated with the nature of our interpretations of others that are unique to our electronic age. All communication is hermeneutic. Dialogue, the language of friendship, is hermeneutic. Technologically mediated communication has altered our understanding of others. Zlatic (2017) explained that “all language use is hermeneutic” and “all writing is digitization” (p. 371). Sara van der Berg, Ong scholar and co-editor of *Language as Hermeneutic*, wrote in the introduction that

Ong set forth several principles basic to his understanding of interpretation: all meaning is negotiated between people; all language is hermeneutic; and digital technologies evoke interpretation as a corrective to the apparent totalizing of information that the dichotomous structure of digitization conveys. (2017, p. 2).

To address and explore the implication of these issues on friendship in our age, this chapter begins by drawing from Buber and Ong to overview the basics of dialogue. It then transitions to Schutz to explore how our interpretation of others and the surrounding world is communicative. Ong’s thoughts on textual communication are then overviewed to respond to several current themes that need to be re-examined in today’s world. It concludes by making connections to technologies today and friendship.

Dialogue: More Than Sound

When we think of the term dialogue, we are likely to imagine a conversation between two people. Perhaps we might imagine the dialogue in a movie or in a fictional text where the narrator breaks and the characters then talk. Dialogue, though, is more than words. Friedman, a Buber scholar, wrote that “genuine dialogue can take place in silence, whereas much conversation is really monologue” (Buber, 1965a, p. xvii). For Buber, human dialogue is grounded in “the sign” (1965a, p. 4). Specifically, he argued that “the sign” meant “sound and gesture” (p. 4). He added, though, that written language can actually be considered dialogue in “special circumstances” (p. 4). The example of a special circumstance that he used was two friends sitting in a meeting passing notes

back and forth. In this setting, the friends are engaged in dialogue. He added that the absence of sound and gesture (sign) does not eliminate the possibility of dialogue; however, it would be impossible for an outsider to understand the nature of the dialogue of silence without being an active participant. Farrell, in the introduction to the 2000 edition of Ong's *Presence of the Word*, also wrote of the special relationship of silence to dialogue. He wrote, "But person-to-person communing, the communing of spirits, is exemplified paradigmatically in live conversation, and perhaps in moments of silence together, too" (p. xix). While dialogue is more than just words, they are an important element of dialogue. Silence has word-dependent meaning.

Words and language play central roles in authentic dialogue and lead to the creation of a realm of mutual meaning between two persons. Buber noted that there are three specific modes of our being in the world related to our utterances. He called them "present continuance, potential possession, and actual occurrence" (1965b, p. 110). Potential possession, he explained, is "the totality of what has ever been uttered in a certain realm of language" (p. 110). Actual occurrence is "its spokenness" and he explained that what sets it apart from the other two is that it presupposes "a historical acquisition" (p. 110). For Buber, present continuance is the "totality of that which can be spoken in a particular realm of language in a particular segment of time, regarded from the point of view of the person who is able to say what is to be said" (p. 110). The importance of present continuance here, Buber argued, is that it is the foundation for both "genuine author" and "genuine dialogue" (p. 110). Genuine dialogue lacks scripting. Scripting is a limitation of the words and utterances that can and should be said in a particular place at a particular time. Scripted dialogue finds its existence outside the between of the two participants as such; it has no place in the spontaneity and generative space of genuine dialogue.

The "between" two persons is an important element of dialogue. Both Buber and Ong recognize the social nature of thought and its place in language. Thinking is speaking to oneself. From their points of view, thought is only possible because of language. While thought can be spontaneous, and it may be generative in the sense of a new idea, it lacks its generation in the shared space that emerges between two persons in dialogue. Ong argued, "The origins of thought and language in the individual's history make evident the radically social nature of thought itself" (2000, p. 140) and also that "thought appears only in a linguistic setting" (p. 145). He added, "There is a limitless variety of nonverbal activity connected to thinking, but when our thought is fully developed, it manifests itself as verbalized, although the thought may be interior and the word not thinking" (p. 145). For Ong, to be generative, thought still has to be verbalized so that it can become part of our ongoing language. To be able to alter language means to be brought into being between persons, which again highlights the generative nature of language.

Dialogue as Generative Space

Buber called the "between" "the oscillating sphere between the persons" (1965b, p. 112). Buber showed that the between is a dynamic space that

emerges between two people who come together in genuine dialogue. It comes into being with communicative work and can disappear. It is not permanent between two persons. It requires a turning of being toward the other in complete truthfulness. The between is a generative space for both meaning and being. This is how dialogue becomes the language of friendship. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the reciprocal recognition of being, particularity, is an important element of friendship. This emerges through dialogue in the between. To show exactly how in the space of the between through genuine dialogue friends are mutually received in their givenness and confirmed as their unique selves, Buber wrote the following in *Knowledge of Man* (1965b):

Relation is fulfilled in a full making present when I think of the other not merely as this very one, but experience, in the particular approximation of the given moment, the experience belonging to him this very one. Here and now for the first time does the other become a self for me, and the making independent of his being which was carried out in the first moment of distancing is shown in a new highly pregnant sense as a presupposition—a presupposition of this becoming a self for me, which is, however, to be understood not in a psychological but in a strictly ontological sense, and should therefore rather be called “becoming a self with me.” But it is ontologically complete only when the other knows that he is made present by me in his self and when this knowledge induces the process of his inmost self-becoming. (p. 71)

But also in this space, the meaning of the relationship itself as friendship is co-created and given meaning. In addition to the creation of Thou, the meaning of friendship itself is co-created in the dialogic space of the between. Because friendship lacks formal constraints and definitions, it is solely dependent on interpretation (Wright, 1978).

In his 2009 work, *The Compass of Friendship*, Rawlins set the stage for dialogue as necessary for human friendship and the specific activities that lead to dialogue or occur within the space of dialogue are “time together, straightforward talk, shared stories, and mutual respect” and these activities “produce the ‘co-knowledge’ of creating friendships” (p. 1). Furthermore, friendships are a space for the co-creation of “deep understandings allowing for shared moral visions and rights unique to their friendship” (p. 1–2). Dialogue moves friends to a space in which a co-creation of a meaningful existence is possible. Regarding interpretation and hermeneutics, Rawlins (2009) wrote, “Our perceptual process of noting similarities and differences goes on constantly, even as we act and communicate in ways that change their significance or create new alignments among them” (p. 17). As in the previous chapters, we come to know others by setting them apart and coming together—distancing and drawing near.

Dialogue as Reciprocally Interpretive Space

In the dialogue of friendship, the interpretive process is reciprocal and ever-changing. Cocking and Kennett (1998) wrote, “It is not that I must reveal myself to, or see myself in, the other, to any great extent, but that, in friendship, I am distinctively receptive both to the other’s interests and to their way of seeing me” (p. 505). Because of the receptivity and reciprocity, beyond the meaning-making of the friendship itself and the visibility of the unique self, Cocking and Kennett argued that we then “develop in a way that is particular to the relationship” (p. 505). They added, “the self my friend sees is, at least in part, a product of the friendship” (p. 505). For Cocking and Kennett, this interpretative process is key for the flourishing of the friendship. Helm (2010) slightly disagreed with Cocking and Kennett. He believed that they were correct in the important role that friendship plays in our lives, but that they were wrong when they attributed “our receptivity to direction and interpretation” as dispositional and internal. Instead, he argued that we need a normative perspective. This is important, because while the meaning of friendship is created in the “between,” there are certain normative constraints imposed from the outside that direct friendship, which we discussed in our first chapter.

Dialogue’s Role in Understanding the Other

These normative constraints are part of our stock of knowledge that informs how we interpret others and our relationships. Schutz drew from Husserl but also diverged from him, dismissing transcendental intersubjectivity and instead placing intersubjectivity in the mundane. In *Collected Papers I* (1973), Schutz thoroughly addressed analogic apperception. Husserl (and multiple other phenomenologists, including Ong) has argued that human thought is binary. Schutz wrote, “Husserl, in the later period of his life, studied the general phenomenon of pairing or coupling which is, according to him, a general feature of our consciousness” (p. 294). At a very basic level, if we are “copresent” with a table, we see only one part of the table but know it as “table.” Here, Schutz wrote, that

this perception of the visible frontside of the object involves an apperception by analogy of the unseen backside, an apperception which, to be sure, is more or less empty anticipation of what we might perceive if we turned the object around or if we walked around the object. (p. 295)

We fill in the missing pieces in our perception to create a whole.

We have particular expectations about the unsensed portion of the object based on our stock of knowledge, and our expectations (anticipations) may not be entirely correct. Schutz explained that

we may say that the frontside, which is apperceived in immediacy or given to us in presentation, appresents the unseen backside in an analogical way,

which, however, does not mean by way of an *inference* by analogy. The appresenting term, that which is present in immediate apperception is coupled or paired with the appresented pair. (1973, p. 295).

We discussed this twinning in Chapter 2 also, related to the uniqueness of friendship. Being in the world, we piece together discrete experiences to create a flowing stream of continuity in perception.

We also do the same in our experiences with others. Schutz (1996) explained that our experience of others is incomplete. He wrote, “I have experienced only some discrete stretches of the enduring life of the Other” (p. 201). He added,

I know his past—up to the present moment—only intermittently and it is not likely that my encounters with him coincided with what were his truly ‘relevant moments,’ moments he considered and continues to consider to be of great relevance for him. (p. 201)

We are incapable of truly ever having complete access to the other’s experience. Schutz explained that “this is so because I lack the knowledge both of the relevant factors of his past life and of the intrinsically personal effects they had on him and co-determine his present feelings and decisions” (p. 201). Ultimately, at this very basic level of meeting, we can say that “the *total* present of the Other, including memories of his that are co-determining influences on his present conduct, is not accessible to me” (p. 201). Despite this accessibility, we make particular inferences about the inaccessibility of others, drawing from our stock of knowledge. Particularly with our friends, Briggie (2008) pointed out that the accumulation of knowledge we build about our friends allows us to make decisions in their best interest, even in their absence.

Every day we encounter various objects and “among those objects which we experience in the vivid present are other people’s behavior and thoughts” (Schutz, 1970b, p. 166). As we listen to another person speaking, “we participate in the immediate present of the other’s thought” (p. 166). Schutz showed us that we are unable to grasp our stream of thought in the vivid present. Instead, we can only reflect. Should I, however, stop to think about the grasping of that stream of thought, I no longer experience it but instead now reflect. Schutz (1976) explained,

My experience of the fellow-man is direct as long as I am straightforwardly engaged *in* the We-relation, that is, as long as I participate in the common stream of *our* experiences. If I think and reflect *on* our experience, this directness is broken. (p. 26)

Essentially, our partner becomes an object—the *object* of thought. As discussed earlier, objectification and depersonalization are issues that stem from the nature of human thought and language, as we continuously draw from our

stock of knowledge and apply information, sometimes incorrectly, to guide our interactions.

Maines (1989) showed that friendships are both personal and categorical, and as such, a relational label emerges (not categorical). We draw on our typifications to structure the relationship. To further emphasize how this is important to friendship and social relationships in general, here is a description of the connection by Schutz:

In the pure We-relation, I apprehend only the existence of a fellow-man and the fact that he is confronting me. For a concrete social relation to become established, however, I must also know how he is oriented to me. In face-to-face situations I gain knowledge of this specific aspect of my partner's conscious life by observing the concrete manifestation of his subjective experiences in the common stream of the We-relation. (1976, p. 27)

Continuing from Schutz, in *Collected Papers I* we find that “the We-relation as such transcends the existence of either consociate within the paramount reality” and that it “can be appresented only by symbolization” (p. 353). We are both natural, everyday parts of each other's lives—“element[s] of the reality of everyday life” (p. 353). For Schutz, the parties to the situation are those which define the particulars of that situation. He adds that “a joint interest makes them partners, and the idea of *partnership* is perhaps the most general term for appresented We-relation” (p. 354). All types of human social relationships rely on appresentation to various degrees, even friendship.

Schutz advanced the idea that all of our encounters are filtered through our scheme of interpretation, which is our stock of knowledge. Not only do all encounters become interpreted that way, but as we are with our friend, we add to our stock of knowledge about that specific person and the relationship itself, which then becomes a reference point from which we understand the other person. Through repeat encounters, a social relationship emerges and our ability to interpret the other becomes more accurate.

Related to our apprehensions of other persons whom we are no longer in corporeal co-presence with, Schutz argued that we do so by “means of a fixed concept, or type, derived ultimately from direct experience but now held invariant” (1970a, p. 223). If, though, we learn of someone through another person, that is, mediated by a second person, Schutz explained that “I have no concrete vivid picture of my own with which to start: I must depend on what my friend tells me” and “I have to depend on my friend's assumption, not my own, that the contemporary he is describing has not changed” (p. 223). When we are oriented to the other, or aware of their presence, Schutz said that this “serves to call attention to the peculiar way in which I apprehend the conscious experiences of my contemporaries” (1970b, p. 225). We apprehend the other as “anonymous processes” (p. 225). He called this a “They-orientation” and contrasted it to a “Thou-orientation.” He wrote, “When I am Thou-oriented,

I apprehend the other person's experiences within their setting in his stream of consciousness" (p. 225). Our awareness in the They-orientation is an abstraction and "my knowledge of my contemporaries is, therefore, inferential and discursive" (p. 225). Because all language is hermeneutic and because of the nature of human consciousness, all knowledge of all others is inferential and discursive.

Problems with Interpreting the Other in Our Everyday World

In *The Social Construction of Reality* (1996), drawing heavily from Schutz, Berger and Luckmann advanced the idea that our stock of knowledge at hand is the ground of all interpretation for all of our experience. However, even in our face-to-face situations, they acknowledged three central problems related to "the knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life" (p. 75). Thinking and acting are not homogeneous and are "(1) incoherent, (2) only partially clear, and (3) not at all free from contradictions" (p. 75). All interactions are interpretive, all communication is hermeneutic. Ong explained that there is a reciprocity in discourse, a reciprocity that creates as it is created and "thus reciprocal discourse commonly interprets itself bilaterally (or multilaterally if more than two are engaged in it) as it proceeds. It negotiates meaning out of meaning" (2017, p. 42). He continued that "dialogue ... is hermeneutic in hermeneutics' natural habitat" (p. 42). Then, "oral conversation advertises the intersubjectivity of all human thought and its tie-in with the intersubjectivity of expression" (p. 42). Ong wrote the following passage to clarify how, exactly, all language requires interpretation:

There is no end to interpretation. In its quite ordinary and simple sense, to interpret means to bring out what is concealed in a given manifestation, that is, in a given phenomenon or state of affairs providing information. We can interpret not only verbalized expression, but anything that provides information: a sense, a roll of thunder, a gesture, a personal attitude shown in various ways, an utterance. (2017, p. 13)

While all communication conceals, there is a special concern when it comes to mediated communication.

Hermeneutic Presence and its Challenges

Don Ihde, in *Technology and the Lifeworld*, delineated the various relationships humans have with and through technology. Ihde recognized the argument that pervades modern scholarship that "technologies are thought to take us away from ordinary and face-to-face experience and *distance* us from others, nature or even objects" (Ihde, 2010, p. 3). Ihde, instead, argued from the position that "contemporary technologies actually *embody* or *re-embody* our fleshly experience in new ways, in interactive ways" (p. iii), and he worked to uncover "the new

ways in which contemporary experience is transformed through new or re-embodiments” (p. iii). Working through Ihde and drawing from Clark’s (2008) claim that writing is extended thought, I have argued elsewhere (Petricini, 2019) that our encounters of others online are *hermeneutic* encounters. We now are in a world where we can solely encounter others via mediated settings. This means that we, too, also can interpret them strictly through mediation.

Bakardjieva (2005), too, made the connection that our communication with others is hermeneutic. She wrote, “The response of the Other comes to me through a hermeneutic relation: I–(technology–social world)” (pp. 64–65). In a hermeneutic relation, we “read” others. But this reading requires several extra layers of interpretive ability, including some beyond our control (such as access to the internet). I have written earlier that “all human communicative exchange is between persons, human persons, their bodies, and although mediated in various forms, it is still between bodies” (Petricini, 2019). When we communicate with others today, most of our communication is hybridized. We interact with our closest partners both in person and via screens. Drawing from Ihde’s phenomenology, we perceive the screen and through the screen. Whether through text, video, or audio, we encounter others in a filtered way. The more we remove the other from the totality of our senses, the more we rely on our interpretive abilities to fill in our understanding of them and the less we rely on information communicated by them.

Absent Cues

Up until now, the purpose has been to show the role of interpretation in dialogue to pave the way for the following implications. Mediated communication has changed elements related to dialogue. The conclusion that it has changed it for the worse is not supported by the research. Mediated dialogue is possible and requires additional levels of communicative work for success. There is no doubt that mediated communication reduces the available cues that aid in interpreting meaning when we engage in communication with other persons face to face. Often, if we are emailing someone or text messaging them, we have no opportunity to see their bodily gestures or facial expressions that may indicate that the words they are saying may not reflect how they feel. We are unable to reach out and hug them or touch them at all. The sensory cues that make up the full experience of presence are absent.

It is important to consider, though, the hybridized nature of today’s relationships. It is nothing out of the ordinary for me to send an email to a colleague who is in the office next to me. I often turn to email out of respect to her particularity. Email creates a reminder that makes life easier rather than popping into her office, and it allows her to address my communication on her time, rather than me intruding. Rarely do we communicate with someone strictly via mediated settings, even our friends. Technology has seemingly been transformed in response to these reduced cues. When I travel, I can send home videos of my time away. I can take

pictures and receive pictures from home while I'm gone, and I can even call and video chat with my family at bedtime and read a story to my son.

Absence/Loss Conflation

Failing to be attentive to the hybridized nature of most relationships has created a scholarship form of tunnel vision that is one problem. Additionally, even if cues are absent, absence can be beneficial in various aspects of our lives and is not always indicative of loss. Bakardjieva wrote, "both my means of self-expression and the codes in which the social is represented to me have to be adapted to the structure of the mediating technology (and the social institutions and practices growing upon it)" (p. 65). She cautioned us that this can be a source of alienation. Ong agreed that communication technologies have created alienation. In many works and lectures, he showed that over time, reading grew to become an interiorizing and solitary activity. While they do promote alienation and objectivity, they also have promoted introspection and intimacy. In an interview with Wayne Aftree, Ong voiced that, "Words are interiorizing. They relate things to my consciousness, but they also enable me to relate my consciousness to itself" (2002, p. 385). Interiorization, specifically, for Ong in this interview is about the fact that "Man can say 'I.' He can come back and take possession of himself, get hold of his own consciousness" (2002, p. 385). Briggles' (2008) work also supports the idea that the absence created can be quite positive, and explained that "the reader of the written words will interpret them in light of his experiences" (p. 77). This process of interpretation leads to new meanings emerging. In addition, the process of writing between two friends writing together "plunges the friends toward great depths of introspection" and the interpretive process takes place at unprecedented levels (p. 77). Here is one example of possibilities over problems, but Briggles is not the only optimist or scholar to point out new additions to our dialogic process that were not possible prior to mediated exchanges. Research examining social networks led two scholars to conclude that "new technologies ... just realize our ancient propensity to connect to other humans, albeit with electrons flowing through cyberspace rather than conversation drifting through air," and they continued, "even astonishing advances in communication technology like the printing press, the telephone, and the internet do not take us away from this past; they draw us closer to it" (p. 257).

Mediated Dialogic Additions

Walther and Parks (2002) have shown that while there are particular cues filtered out of mediated communication, there are also elements of mediated communication that are not present in the face-to-face. Citing multiple studies, the pair identified several benefits of mediated interpersonal communication. They wrote that studies reported improved mental well-being, access to superior expertise, support, and relationships grounded in similarity (versus

solely proximity like in the past). Zhao explored Schutz extensively and other relevant literature to show that mediated exchanges allow people to “express themselves more openly, engaging in intimate exchanges of feelings and thought with one another free from the concerns that constrain human interactions in geospace” (2015, p. 101). In addition to the above, there are other benefits to mediated communication.

Zhao (2005) also noted the level of introspection necessary to communicate online and wrote, “Telling telecopresent others who we are therefore requires a level of introspection and reflectively that is not normally exercised in the realm of face-to-face interaction” (p. 397). Zhao explained that when we are within the actual physical presence of another person, we do not need to describe ourselves for “they can see for themselves” and “they will come to know us over time” (p. 397). When it comes to mediated communication though, particularly text-based, the cues are so filtered that it is necessary to give self-descriptions—specifically “in text-based online communications we are nothing until we type at the keyboard and others do not know us unless we tell them something” (p. 397). While the possibility is there for deception, there is also an element of increased awareness of the self.

In addition to increased self-awareness through text-based communication, Briggie also noted another important element—deliberateness. Because “writing occurs at a slower pace than speaking” the lag can foster “the attentiveness and discipline to discover deeper truths about one’s nature” (p. 77). He added that “it also affords greater opportunities to formulate precise language to describe one’s character or to articulate one’s reactions to the words of a friend” (p. 77). The deliberateness that arises from the reflective delays in writing can “thus act as an anchor to submerge the friendship to great depths” (p. 77). As a side note, different types of media encourage different types of levels regarding this, e.g. email versus text. Email, of course, offers more asynchronicity than text messaging.

Particularly, related to the cues-filtered-out approaches that argue that our friendship possibilities are limited via virtual environments due to the loss of cues, there is no guarantee that the richer cues in the face-to-face context enrich relationships. Briggie wrote, “In offline contexts, we may encounter richer cues, but we may also often be constrained from working with them to do the important interpretive effort for the building of close friendships” (p. 75). He showed that “mutual acts of reading and writing” actually helped cultivate friendships (p. 76).

Finally, one more instance in which absence can allow for deeper understanding is related to the judgments and stereotypes that prevent dialogue related to one’s appearance in face-to-face settings that can disappear via mediated settings. The research has shown that when communicating via technological media, it is possible to form impressions of the other with whom one is conversing. Walther’s 1996 model of hyperpersonal communication suggested that the caveat of computer-mediated communication is that it relies less on the nonverbal realm and more on the words themselves. One downside is that our words are more filtered and likely to be edited. The upside, though,

is that one's physical appearance does not impede the impression process. So in these instances, the lack of cues instead frees the listener and speaker from the presuppositions and judgments that one makes within shared physical space.

Digitization

Mediated communication can distance the individual interpreting the meaning from the words which are used to convey that meaning. It fragments and digitizes communication and removes speakers from dialogue. When this happens, there is an objectification of the self. We see in our mediated world a great amount of concern with how one's words appear, or one's image appears via words. Drawing from Buber, Friedman said that

the essential problematic of the sphere of the between, writes Buber, is the duality of being and seeming. The man dominated by being gives himself to the other spontaneously without thinking about the image of himself awakened in the beholder. (p. 27)

He then explained,

The "seeming man," in contrast, is primarily concerned with what the other thinks of him, and produces a look calculated to make himself appear "spontaneous," "sincere," or whatever he thinks will win the other's approval. This "seeming" destroys the authentic of the life between man and man and thus the authenticity of human existence in general. (pp. 27–28)

But, important to note here is that Buber wrote this long before mediated communication in the electronic setting existed, and this distancing is endemic to all human communication in general. In this above work, Buber argued that all human relation requires a distancing.

Ong wrote, "A text certainly does separate an utterance from its author, who, once he or she has written down the text, may as well be dead" (2017, p. 29). In this context "a text" is a broader work than the average Tweet or phone message. That being said, when one imagines small fragments of type from individual "authors," they tend to consider them "utterances." They are, without a doubt, not spoken. They could be rehearsed, or perhaps not. These short snippets of words, though, vary depending on the immediacy of response. Take a ten-word sentence typed out for a Tweet, versus a ten-word sentence typed into a text message. Here, due to the setting, both are text and both may say the same thing, but the anticipated response where we imagine others is quite different. It seems that the degree to which various media feel separate relates to anonymity and intimacy. Ong addressed this with writing and shows that writing can lead to anonymity, but cautioned that we do not conflate text as disembodied. He wrote, "writing creates anonymous discourse, as has often

been pointed out”; however, “removing an utterance from its author is not removing it from discourse” (p. 45). He explicitly then stated that “no utterance can exist outside discourse, outside a transactional setting” (p. 45). He further clarified, “Putting an utterance into script, then, can only interrupt discourse, string it out indefinitely in time and space” (p. 45). He continued later that “text, however, functions fully as a text (and thus in actuality raises consciousness) only when it reenters discourse” (p. 46). He added,

Text can be made to reenter discourse, to function as utterance only by something nontextual, that is, by a code in a living person’s mind for converting the visual into the auditory, the code that we learn in order to read. (p. 30)

All language is hermeneutic and requires interpretation.

In *Language as Hermeneutic*, Ong actually tied language learning and interpretation to intersubjectivity itself. He called intersubjectivity “mysterious” and argued that it “marks human consciousness” (p. 88), and he argued that it is what underlies all language. He wrote, “In learning to speak a language, the child has to learn to interpret intersubjectively” (p. 88). He further added that

for a sound to function as a word, the speaker has to intend that the sound he or she makes so functions—that is, that the sound is not *just* a sound but has some specially intended purpose of its own. (p. 88)

Furthermore, “the speaker has to know that the hearer knows that he or she so intends” (p. 88). He continued, “And all this network has to be set up initially without being explained in words, for it lies beneath the use of words as words” (p. 88). Instead, he noted, “It lies in our intersubjectivity, in our being able to be aware and, in a way, to participate in and interpret the subjective consciousness of other human beings” (p. 88). He argued, “Hermeneutic or interpretive activity, like intentionality, precedes as well as accompanies naming as such” (p. 88). To clarify this point, Ong explained that “from the start, language learning is not essentially an exercise in affixing names and structuring them in relation to one another but is a complex hermeneutic or interpretive process ... involving intersubjectivity” (p. 88). Whether inserting text into an ongoing discourse or engaging in face-to-face conversation, all language is hermeneutic. Hermeneutics is concerned with showing us what is concealed. Ong wrote, “Interpretation or hermeneutics makes up for such missing elements, the absences with which all texts present us” (p. 39). All text creates an absence of meaning outside the words themselves and the meaning the interpreter ascribes to those words.

All language requires interpretation; however, the more removed from the paradigmatic setting, the more the individual interpreter must draw from his or her conjectures to interpret the other. As communication technology has evolved, we have been more and more able to uncover more cues about others

in their absence. Soukup wrote that “handwritten texts more urgently than face-to-face communication required interpretation because here people first experienced the absence of the author, the absence of the kind of dialogue to which they had been accustomed” (2012, p. 40). Despite this, face-to-face communication is still paradigmatic for all other forms of communication. Ong argued that in the interpretive process of the face-to-face, it begins before the utterance of any words. Meaning, he explains, is always negotiated and this is a natural part of the “discursive process” (p. 40).

The paradigmatic form of interacting with others is the face-to-face situation and all meaning is embodied, even the meaning of the being of the other. Ong explained that words themselves *represent*. He noted that “The *re-* in ‘represent’ suggests some kind of sense of presence antecedent to verbalization” (p. 23). Ong asked us to understand the “the word for chair and the thought for chair are neither the same sort of thing as the sensorily present chair” (p. 23). Zlatic (2017) wrote that for Ong, “all language use is hermeneutic because being is not equivalent with idea; every statement must be interpreted in light of contexts, purposes, attitudes, and so on” (p. 371). Textual communication is not even possible without face-to-face communication we all encounter naturally in our world. Soukup (2012) wrote that written communication is entirely dependent on face-to-face communication and added that even to read a text is to liken the text to sound, in a sense when we “decode” it. This process, however, requires a system to decode it, which is grounded again in the primacy of the paradigmatic form of communication. All text arises from speech and all text is read and belongs to a greater discourse, Ong has explained.

While all language is hermeneutic, textual language, Ong argued, requires more interpretation. He explained that “a basic reason why text can call urgently for interpretation or hermeneutics is that text always comes out of the past. Spoken words come into being always in the real, existent, holistic present. Writing does not” (p. 36). We must fill in the gaps based on our stock of knowledge at hand.

When it comes to the difficulty of interpreting outside of the face-to-face situation, Ong, like Walther and Parks, argued that there are cues that are filtered out, but “interpretation or hermeneutics makes up for such missing elements, the absences with which all text presents us, and deconstructionists have liked to insist” (2017, p. 37). The solution is not to remove media from our relationship but, instead, to explore a hermeneutic of care and commit to engaging difference no matter which medium we use to interact, mindful of the particular challenges we face.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that due to the nature of interpretation in the dialogic process, dialogue is possible in mediated settings, but it imposes several specific challenges in our relationships and communication with others. As a result, there are several directions and implications that need to be

explored further. First, despite the I-Thou, I-It transition that is part and parcel of all communication, like textual communication, mediated communication is especially conducive to objectification. Ong wrote, “Taken up by different readers at different times, always after its creation, the text constantly emerges in always new contexts” (2017, p. 36). Text is visual, “lying there passively, able to be operated on as spoken words are not” (p. 37). He also noted the “thing-like quality” of texts (p. 37). This “thing-like quality” creates a separation as we interpret in a way that is different from the interpretation of spoken words. Ong explained,

Spoken words are in great part further given meaning, further explained, interpreted as they are being uttered, not merely verbally but often in other ways such as subtle personal interaction with the other party or parties to the discourse as well as by nonverbal elements in the fuller context or situation in which they are spoken. (p. 39)

In some settings, the immediacy of continuous interpretation is delayed. Because of this, we need to be cautious about the interpretations we make about our asynchronous encounters.

For example, if a friend sent a text that said, “I am mad at you” without context, I could interpret that text in several different ways. Should the friend go to work and be unable to text for the next eight hours, I would be unable to clarify in any way exactly what they meant. Perhaps I choose to get angry. Perhaps I get nervous, wondering how I upset them. I could imagine that they are joking about something I did. No matter how I proceed, I am drawn into the text without the ability to further clarify until much later.

In some instances, we are uncertain even *who* will be the recipient in our communicative exchanges solely via text. This is interesting because it is true that speaking to someone face to face confirms that the *who* behind the discussion is there. However, orality alone in today’s world does not ensure this. Instead, this is a feature of face-to-face or even face-to-screen or screen-to-face. Yet, there is much more uncertainty in the textual case as we are never 100 percent sure who is reading our messages. At the same time, we are also never sure who is hearing our conversation with someone in which we are face to face. Because of this, we need to again be cautious and aware of this new possibility of our age.

Our technology has expanded to create new cues to compensate for the lack of cues. Because of this, we also now require more specialized interpretive training. For example, emojis and their meaning can vary. In Japan, the emoji with steam coming out its nose is used to signify triumph, while in the United States, it is often used to signify anger. All language is hermeneutic, Ong explains. But it seems that as we reduce the cues more and more, we create a more desperate need for interpretation if we alter his earlier quote. Ong noted, “With special skills and great effort the reader may be able to reconstruct conjectured responses of the absent writer which will fit the text somehow into

the milieu in which the reading is being done” (p. 47). And this does happen. But, arguably, there is also a between space created when two people converse via cyberspace, in which the milieu itself is the between that is generated between the two individuals. Ong later wrote that text creates a “laborious, self-conscious, one-sided” level of work (p. 47).

He noted, “Diminishing the temporal distance of the printed word decreased the impersonal distance between reader and writer” (p. 504). He then went on to predict, “Eventually other forms of mediated communication will provide great, more direct interaction beyond the immediacy of the event and increase the interactive nature of the discourse in ways that artificially simulate (not nonetheless approach) direct verbal communication” (p. 505). The next chapter will explore these new instances in which communication has been spread across time and space.

Zhao argues that in comparison with shared space, telecopresence requires more communication. He wrote, grounded in Habermas:

In the realm of consociates, mutual knowledge is constructed based on the sharing of lived-through life experiences; in telecopresence, however, it is constituted through communicative action. Communicative action is a form of “speech acts” by which “two subjects come to an understanding with one another.” (2015, p. 118)

Even more importantly, those who are together virtually are unable to make as many assumptions and do more communicative work, Zhao argued. As in the previous chapter, communicative work has been the focus. In the next chapter, we will explore how shared space, shared thought, and shared language come together for friendship.

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4 Time and Space

Altered Dimensions of Friendship

For most of human history, all social relationships were limited by place and time. Friendships were created and maintained within specific physical boundaries. When an individual moved far from a friend, it was difficult to stay in touch. Even if the duo had some means of mediated communication and could remain in contact, it was a struggle because communication was often “infrequent, expensive, or unsatisfying” (Adams, 1998, p. 157). Today, it has been said that friendships exist independent of time and space (Dreher, 2009, p. 407). Time and space are two social dimensions of relationships that deserve deeper consideration from a philosophy of communication framework because this context helps situate shifting understandings of what constitutes (or does not constitute) friendship. Sociologist Anthony Giddens is one scholar who has influenced multiple researchers investigating time and space and their connection to human relationships. He argued that “neither time nor space have been incorporated into the center of social theory” (1979, p. 202). What was true in the late 1970s is still true today. Both dimensions have yet to be explored in the realm of friendship specifically. Giddens argued that “the extension of social systems in space and time is an evident feature of the overall development of human society” (pp. 203–4). This chapter will explore the altered dimensions of time and space and the associated effects on friendships. It begins by examining the evolution of time consciousness in human society grounded in the media ecology tradition. After, it offers an analysis of the shifting boundaries of physical space and the implications of technology for friendship. Finally, it proposes that phenomenological distance can exist independent of time and space and phenomenological distance is the true wedge between friends, more so than space or time.

Friendship, Time, Temporality, and Time Consciousness

Phenomenological Considerations—Friendship as Duration

There are several relationships between time and friendship. As we will see in the following section, friendship seems to transcend space and time, while still being bound by time. Friends must share the same historical moment, friendship requires a duration through time, but an absence of communication over

long periods of time does not end a friendship. These are only a few of the many complex associations between time and friendship.

Much of the literature on friendship notes the amazing ability for friends to meet again after decades and pick up as if they had never been apart. Friends still consider themselves friends despite large gaps in time between when they last met in person, as well as despite long distances apart physically (Dreher, 2009). While friendship does seem to transcend time, it is also bound by time. Dreher pointed out that “friendship can only be constructed in concrete historical worlds” (p. 408). It would be impossible, for example, for me to be friends with my great-great-grandmother’s friend, despite the possibility of me finding a journal and knowing her innermost thoughts (as noted in Chapter 2). And, while friendship can extend through shared biographical time and space, it cannot extend over non-shared time because of the necessity of reciprocity.

Another significant way that friendship is related to time that is important for this project is the notion of friendship as duration. Friendship is felt as an enduring relationship and the duration of friendship is part of its essence. For friendship to be a friendship, it has to have duration and “must last more than one minute, or one hour” (Stocker, 1981, p. 752). Our encounters with our friends are discrete units of time, but our friendships are extensions of time. We do not spend all of our time with our friends, nor would we want to or even be able to. That being said, while our interactions with them are discrete, isolated moments of interaction, our actual friendship is experienced as duration.

This opens the door to drawing from Schutzian phenomenology again. Schutz (1970b) drew from Bergson in his discussion of *durée*. He began, “What we, in fact, experience in duration is not a being that is discrete and well-defined but a constant transition from a now-thus to a new now-thus” (p. 60). Our experience of the other’s presence in the actual experiencing moment is duration. We experience friendship as a constant transition. Schutz argued that the difference between discrete experience and pure duration is a “difference between two levels of consciousness” (p. 61). Schutz asked us to imagine our immersion in our streams of consciousness and said, “in my duration, I do not find any clearly differentiated experiences at all” (p. 62). He continued, “at one moment an experience waxes, then it wanes” (p. 62) and added, “for I experience my duration as a unidirectional, irreversible stream and find that between a moment ago and just now *I have grown older*. But I cannot become aware of this” (p. 62). Should we turn our awareness towards the stream, what Schutz calls reflection, we are then turning against the stream and we cease to be immersed during our reflection. The now that has become a thus is only understood through remembrance. Ultimately, Schutz’s point here was that “the simple experience of living is the flow of duration” (p. 62). All meaningful experience is ultimately discrete as it requires, for the nature of being meaningful, a reflective turn. And so, then, as a meaning-making relationship, our experiences with friends are discrete moments that are filed into a protracted sense of duration with them. Schutz wrote:

Because the concept of meaningful experience always presupposes that the experience on which meaning is predicated is a discrete one, it now becomes quite clear that only past experience can be called meaningful, that is, one that is present to the retrospective glance as already finished and done with. (p. 63)

Meaning, particularly, he wrote, is “merely an operation of intentionality” (p. 63). Our stream of consciousness is our *durée*. Schutz noted that

in and by our bodily movements we perform the transition from our *durée* to the spatial or cosmic time and our working actions partake of both. In simultaneity we experience the working action as a series of events in outer and in inner time, unifying both dimensions into a single flex which shall be called the *vivid present*. The vivid present originates, therefore, in an intersection of *durée* and cosmic time. (p. 70)

Our communicative acts are what draw our inner *durée* out to the manifestation of duration in friendship and all human relationships. Specifically related to time, as biographies intersect, Dreher (2009) argued that the particular uniqueness of the relationship must be shared “as well as experience of an existential nature” (p. 413). That is to say, within each of the individual’s biographical identities, life narratives, they must find the friendship to be a friendship as well as be orientated reciprocally toward each other *as* friend.

In the previous chapter, a lengthy examination on the issue of apperceiving others was undertaken. This has a connection to the current section in that when we perceive others, we do not perceive their “now” self only—we combine a collection of remembered past and anticipated future selves which collectively become “them.” Schutz argued “that apprehension does not necessarily presuppose actual perception, but that the appresenting member of the appresentational pair may also be a recollection or even a phantasm” (1970b, p. 201). Related to this, he added “that the result or product of another activity refers to the action from which it resulted and, thus, can function as a sign of his cogitations” (p. 201). Finally, he notes “that the principle of the relative irrelevance of the vehicle is applicable (the printed lecture refers to the talk of the lecturer)” (p. 201). Unpacking the above phenomenological statements, this matters to the current discussion because we take the independent artifacts that our friends make available to us to inform our perception of them (social media posts, writings, videos, intentional and unintentional communicative acts, etc.). In all of the instances in which we encounter our friend, they build on the interpretation of the friend and inform the sense of friendship that we have.

The Evolution of Time Consciousness

The experience of duration in friendship is only one of several important phenomenological considerations. Bakardjieva (2005) argued, drawing from Schutz, that one of the most critical aspects associated with time consciousness is the intersection of the subjective, collective, and cosmic time scales. She wrote that the “fixed course of temporality,” is derived “from the intersection of subjective time (stream of consciousness), biological time (the rhythm of the body), world time (the seasons) and social time (the calendar)” (p. 41). Technology helps bring biological, world, and social time “into closer conformity with my subjective time” (p. 63). She added, “in a sense, this can be interpreted and experienced by the actor as an increase in personal freedom, spontaneity, and control, or in other words as empowerment and disalienation” (p. 63). Technology has had a major impact on all areas of our lives and time consciousness, and multiple scholars have investigated similar themes to those Bakardjieva has noted about the impact on individual experience.

A good portion of media ecology literature has studied time consciousness related to shifts in technology. One particularly influential work is Eliade’s *Myth of the Eternal Return* (1954). In this work, Eliade explored archaic ontologies using recordings of various myths, narratives, and rituals. Without the ability to record knowledge or information, the world available to these early groups of people was the world as it could exist only in the spoken word. Sound exists only in time, it has no spatial dimensions. Sound is completely bound by time, by the moment one sound comes into existence, the sound that comes before is already gone (Ong, 2000). What could be remembered, stored, and passed on was limited to the capability of the human mind and verbal language. Early human beings experienced being in the eternal present. Natural events, by all appearances, seemed to be cyclical. Over time, the moon waxed and waned. The sun seemed to return to its position on the horizon. The heavens, too, seemed to adhere to a cyclical pattern, always returning to a point of beginning. Eliade explains that collective knowledge endured through repetition (1954, p. 20). This is not just in language, meaning metrical phrases, songs, and stories. This included actual repetition of acts and rituals which help transport the individual into the perceived time of the original creation of the act itself. What we have here are human beings who are limited to a knowledge of the eternal present and knowledge of a sense of being as it is in the beginning. Eliade writes, “Through repetition of the cosmogonic act, concrete time, in which the construction takes place, is projected into mythical time, *in illo tempore* when the foundation of the world occurred” (p. 20). All acts had archetypes, the main archetype being creation.

Time spent repeating archetypal acts was time spent *in illo tempore*, or sacred time. Time without any mythical meaning, without an archetype or an exemplary myth, simply was not time. Eliade writes, “an object or an act becomes real only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype” (p. 34). Sacred time was not experienced as time, however, as we might understand ourselves

in time in today's world, either. Instead, to be in the act of ritual was to create an "abolition of time through the imitation of archetypes and the repetition of paradigmatic gestures" (p. 35). Profane time "is without meaning: in the state of 'becoming'" (p. 35), he explained. As communicative technologies changed, though, so did our experience of time.

As human beings relied more and more on scripts to record, the mind began to explore and reflect on being in the world and being in time. Eliade points out that in the development of monotheistic cultures of the ancient world, we begin to see narratives in which there appears to be a shift toward a somewhat historical or even linear understanding of time—that it has a beginning and an end. For most cultures, time was still cyclical. Havelock (1986) wrote, "The substitutions for the 'timeless present' turning into the 'logical present' in place of the 'immediate present' or the past or future, became a pre-occupation of the pre-Platonic philosophers, particularly Parmenides" (p. 106). We can see in the work of many ancient Greek philosophers an explosion in abstract thinking and by 100 BCE, Eliade says that knowledge of the human as a historical being was commonplace.

By the Middle Ages, a sense of measured time infiltrated human consciousness, changed by and changing how humans interacted with the world, each other, and themselves. To say that language alone changed consciousness is to reduce the complexity of the vast changes that occurred over this period. First, in this period, written and then printed word created an orientation toward the visual field of sensory experience and jolted language somewhat out of the sound world in which it had been since the beginning. Second, written word also made it possible for knowledge to be stored outside the human, and in such, thought could now be abstract. The new orientation toward the visual, then, and the ability to think abstractly led to a new orientation toward the linear, mechanistic, quantified experience of time.

Mumford argued that mechanistic, linear, sequential time stemmed from the monastery of the Middle Ages (2010). He wrote,

Benedict added a seventh period to the devotions of the day, and in the seventh century, by a bull of Pope Sabinianus, it was decreed that the bells of the monastery be rung seven times in the twenty-four hours. These punctuation marks in the day were known as the canonical hours, and some means of keeping count of them and ensuring their regular repetition became necessary. (p. 13)

Jacques Le Goff, a medieval historian, has studied the rise of both Christian time and secular time in his works *Medieval Imagination* (1992) and *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (1982). The eleventh century marks the beginnings of change. Le Goff explained that "for the Bible, and primitive Christianity, time is primarily theological time. It 'begins with God' and is 'dominated by him'" (1982, p. 30), and continued, "their eternity was merely the extension of time into infinity" (p. 31). An orientation toward the

quantitative was developing, though. Time “spent” in church and time spent praying now had a direct effect on time spent in purgatory in the afterlife. In this quantitative orientation, time was the means to God. Time carried the Christian in one direction, linearly, to God. By no means was time quantitative and linear in today’s sense of time, however.

Spiritual fissures began to arise in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which Le Goff investigated specifically by tracing artifacts of the medieval merchants (1982). Le Goff explained that merchants were subject to natural time, or “the dominion of meteorological time, to the cycle of season and the unpredictability of storms and natural cataclysms” (p. 345). As the flow of communication and records increased, so too did commercial networks, networks in which time was now an object of measurements. Le Goff noted the commonality of letters of exchange in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Champagne. In the fourteenth century, escapement devices began to be used in towered mechanical clocks, ensuring mechanical accuracy (Le Goff, 1992). Consciousness was now altered as the sound of the bells signaled a measured, punctuated time that was independent of religious life. At this same time, the vanishing point now began to be used in painting, murals now depicted cycles, and portraits became more realistic, capturing the subject in time (Le Goff, 1982).

The post-modern era experiences time differently than modernity. We are in a society so fragmented in the individual experience that in the present world, trying to reflect on any collective experience might be impossible. If the consciousness of time is intertwined with the medium of the word, whether it be oral, written, or print, electronic, or digital, then the present world is an age in which the preference for the method of delivery of the word, although computerized, varies greatly between individuals. Despite these limitations, from a rhetorical standpoint, there are generalizations and even implications that arise from study.

Born in 1912, by the time Ong published *In the Human Grain* (1967), a collection of essays in which he explored the consciousness of human time, he had experienced two world wars and the atomic era. In the decades before Ong’s birth, the industrial era brought the Western world into a new age of mechanistic time. In the 1850s, the railroad system standardized time across North America. Sun time varies every eight miles from east to west, but the railroad system of time now grouped time into four locations, spatial locations (Mumford, 2010). The standardization solidified a linear experience of time across space. The railroad in one sense, then, built a collective spatial time structure. In another, it annihilated time and space, transporting people with speeds thought never possible. Boorstin wrote, “As there comes to be less and less difference between the time it takes to reach one place rather than another, time itself dissolves as a measure of space” (1987, p. 115).

The railroad was only one means through which space/time structure changed in that era. Vehicles of transportation evolved to transport goods and people faster and faster, and communication technologies, such as the telegraph, telephone, radio, and television, now made possible the transport of the interior through space

in record time and these electronic technologies drew the word toward an oral/aural orientation. In Ong's world of the electronic age, voice now was becoming alive, and printed word was melding with sound. This post-typographical era, the electronic era, established man in "a radically new relationship to time" (2000, p. 98). Ong wrote in *Knowledge in Time* (1968) that knowledge is now accessible to the human being: knowledge of the physical universe, knowledge of man and his life world, and knowledge of man in time. He noted, "Until quite recent years, man had no very effective idea of the real time scales applying to the universe of which he was a part" (1968, p. 13). We know ourselves on a macro scale, meaning of our place in the evolving physical universe, and on a micro scale, meaning as part of an evolving unique person. He wrote, "Today we know the world as something with which we are in publicly and circumstantially verifiable contact, and as affecting the real present in ways that are matters for scientific, cosmological, and historical study" (1968, p. 14). This has had an effect on our experience of others in time and space and as a result, our friendships.

In both oral culture and electronic culture, there is a strong sense of simultaneity and presence between individuals, but Ong pointed out that simultaneity in the electronic world is "supercharged" (2000, p. 91). He explained that "the computer is actually the most quantified and most highly sequential or linear of all instruments; it creates a sense of simultaneity only because its inhuman speedup of sequences makes it appear to annihilate them" (p. 91). This speedup has still drawn us inward, but at the same time outward. It has created a paradox and draws us toward both interiorization and exteriorization (1967; 1968). As time and space have been "annihilated," it has led to a heightened sense of presence, yet at the same time, electronic technologies draw people inward, into themselves and have offered a possibility of reflection of the self in a historical way not possible in the oral world (2000, p. 312).

The process of digitization in our age refers to the process of converting everything into binary code, or quantification. Mumford wrote of the mechanical age (early electronic) that "irrespective of strain or fatigue, despite reluctance or apathy, the household rises close to its set hour" (2010, p. 269), and it is no stretch to say that most individuals still are servants to time. Time consciousness as it "arbitrarily rule[s] over human functions is to reduce existence itself to mere time-serving and to spread the shades of the prison-house over too large an area of human conduct" (Mumford, 2010, p. 271). Boorstin believed that experience was being homogenized. He wrote, "Moving only through time, measuring our distances in homogenous ticks of the clock we are at a loss to explain ourselves, what we are doing, where, or even whether we are going" (1987, p. 115). Rushkoff agreed that in the present age we have found ourselves lost in general and lost in time (2013), and numerous philosophers find the electronic and present era marked by a lack of moral unity, coherence, and narrative.

It becomes difficult to think of any aspect of human life that has not been quantified. Even childbirth now occurs on a schedule as more and more mothers and their obstetricians plan dates for cesarean sections, not just for medical necessity but for mere convenience. Marshall McLuhan wrote that

“time is separated from the rhythms of human experience” (2003, p. 199). Despite being a scholar of the electronic age, he recognized that “time measured by abstract uniform units gradually pervades all sense of life” (2003, p. 199). In his era, he recognized that “not only work, but also eating and sleeping, came to accommodate themselves to the clock rather than organic needs” (2003, p. 199). Rushkoff, in *Present Shock*, discusses chronobiology (2013). Researchers have discovered that the human body seems to operate on a 24-hour cycle, known as a circadian rhythm, independent of any time cue. Melatonin production, the hormone that makes us feel tired, has been shown to decrease with exposure to sunlight and increase with exposure to darkness, and melatonin production is interfered with when an individual is exposed to blue-light rays—the rays emitted from smartphones, computers, and television screens. Body temperatures fluctuate with exposure to daylight.

This has definitive effects on our experience of others and our friendships. Preferences for technology greatly vary. The choice of medium affects experience, and these choices appear to be highly individualized and fragmented. We might communicate with one friend strictly via text, yet meet another for happy hour and even a different friend receives weekly phone calls. Sometimes the context changes based on the immediacy desired, and others we simply choose based on convenience. In Western culture, in our current moment there are numerous calls to “schedule in” time with friends, as if it can and should be quantified. Social media even keep track of the number of friends we have now, quantifying even the most tangential of relationships that might be friendly. While our understanding of our place in time has shifted quite significantly alongside the correlative shifts in communicative technologies and have altered the means by which we can communicate with our friends, our physical place in the cosmos has also come under the philosophical gaze.

Proximal Distance and the Physical Limitations of Friendships

Our changing perceptions of time and the correlative technological shifts also have impacted our experience of space—specifically the space between friends. In this section, we will see that there is a tension that exists. We have removed barriers related to space between friends; however, there is still a real feeling of being “distant” from others. Proximal distance and its relationship to phenomenological and experiential distance are a relevant thread to be examined in this section, particularly related to anonymity and intimacy.

As communication technologies evolved, our perceptions of and experience in time and space have changed. Schutz argued in his work that “I experience a fellow-man directly if and when he shares with me a common sector of time and space” (1976, p. 24). Temporality was a central element of his phenomenology. For Schutz, sharing time is what is fundamental to “a genuine simultaneity of our two streams of consciousness” (p. 24). Sharing space, Schutz explained, is what is vital for “my fellow-man [to appear] to me in person as he himself and none other” (p. 24). As noted in the Chapter 1 of this work, there

has been a call to extend Schutz's phenomenology of time to incorporate media's effects on being. Bakardjieva (2005) argued "that media are implicated in a recharting of the zones of anonymity of the experienced social world" (p. 43). She added, "technological mediation, and particularly information and communication technologies, similarly rearranges the structures of anonymity stretching from the most intimate we-relations to the most distant they-relations" (p. 64). The physical boundaries of friendship need to be reimagined. Proximity is no longer a necessity for the creation and maintenance of friendship.

Early interpersonal communication literature noted proximity as one of the key characteristics of affinity and friendship development. The traditional relationship development characteristics are "physical proximity, frequent interaction, information about physical appearance, cues about group members, and information about the broader social context" (Parks & Floyd, 1996, p. 84). In 1996, when the pair originally published their research, and even today in our modern time, online relationships were and are considered to be rather impersonal. The work done by Parks and Floyd proved that relationships can and do occur online. The evidence would seem to suggest then that physical proximity has nothing to do with friendship. While there might have been a shift in proximal limitations to friendship, new research related to social media networks shows that there does appear to be a *cognitive* limit on the number of friends one can maintain at one time (Emmeche, 2017), and this makes sense when one considers that friendships take significant communicative work.

Perceptualizing Bodies and Others in Time and Space

If human beings were previously limited to communicating with those nearby, it makes sense that we would have adapted from an evolutionary perspective to limit the number of relationships and the communicative load that we could maintain at any point in our biography. Our body in space directed which human beings we had access to in the communicative realm. If you stand and can imagine how many individuals could surround you, it certainly would not be equivalent to the number of relationships one can maintain via social media today. Schutz worked to delineate different zones of relevance to one's body in space. As I stand, my body in space, there are particular spatial zones that extend outward from my experience. For example, first there is the *zone of actual reach*. I can reach out and touch my computer. But there is also *present reach*. A world that was within my actual reach can move out of my present reach through the passage of time. But the world within our former actual reach is retained in our memories, flowing into our stock of knowledge and informing all of our perceptions and interactions (whether accurate or not). Though I might walk out of the room, the computer, to me, is still on that table. Schutz and Luckmann wrote that this is "conscious activity in the form of remembrance and anticipation" (1973, p. 45). Based on how things *were*, I

then remember them and anticipate them. My computer might very well have been stolen.

Schutz and Luckmann wrote, “The world in actual reach has essentially the temporal character of the present” (p. 51). They continued:

The world in potential reach has a much more complicated temporal structure. The world in restorable reach is based upon the past, upon that which was previously in my reach and upon that which (as I assume on the grounds of the idealizations of the “and so forth” and “I can always do it again”) can once again be brought into my actual reach. (p. 51)

As we move through time and space, all of our experience is perceived as continuous. This perception, too, applies to our friendships.

We believe that our friend, when they leave our physical presence, will return to that presence and be the same friend with the same qualities and traits as when they were originally in our presence. And this is developed through a build-up over time. When we encounter someone in a face-to-face situation, as they continue to meet us in the present over and over again, we build up a stock of knowledge about who we believe them to be. Even when they cease to be within our actual reach, that is, within our physical presence, they are still present to us as a remembrance and as an anticipated person in the future, so that we can then build a pattern of our encounters with them. Schutz (1970a) addressed the idea of a human being walking out of our direct reach, and in doing so points to the notion of our experience of friendship that is built through our anticipations and memories. He explained:

Far from seeming obvious, it actually seems absurd that someone we are close to has somehow become “different” now that he is out of sight, except in the trite sense that our experiences of him bear the mark of pastness. (p. 220)

The jump from attainable reach from a face-to-face setting to a virtual setting is not that difficult, providing that the verbally explicit there is created in such a way that our stock of knowledge provides us with enough information to adequately anticipate information, as the remembrance is irrelevant anyway based on Schutz’s observation that only a very small amount of information about our world comes from personal experience.

Mediated Intimacy: Technological Transitions and Redefinitions of Connection in Cyberspace

Conceptualizing Phenomenological Distance

All relationships have an element of distance because of the nature of what it means to be a human being with consciousness, and intimacy has its limits.

There is a reason that even before social media existed, intimacy and its development were thoroughly investigated in multiple fields. If you have ever sat in a room full of people but felt alone, you have experienced feeling distanced from others despite no significant proximal distance from others. Likewise, if you have ever been alone deep in the forest but felt deeply connected to others, you experience intimacy despite no others within your immediate proximal presence. It is impossible for us to ever be able to know others with complete certainty and phenomenological distance is part of being human.

In previous eras of human history, being proximally distanced often meant being phenomenologically distanced. If we were not around others, it was not possible to communicate with them. Technology has altered the possibilities for closeness and distance as communicative versus tied to physical place. Bennett (2016) argued that technology obscures the “need for close physical space” (p. 254). For her, there is a loss associated with lack of physical space which is “rectified,” she argued, “when we are intentional about our daily choices of interaction” (p. 254). Her article drew from Elull and *technique*, and she cautioned against the “tendency to truncate the basic premise of human relations—presence—for the sake of a more efficient means of dealing with the other” (p. 255). She argued:

While social media allow people to be co-present (i.e. present to each other simultaneously in different time zones and locations), the absence of one’s physical presence leaves a friendship (or any relationship) in a precarious situation. The inability to act towards or touch another creates a situation that is emotionally sparse, certainly lacking in relationship richness. Connecting with others online, over time, creates a normalcy for absence. (p. 255)

Bennett did note that “for online social networking to work, people *must* be absent from each other. Distance is a necessity” (p. 250). But distance and remoteness are part and parcel of all human relationships because they are communicative phenomena. Even hunter-gatherer families experienced partners leaving the family’s proximal presence to gather food or hunt. Absence is a natural part of all human relationships, and the common idiom “absence makes the heart grow fonder” clearly shows that for at least as long as I have been alive to hear that expression, human beings have recognized that absence cannot and should not be avoided.

Distancing is simply a natural part of our relationships with others, both in the physical realm and in cyberspace. Zhao and Elesh (2008) pointed out that in the physical domain, we have always had ways of keeping others closed off from our spaces. They called these involvement shields and wrote, “Besides using walls and gates that physically keep others from getting within range, people also create ‘situational closures’ to symbolically close off a region into which they retreat. For example, a door curtain, even if transparent” (p. 576).

Online, they noted, we do the same—we might “ignore, hide, block, or relegate” (p. 576). They added:

In either region, the establishment of copresence also depends on people’s willingness to engage and be engaged by others, as various involvement shields can be deployed to block access if people are not interested in participating. (p. 578)

Computer-mediated communication “combines the permanence of writing and the synchronicity of speaking” and this is “an entirely new mode of human contact created by the internet” (Zhao, 2006, p. 462). Zhao also explained that “in the traditional society, intimacy is closely tied to physical proximity and others become progressively more anonymous as they are distanced from each other” (p. 462). Evidence is showing that intimacy can be maintained across space and the opposite, that two people can share space yet no intimacy.

Communicative technologies have altered our experience of space and time, and as a result, because of the connection between friendship and space and time, we find ourselves at the forefront of new possibilities for connection. Different technologies have different effects and are conducive to different forms of encounter and intimacy. Mok et al. (2010) found that email, for example, had minimal effects on relationship maintenance—meaning that people did not care less about their friends or feel less close just because they were communicating via email. At the time of the study, the trio noted that face-to-face communication between friends and relatives remained unchanged from the 1970s to the time of the study. Phone contact did slightly increase. Yang et al. (2014) observed that specific channels are more conducive to building and fostering intimacy than others. For example, they noted that cell phones are the most intimate, and social networking sites the least. However, if we are using a messenger via social media to communicate with a friend with access to multiple emojis, gifs, and other tools to add nonverbal elements to our conversation, yet on the phone using email, we then encounter a scenario in which their conclusions are not applicable. The rapid acceleration of technology has shown us that humans want to feel connected across distances, and they will create technologies that facilitate this.

The felt sense of intimacy has shifted as our technologies have shifted. Even the intimacy that is possible between reader and writer has come under consideration. Ong wrote the following concerning intimacy and electronic media: “Does Hopkins’ electrically implemented relationship with his subject establish any special relationship with his readers? It does establish a new kind of directness in the relationships, a new intimacy, a participatory intimacy” (2002, p. 501). Chambers (2013) also noted a new intimacy, arguing that “today’s technologically mediated relationships give rise to a new, mediated intimacy which incorporates friendship and reflects the fluid, diverse and informal nature of contemporary personal interactions” (p. 45). Adams (1998) pointed out that

not only are we altering our friendships but that we are developing technology that suits the purpose of forming and maintaining friendships.

Zhao (2004) argued that we need to update Schutz's divisions to incorporate a third realm, "consociated contemporaries" (p. 91). This group shares time but not space. There are new spaces for contact and these require new conceptualizations of our physical and phenomenological spaces. The third realm, specifically, Zhao argued, is one in which there is an interaction between face and device. In this realm, the mediated realm, there is a significant amount of trust that must occur in addition to the usual trust between two persons in dialogue. Zhao uses the example of a mailperson delivering a letter between two people. Each person trusts in their understanding of the system to deliver their message, for example. Trust and connections will be taken up in the next chapter of this book.

Many scholars lament the loss of the "richness" of the face-to-face situation. The new realm of consociated contemporaries is often one that many researchers in multiple disciplines attack as "less than." This is unfortunate. Rhetoric that pits online relationships against offline relationships is not only unhelpful, it represents a reality that does not exist. The majority of our relationships are hybridized in today's world. In the previous chapter, the notion of absent cues was discussed and the inaccurate tendency to associate absence with loss. This, too, has been done with immediacy. A lack of immediacy is not a lack of intimacy, but it can become problematic when we begin to inaccurately interpret the other. Schutz wrote, "The first steps beyond the realm of immediacy are marked by an increase in the number of perceptions I have of the other person and a narrowing of the perspectives within which I view him" (1970a, p. 218). Whether the lack of immediacy is related to our being removed from the other's presence, or them leaving the medium from which we were exchanging text, intimacy does not cease to exist.

Gumpert and Cathcart (1986) pointed out that all human communication is a derivative of the interpersonal communication process. They wrote, "An environment in which we talk to each other and see each other while we are actually in the presence of the other is no longer necessary to interpersonal communication" (p. 165). They added:

Interpersonal intimacy has traditionally entailed physical and psychological closeness. We could be intimate only with those that we could be close to physically and emotionally. As Edward T. Hall has pointed out in his works on nonverbal communication, we actually divide personal space into intimate and social distance depending on how close we allow others to come. (p. 165)

As communicative, intimacy transcends space and time and can account for the large distances between friends both across time and space. Cocking and Kennett (1998) explored the relationship of intimacy to friendship. They argued that intimacy is not even a requirement for friendship in the first place, and

even if it were, it is not tied to space. The pair wrote that typically literature does tend to focus on “intimate friendships” and that these friendships entail “reciprocal deep affection, well-wishing, and the desire for shared experiences” (p. 502). The pair highlighted the nature of self-disclosure on intimacy. In the previous chapter we briefly discussed intersections with self-disclosure. There is a huge amount of communication literature dedicated to self-disclosure and trust—it is a major vignette in the communication discipline.

This project advocates the position that intimacy is an essential feature of friendship. Cocking and Kennett wrote that self-disclosure “is thought to cement the bonds of trust and intimacy that exist between close friends and has been understood to mark companion friendship in two sorts of ways” (p. 503). Both of these are problematic for the pair. One version of self-disclosure paints intimacy in friendship as requiring a telling of secrets. Another version is the mirror-view which argues that intimacy requires a seeing of ourselves in the other. Cocking and Kennett argue that the mirror-view and secrets-view of friendship “fail to identify features that are in part constitutive of close or companion friendship” and “that they miss the mark” concerning understanding the self in the role of friendship.

They point out that sometimes friends lack similar interests, and sometimes similarity does not create friendship. Sometimes friends do not “herald increasing intimacy” and they explained, “I may like to discuss philosophy with you but have no wish to go to a football game with you upon discovering that you, too, follow football” (p. 508). When it comes to self-disclosure, Cocking and Kennett mention that it is kind of absurd to imagine that we could share our most private moments, e.g. using the bathroom, without having the opposite effect of alienating others. They then responded to imaginary arguments to this idea—that the kind of information disclosed needs to be revelatory. Cocking and Kennett (1998) recognized that sharing secrets and concerns “can serve to deepen and nurture intimacy” (p. 508). However, they clarify that the nature of the privacy of the disclosure has nothing to do with intimacy, and instead it is

the value we assess to the hopes and concerns we share (whether we wish them to be kept private or not) and the fact that we choose to talk to each other about what matters to us that contributes to the growth of intimacy between us. (p. 508)

Intimacy grows through communicative choice—the choice to communicate, communication with *you*, how to communicate and to call you my friend.

Regarding intimacy and choice, Chambers wrote that these choices related to intimacy are based on “trust, sharing, and reciprocity” (2013, p. 52) and argued that we even have a more realistic orientation to friendship, one in which choice is emphasized thanks to the nature of social media. She wrote that social media promotes “more casual, immediate, informal modes of communication” and that this can offer more opportunities for intimacy development, including “self-disclosure, shared secrets, and a sense of exclusiveness”

(p. 52). Social media certainly provides more access to opportunities for these aspects of intimacy, but equally, it also makes it much easier to break the bonds of intimacy, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Problem with Silence in Digital Realms

Ong argued that “personal presence in a text is not the same as the presence of two persons to one another in spoken dialogue” (2002, p. 521). He added, “And indeed in some texts—such as lists, certain perfunctory reports, and the like—the presence of the text’s author can be minimized. But, however remotely, it is there, although it lies in the background” (p. 521). This is essential because if we say that presence is a necessary component of friendship, then ultimately it still would be made manifest in communication that would be strictly textual between two people.

Silence in the digital realm is just as complex as silence in the physical realm, and the associated effects on friendship are complicated. Silence is difficult to define. It has multiple subjective connotations. In some instances, silence is loss. In others, it signals peace and tranquility and a space for our memory to work. Silence can mean that someone once with us is gone, or it can be quiet contemplative time that occurs while we are right next to someone. Silence is connected to space and to time.

In *The Barbarian Within*, Ong notes that sound and silence have no permanence in space. Later in that work, he notes that as unfortunate as it is, text rarely “finds its way out of the silence of the manuscript or printed page” (p. 51). The majority of vocal performance meets the ears of another. The majority of textual performance does not. Sound, Ong noted in multiple works and talks, is time-bound. He wrote that it “exists only as it is passing out of existence” (1967, p. 7). To stop a sound leaves us with silence, which he considered the opposite of sound. Sound is connected here not only with the idea of time, but also of distance. When we observe silence as loss, it can lead to the felt sense of phenomenological distance—drawing us here to the point that sound, as a time-bound phenomenon, can lead us to feel distanced. Whether it has been ten minutes or ten years, the experience of distance occurs when there is a silence that is starkly different from before. With text or spoken conversation, friends feel distanced not because of a lack of time together in physical presence, but because of a silence.

Like distance, silence, too, is part and parcel of our everyday human existence. Ong wrote that all speech is sound interrupted by silence. He explained:

Silence is a part of our speech. Our speech has to include silences. All human speech is articulated, which means it is not constant emission of sound, but is always interrupted sound. Words are interrupted by being divided into syllables. And sentences are divided into words, and we pause more or less between many words. (2002, p. 379)

Speech, Ong argued, is just a “transaction between sound and silence” (p. 379). Ong continued this theme in his work *Language as Hermeneutic* (2017), in which he addressed the changing world of media.

At the time of writing his text, Ong noticed an interesting connection between sound and computerization. For him, silence and its complexity in human thought and speech was the predominant reason that artificial intelligence would never be able to exist. He noted that “human language and thought are embedded in the nonverbal, the total human, historical, existential environment of utterance, with which they interact dialectically to produce meaning” (p. 82). Not only is this impossible to be digitized, but he also argued that language and thought are equally “grounded” in “what is not said, in silence” (p. 82). For Ong, there is a sense of “living silence” that contains human thought and language.

The notion of living silence is deeply connected to Ong’s notion of presence, which was discussed in earlier chapters. Presence, in the felt sense of another person oriented to me, is simultaneously silent and full of meaning. Van der Berg and Zlatic, the editors of *Language as Hermeneutic*, wrote, “The silence speaks. Listen to the silence. A presence is never mute. These aphoristic paradoxes spoke to Ong, for they too implied the primacy of being over idea, and truth over propositional statement” (Ong, 2017, p. 168–9). Zlatic even argued that the entire manuscript is a statement on silence.

Ong emphasized that we need to be careful to not conflate the “silence” of media with loss. He began that it may be true that “writing silences language”; however, later he noted that “it might be more accurate to say that writing renders silence to irrelevance” (p. 171). He continued that “in spoken dialogue silence is a structural component of the oral, whether in the hesitation, pause, or pregnant cessation of speech—silences that can be more meaningful than the spoken words” (p. 171). In the written, though, he noted that

beyond enunciation, silence includes tacit dimensions, those factors taken for granted, that need not be said or cannot be said because of temporal restrictions or because the speakers are not even aware of them. When in writing all is silent, silence is mute. Or, at least, harder to hear. (p. 171)

Ihde also discusses silence in his 1976 work *Listening and Voice*, in which he recognizes the special form of silence that exists when two people are oriented toward each other. He called this a “pregnant silence” and wrote, “In each of these cases the presence of the other as face carries both the significance of pregnant silence and of a call to speech and listening” (Ihde, 2007, p. 178). While this silence may have no sound at all, it is rich with the possibility for sound. Ihde wrote, “The other exceeds the silent presence of the face in the aura that has been cast and places both of us in the midst of mutually penetrating sound” (p. 178). He added:

The speech situation occurs within the context of full significance. Here not only voice but the face as the indicator of pregnant silence remains part of the entire gestalt. This is the nearest horizontal aspect that surrounds the central speech. But there also remains the hiddenness of the “silent” voice of inner speech which, like the hidden side of a transcendent thing, remains hidden to the other. And beyond both the pregnant silence bespoken by the face and the “outer” silence that does not reveal inner speech, there lies the Open silence of the ultimate horizon. In all three of these respects there remains a hiddenness that belongs to the center of voiced language. The perfectly “transparent” eludes the desire of philosophy. (p. 179)

Ihde conjured a scenario in which a prisoner is summoned to face torture by enforcers in a dictatorship to exemplify the complexities of silence. His silence, Ihde noted, is simultaneously empty and full. He wrote, “his voice does not reveal the secrets that he holds within himself. Yet the silence also ‘speaks’ as the horizon pregnant signification of the face” (p. 180). Silence in sound “affirms the silence of the interior,” which he explained is “one aspect of the hidden which is essential to all speech” (p. 180).

Johannesen (1974) noted the importance of silence as the “background” that “gives meaning to speech communication” (p. 26) and the important distinctions between acceptance of silence and the contextual significance across cultures. Soffer (2010) has argued that we can even go a step beyond Ong’s notion of secondary orality. Soffer has coined the term *digital orality*. For Soffer, this means that there are speech-like communication events that occur strictly via written text. He noted that a distinguishing factor between secondary orality and digital orality is that digital orality is enmeshed in the communication between individuals and small groups, and argued that texts written in the digital orality space are not ever meant to be converted to sound, and utilize many more oral features than the texts of secondary orality.

Conclusion

Because of the nature of silence and its various meanings, in the digital realm where deliberateness and verbal explicitness are so important, the silence of a friend is troubling. Silence via a text can mean that the person is busy, that they died, that they are angry, or hundreds of millions of possibilities. When discussing hermeneutic presence in the previous chapter, I noted that we tend to understand the actions of our friends online grounded in our unique histories and understanding of their natures, and adding this chapter’s implications, we interpret their silence as part of the entire understanding of their being and confirm that silence through their explicit explanation later. This is why it is so jarring when a friend disappears completely online. Ghosting or unfriending offers no explanations or gives no understanding for the silence. In the next

chapter, we will examine in more detail how friends come to “be” together, and what happens when friendships cease to exist.

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5 Sunaisthesis

The Synecdochal Activity of Friendship Ethics

What is the role of self and similarity in friendship? This chapter asserts that our friends are those with whom our ethical selves become visible to us, but in a way that generates and transforms meaning. Currently, there is a debate that is ongoing about the moral nature of friendship and ethical being in a media-saturated age. McFall (2012), for example, argued that character friendships cannot be created online. He added that hybridized character friendships are possible but cannot be sustained only through mediated communication. Vallor (2012) reasoned that social media do support and strengthen friendships, but they must supplement and not substitute for face-to-face interactions. Bennett (2016) asked,

Just what *does* it mean to be a true friend? Is it the same in 2014 as it was twenty years ago? Is the online friend synonymous with or an adequate substitute for the friend who lives down the street? (p. 251)

And along these same lines, what does it mean to be a good friend?

If friendship is important for the creation, maintenance, and transformation of ethical being, then one would expect that a lack or loss of friendship would have significant and negative impacts on one's life, and, generally, the literature confirms this. One thing that social media has done has made it much easier to create bonds, but also it has made it easier to break them. For most of human history, most individuals stayed within close proximity of their friends, as noted in previous chapters. If a friendship ended, it would have been very difficult to avoid the other. Now, though, with the click of a mouse, friendships are canceled. Does the dissolution of hybridized and online friendships have the same effects as in-person friendships? This chapter will look at two phenomena. First, the nature of friendship loss and the effects of technology on this phenomenon, and second, the connection between friendship and self through Aristotle's work on friendship. To conclude, this chapter will discuss the implications of technology on the nature of ethical being and doing through friendships.

The Effects of Losing a Friend

A curious gap in the research has been made clear to me over the time frame in which I have been working on this manuscript. I have spent much of my time in this book discussing all of the benefits of making and having friendships, but very little time discussing the transformation associated with the loss of friends. Roughly a year ago, I enthusiastically approved a friend request on Facebook from a coworker. Following the request, there were several months of liking each other's posts and getting glimpses into the other's world. A month ago, I was surprised to see that the person was being suggested as a friend again. Knowing that I had not done the unfriending, I was disappointed and hurt. So many questions followed in my head. What did I do? Why did they unfriend me? What will work be like when I see them again? About a week later, someone I had attended high school with but had never been close with also showed on my suggested friends feed, revealing that she had unfriended me. I had watched her children be born and grow up. Again, I was hurt and wondered what I had done wrong.

What I learned is that I am not alone. In general, ending a relationship is one of the most stressful events in life, and there is no reason to imagine that friendships would be any different. Soon we will see that the end of friendships is a natural and common childhood occurrence and not always negative. Everyone has lost a friendship. However, the research on friendship loss is minimal in general and much more limited if investigating the nature of technology and its relationship to friendship loss. In his 2004 essay on the theme of friendship loss in poetry, Furman noted that despite the loss of a friend being one of the most significant events for an individual to go through in their life, there was very, very little scholarship investigating it. Healy (2015) also noted that there is relatively little scholarship on what happens after the end of friendship, and in general, the literature focuses on negative ex-friendships.

In general, models of relationship dissolution have been used to study friendship termination, and earlier speculation that the processes leading to growth and maintenance of relationships simply reversed proved problematic. Drawing from Duck (1982) and Lea and Duck (1982), Rose (1983) argued that friendship termination is not just a reversal of formation, and as such, "there is a need to examine friendship termination independent of formation processes and to distinguish it from other close relationship endings" (pp. 4–5). Oswald (2017) argued that friendships are even more prone to deterioration when compared to familial or romantic relationships. To this date, there is still little research on the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral effects of the termination of a friendship on an individual, and I could find little research that examines the effect of technology or related implications.

This gap in the literature deserves more consideration across multiple disciplines for several reasons. There are both internal and external reasons—it matters at the level of the individual and the community. First, and most related to this chapter, is that our friends, and former friends, have an impact on

our moral thinking and how we live our lives (Healy, 2015). In earlier chapters, the benefits of friendships and positive effects on mental and physical health were established. Summarizing a plethora of research, Oswald (2017) showed that maintaining friendships has multiple positive effects, including less loneliness, constructive joint problem-solving in stressful times (Oswald & Clark, 2006), social resource attainment (McEwan & Guerrero, 2012), and happiness (Demir et al., 2011). In addition, Oswald argues that navigating the maintenance behaviors in friendships paves the way for understanding the complex maintenance strategies of other relationships, like romantic and workplace.

In the workplace, particularly, the implications for friendships that end also deserve more attention. One study found that some of the strategies used by individuals to end workplace friendships included avoiding discussing nonwork topics, nonverbal cues, and avoidance. Some of the effects were increased emotional stress, struggles with performing work tasks, higher turnover rates, and “altered perceptions regarding the role of friendships in the workplace” (Sias et al., 2004, p. 321). Coworkers were not the only ones to have increased emotional stress as a result of friendship termination. In a study focusing on the “affective, behavioral, and cognitive” reactions to the end of a friendship, Tortu (1984, p. 3) found that children, too, can have intense emotions as friendships end and the older the child, the more they can be affected. Baumeister and Leary’s (1995) review showed that we do find that the end of relationships does have significant impact on human well-being. Drawing from Hazan and Shaver (1994), they concluded that distress and protest of ending relationships is “nearly universal” (p. 502). Despite this universality, not much is understood about friendship termination.

In a previous chapter, a discussion about the association of absence with loss was noted, and this deserves consideration in this chapter, also. While there can be negative effects associated with friendship endings, not all ending is bad, and over the course of one’s lifespan, friends come and go. The loss of friendship is nothing out of the ordinary in the childhood phase of human development (Bowlby, 1980). Rose (1984) noted that friendships can end “without either party experiencing any overt dissatisfaction” (p. 267), particularly in young adulthood because of physical and psychological separation. Not only can friendships end without either party feeling slighted or upset, but sometimes, if the relationship was detrimental or toxic to one or both parties, the impact of the dissolution of friendship can be positive. Drawing from the work of Baumeister and Leary (1995), Krämer et al. (2015) point out that people often maintain friendly relationships or even will say they are friends with people they do not like due to the need to belong. Smart et al. (2012) specifically noted the gap in literature exploring the dark side of friendships, particularly difficult friendships, and the negative aspects of these relationships.

Sometimes, friendships are maintained despite general dislike of the other person. The use of the term “frenemy” indicates that we clearly have relationships in which we have friendly-type interactions yet dislike of the other (Bushman &

Holt-Lunstad, 2009). Researchers wanted to understand why we are hesitant to end ambivalent and negative friendships if they have detrimental effects in our lives, especially given that friendships are voluntary. They explored several reasons for staying in a friendly relationship, particularly grounded in the notion of an external barrier. Some examples of barriers they gave include involvement in social groups, financial burdens, and proximity. They also listed several internal barriers, including religious beliefs, self-identity, and sense of commitment. In their study, Bushman and Holt-Lunstad found that barriers to ending friendships, more often than not, were internal. In addition, the pair also found that rather than dissolve the friendship completely, often individuals distanced themselves from the other in the ambivalent friendship.

Considerations and Differences in the Experience of Loss in Friendship

Understanding friendship loss is difficult considering the complexities above. There are other considerations that affect how we understand the effects of dissolution, including the levels of friendship, how unexpected the terminating event was, and how the friendship was ended. In the introduction to this book, levels of closeness were noted with respect to how we name friends (from casual to best, for example). According to Wright (1984), there are two typologies of friendship. Superficial and developed friendships differ in that the first is associated with social rewards and benefits, and the second is associated with mutual well-wishing. It is likely that the loss of developed friendships affects individuals more than for superficial friendships.

Duck (1982) differentiated between dissolution/termination (meaning a complete end to friendship), breakdown (which he explains is “turbulence or disorder in a relationship that may or may not lead to dissolution”), decline (“a reduction of intimacy without actual physical withdrawal”), and disengagement (which includes all of the above) (p. 2). A friendship that has had a reduction in intimacy will be experienced differently than one that has been completely ended. It is more helpful, Duck argued, to view dissolution as a process and not as an event. He identified several other misconceptions with the dissolution of friendship. He explained that it is not always conscious or strategic, predictable or orderly, grounded in choice, purely dyadic, or inherently negative.

Applying Rodin’s 1982 model of disengagement to friendships, Rose (1984) categorized four different possibilities that could lead to the ending of friendship. One, she noted, is that the friend “may do or say something that suddenly meets one’s ‘dislike criteria,’” that is, may violate some expectancy strongly associated with friendship. Alternatively, another reason friendship might end, Rose noted, is because what we value, like, or care about could change. Next, a friend could be “displaced” or move away. Finally, using a cost-benefit analysis, the costs of being friends begins to outweigh the benefits.

In their study, Rose and Serafica (1986) explored how communication is affected by or impacts friendship dissolution. They hypothesized that friendships at the casual level would probably include “a simple decline in the

rewards or interaction maintaining the friendship” (p. 276). The more contact, then, the higher the level of friendship is what they expected their results to show. Because of this, the pair explained that what we should expect is “best and close friendships should be less affected by a decline in contact due to either reduced proximity or to reduced interaction” (p. 276). The results of their study showed that casual and close/best friendships do have different perceived “maintenance strategies” (p. 279). Surprisingly, time together and effort were significantly more important in close relationships than best friendships and total amount of interaction was completely irrelevant.

Communication and Friendship Loss

There are many reasons that one friend may choose to end a friendship, and many seem to come back to the notion of being unable to do things together. Roberts and Dunbar (2011) have shown that the failure to continue to partake in joint activities, which is considered maintenance, makes friendships “more prone to decay” (p. 193). Oswald et al. (2004) explored the various strategies that friends use to maintain their relationship. The researchers thematized four main categories of behavior: supportiveness, positivity, openness, and interaction. Summarizing these behaviors, Oswald (2017) explained that positivity was related to “behaviors that make the relationship rewarding” and “*not* engaging in antisocial behaviors that would negatively affect the friendship” (p. 269). The specific examples Oswald gave were communicative behaviors, such as the expression of gratitude and trying to be positive, and avoiding ignoring the other person’s communicative attempts. Supportiveness, Oswald summarized, was related to “providing assurance and support” (p. 270). Examples of this given were relational and person-centered and communicative, like making “the other person feel good about who they are” and letting “each other know you want the relationship to last in the future” (p. 270). Finally, Oswald explained the notion of interaction as “behaviors and activities that the friends engaged in jointly” such as celebrating “special occasions together” (p. 270). The strategies used to end friendships are also communicative. Using Baxter’s typologies (1982), they include withdrawal/avoidance, manipulation, “positive tone” strategies, and open confrontation.

Grounded in the paradigm that views relationships as rule-based interactions, specifically exchange theory, Argyle and Henderson (1984) studied the effects of rule-keeping and rule-breaking on the dissolution of friendships. In earlier research, Argyle and Furnham (1983) argued that friendship has specific activities associated with the creation and enactment of rules: “talking, eating, drinking and joint leisure” (p. 213). Argyle and Henderson wrote, “To justify severing a relationship, the individual faces the difficulty of reducing the level of commitment within the particular relationship, while still maintaining commitment to the abstract ideas of ‘friendship’ or ‘relationship’” (p. 216). Summarizing the work of La Gaipa (1977), these two researchers explained that from a rules-based perspective, when ending a friendship, “there is a need for

recognized and acceptable public reasons for termination” and that these violations need to be attributed to “the violation of cultural values such as trust and loyalty rather than the failure to provide instrumental rewards” (p. 216), both of which are related to communicative behaviors such as self-disclosure and intimacy.

Now that proximal barriers are no longer communicative barriers, one might expect the nature of friendship loss to be different, yet this is not exactly the case. While there are some things that are different, as we will see in the next section, there are still quite a few things that are the same no matter how a friendship is created, maintained, or ended.

Breaking the Bonds of Friendship and Social Media

Early in the studies to understand why friendships end, many focused on the notion of proximity. In the 1984 study by Rose and Serafica, above, it was thought that a friend moving away from the other was significant, but when it came to close friendships, proximity was not as important as “a decline in the quantity or quality of interaction” (p. 282), which rings true with our examination of the effects of technology and distance in our lives. The pair found that this could be “the result of continuing arguments, the discovery of differing values, betrayal or boredom,” etc. (p. 282). The new research is showing that there can be significant cognitive and emotional effects to being unfriended online, which might occur for several reasons, such as expectancy violation, a biological response because of evolutionary origins of friendship, but also due to the nature of friendship itself and its role in our lives, especially now that technology is embedded in our lives. Bevan et al. (2012) specifically examined the cognitive and emotional consequences of unfriending on Facebook. Drawing from the work of Ellison et al. (2007) and Steinfield et al. (2008), Bevan et al. pointed out that there is a clear evolution of the nature of Facebook and its relationship to friendship. Originally a networking medium, Facebook has become a “full-fledged friendship lifeline” (p. 1459) and this is true. Many of us interact with friends at a distance strictly online, particularly with the recent pandemic.

Online and Offline: What is the Same about Friendship Breakups

Much of this book has been dedicated to examining the similarities and differences between friendship pre and post the current communicative technology boom, and like prior chapters, while some qualities of relationship dissolution are the same, there are some unique issues to our era. The effects of the loss of a friend individually is largely context dependent. Often, there is some kind of felt distress, particularly when the ending is unexpected. Also, friendship endings in the digital age are still plagued with communication issues at their core. Zamani’s (2020) current work examines the lack of clarity when friendships end without a clear communication about why. This can lead to

distress, sometimes significant distress, in one's life. Grounded in the earlier work by Baumeister and Leary (1995), which found that minimal interactions in a friendship often fail to satisfy belonging needs. Like ending friendship in offline contexts, Krämer et al. (2015) have noted that ending online friendships, even the act of "unfriending," is often more complex and difficult than most give credit to and rarely is done spontaneously. Their work showed that continuing bad friendships also mirrors that of in-person friendships, such as religious beliefs, shared social circles, and internal barriers.

Gashi and Knautz (2016) have pondered the effects of unfriending on the person that has not done the unfriending. They noted that feelings of rejection, sadness, and even rumination might manifest. Drawing from Sibona's study, and similar to the in-person setting, Gashi and Kanutz noted that the effects of unfriending on the psyche of the person who is being unfriended depend on the amount of time the unfriended person spends online, the value of the relationship, the surprise of the unfriending (e.g. if it is discussed prior, it isn't as shocking), and communication after the unfriending occurs.

Unique Qualities of Friendship Loss on Social Media

While there are elements of friendship loss and dissolution that are similar in both online and offline contexts, there are several unique qualities associated with loss in our digital age. There are two major associated themes. First, unfriending online appears to be more self-focused than relationship- or other-focused. Second, there is a process of unfriending online that differs from that of the strictly in-person context and several associated effects.

When it comes to the theme of self-focus, we can see that unfriending in mediated settings is centered quite differently. A phenomenon regarding friendship termination that is unique to our digital era is the creation of unfriending invitations via mass messages to one's friend list. Floyd et al. (2019) argued that this is exemplary of a curious tension—a tension between "the need for inclusion and the tendency for in-group preference" (p. 20). This is the first time in human history that an adult would publicly declare "If you don't like what I have to say, don't be my friend anymore!" It is hard to imagine our ancestor's crying this in a public sphere. The group of scholars found that often, participants in their study commonly did so for reasons that were categorized by the researchers as threats, and concluded that individuals who post invitations to unfriend online are doing so from a framework of "image management" versus "relationship management" (p. 27).

The mass sharing also relates to self-disclosure losing some of the person-centric nature that it has held between relationships for centuries. One researcher, in an investigation on long-term friendships, considered whether maintenance strategies that kept long-term friends close could be performed online (Oswald, 2017). Drawing from McEwan's (2013) work on Facebook friendships, Oswald noted that disclosure takes place online often, as do displays of caring. Surveillance behaviors via Facebook, such as looking at pictures,

reading statuses, etc., Oswald noted, were actually correlated with “friendship satisfaction, liking, and closeness” (p. 274). However, “sharing” via Facebook was negatively associated with the three above categories, which led Oswald to conclude that “self-disclosure on Facebook may function differently than face-to-face self-disclosures” (p. 275). Based on previous chapters, self-disclosure plays a key role in the development of intimacy. While it can be developed online, it makes sense that statuses that share to a general public lack the particularity and other focus that would contribute to the intimacy of friendship interactions in general.

The change in, or absence of, maintenance strategies can lead to friendship dissolution as they are important elements between two people hoping to stay connected. This lack of care and person-centered disclosure also creates a space that makes unfriending more dehumanizing than before. Unfriending has a deliberateness that does not go unnoticed. Unlike the strategies typically used to dissolve friendships that occur in strictly offline contexts, unfriending online happens all at once with the click of the button. While this does seem other-centric, it is much less humanizing than other-centric. Robertson et al. (2019) define social curation as “the act of unfriending or blocking others on social media with whom one once had a connection” (p. 2). The choice of the term “curate” is an misnomer. Curate, originating from *cura* meaning “care” in Latin, has taken on a connotation in modern times related to the organization of objects, such as in a museum or art exhibit. In an essay by journalist Erin Kissane (2010), she investigates the etymology of the term back to Roman times, in which curators handled everything from road works to public events. In the Middle Ages, priests were designated curators, consistent with the notion of “care” for their parishioners. Curation had, over the ages, been related to concern with the welfare of others.

When we partake in the social curation of our friends list now, there are several ways in which it is possible to engage in the act. One suggestion by John and Gal (2018), related to a set of interviews, is that unfriending is a form of metacommunication. The pair wrote, “Through unfriending, users are saying something about unacceptable types of talk” (p. 2). A second important contribution that the pair made is that in their interviews, every single participant made comments associated with needing to rid their space of the others’ content. The pair wrote that the comments were “often accompanied by metaphors of cleanliness, and [were] related to the fact that Facebook is on their phone in their pocket or on their PC in their living room” (p. 2). They added that “unfriending was a way of decontaminating what was perceived as a domestic (and not political) space” (p. 2).

Ultimately, the scholars argued that unfriending can be understood as a form of boundary maintenance, but differs in the sense that it serves now as “a mechanism for controlling what we allow in within a context of networked sociality” (p. 2). Aristotle has always contended that friendship sets the stage for all civic life, so it is difficult to untie the complexities of unfriending as a form

of silencing others versus just making a statement about what can, and cannot, be discussed in the public sphere.

While understanding the perspective that boundary maintenance is a form of self-care, at the same time there is little room for growth and learning in the space of unfriending versus losing a friend in an offline context. The suddenness of unfriending with the click of a button seems to lack the granting of understanding and gifting of sense-making about the end of a friendship to the other that the incremental dissolution of friendship has typically allowed. Of course, this is all keeping in mind that just like in the offline contexts, “friend” has various connotations and levels of relationship intimacy. Sibona (2014) argued that one of the reasons the term friend is a misnomer online is because “a given dyad does not always represent friendship in the common sense as the tie strength may vary from weak to strong” (p. 1682). Krämer et al. (2015) have pointed out that becoming a “friend” on social media “requires one mouse-click,” and their point is a good one. “Friends” and “followers” online may be those with whom we have no knowledge or connection to at all prior to our encounter with them in the online sphere.

In the offline context, Krämer et al. pointed out that it is quite difficult to end a friendship. Just as there are different levels of friendship, there are also different associations with friends online and expectations about how those connections should end. Bevan et al. (2014) applied Burgoon’s 1976 expectancy violations theory to analyze the ways in which being unfriended “could vary in valence, importance, and expectedness according to a number of relationship and Facebook involvement characteristics” (p. 171). They determined that “being unfriended constituted a moderately expected and negative and moderately-to-highly important expectancy violation” (p. 171). They also concluded that weak versus strong ties affected valence.

It can be particular hurtful to be “ghosted” by a friend online. Ghosting is a phenomenon in which communication unexpectedly ceases, despite regular communication and feelings of closeness by at least one person in the relationship. Drawing from Sibona and Walczak (2011), Bevan et al. (2014) noted that there is a specific “marker” of friendship termination that is lacking in the offline setting. Second, they explained that “the act of unfriending is unilateral in that the unfriended is consciously aware of the act of unfriending, but the individual who is unfriended never receives a formal notification of its occurrence” (p. 171). Bevan et al. (2012) found that there was a connection in their research between the likelihood of Facebook users to ruminate and experience negative emotions when unfriended, especially if they were more intense Facebook users and were unfriended by someone close.

One last important point is that the effects of technology on friendship loss have not been all negative. Losing a friend can be hurtful, and reconnecting can bring great joy to our lives. The reason why losing a friend can be so hurtful and reconnecting so rewarding is related to the nature of friendship itself—*sunaisthesis*.

More Than Me, More Than You: Friendship and Sunaisthesis

While working on this chapter, I was approached by my niece one day with a strange question. The Covid-19 pandemic had required children all over the globe to turn to remote schooling. Alone in their rooms using their laptops or computers, and sometimes even phones, they would log in and attend classes virtually. Some were synchronous, and some not. The question she posed was whether a friend could come visit while they did their independent school work—together. I agreed and her friend came over. Side by side they did their online classes. They each had different goals, different teachers, different school districts, and are even in different grades—yet each wanted to spend their time with the other doing this work. This, and all of the other joys and sorrows of friendship, are connected to a thread of Aristotle’s moral philosophy that he uncovered over 2,000 years ago.

Von Heyking (2008) wrote that “Aristotle’s friendship teaching has been called the ‘peak’ of his moral teaching” (p. 179). However, diving deeper, “his understanding of *sunaisthesis* (joint perception/awareness) as the activity of virtue friendship has been called the ‘peak of the peak’” (p. 179). Von Heyking added that “friendship is built into the very way human beings think and act toward one another as moral agents, which shows its foundational role for political life” (p. 179). Friendship, he noted, is considered “to be the highest and ‘most divine’ human capacity” (p. 179). Sunaisthesis is essential for friendship and all human flourishing. Sunaisthesis is central to ethics, Liu (2010) explained, because it “refers to the way friends feel the life or existence of each as good, meaningful, and desirable” (p. 589). For Liu, sunaisthesis is “a way that friends grasp each other’s lives” (p. 590). As such, she explained “*sunaisthesis* is therefore a fundamental form of intimacy and an indispensable component of friendship” (p. 590). She added that “we are not really close to our friends unless we have a feeling for what gives their lives meaning or what moves them” (p. 590). She continued, “and as a way of appreciating the goodness in each other’s lives, *sunaisthesis* would also appear to be necessary for friendships” (p. 590). Sunaisthesis, Liu argued, is “one of the most important ... activities of friendship” (p. 590). Because sunaisthesis is *the* activity of virtue friendship, it will be the focus of this section, which begins by overviewing the importance of sunaisthesis for Aristotle’s moral philosophy and friendship. It reviews the secondary literature to trace the etymology of the term, then approaches the notion of sunaisthesis by examining it as the synthesis of humans living together, perceiving together, and doing together within a communication framework. It concludes that as communicative, it can and does occur online.

Aristotle on Friendship: An Overview

For Aristotle, there were types of friendship—utility, pleasure, and virtue. The most desirable friendship for the good life is virtue-friendship. McFall (2012), drawing from Aristotle, explained that character-friends “provide for each

other, an opportunity for robust moral reflection” (p. 222). Friendship is a conduit for human flourishing, and arguably for Aristotle, *the* conduit for human flourishing. Multiple scholars recognize the importance of friendship for Aristotle’s entire project on ethics. Cooper (1980), noted it was the central component of all of Aristotle’s work. Thomas (1993) explained, “It is clear that Aristotle took friendship to contribute in an enormous way to human flourishing” (p. 48). Kalliaranta (2016) wrote, “Aristotle’s theory of the good life and in particular, his analysis of the role that friendships play in achieving human flourishing, has been one of the most influential and long-lasting theories on human connections and friendships” (p. 66). Von Heyking (2008) argued that “friendship is the quintessential human activity, where the soul and its constituent parts are fully activated in their intellectual and moral capacities” (p. 180). He added that, for Aristotle, friendship was “an intellectual and moral activity” (p. 180). As an intellectual activity, friendship is related to the ecology of knowing.

Friendship and Knowledge Production

One reason why this issue is so pressing is that friendship is foundational to the creation of knowledge itself, and communicative practices within friendships are one way in which knowledge is produced. Maines (1989) even equated an “ecology of friendship” with “an ecology of knowing” (p. 198). Cooper (1980) noted that according to Aristotle, “human flourishing, in short, does not consist merely in conformity to natural principles but requires self-knowledge and conscious self-affirmation. Self-knowledge is thus an essential part of what it is to flourish” (p. 341). Von Heyking added, “friendship is the expression of the human intellect whose nature it is to identify with the known” (2017, p. 187). Also associated with knowing is situating ourselves within a world of narrative and virtue structures.

Rawlins (2009) wrote, “friends also co-create deep understandings allowing for shared moral visions and rights unique to their friendship” (pp. 1–2). Friendship is an epistemological and ontological space, deeply entwined with our virtue structures. From an Aristotelian perspective, our well-wishing, Rawlins showed, is “mutual” (p. 5). This includes “reciprocated concern and actions to benefit each friend” (p. 5). These concerns and these actions, then, lead us to the realm of ethics, as there are significant choices involved in “connected, responsible, positive freedoms” (p. 9). Rawlins argued that “it requires unforced yet mutually contingent choices to respond to each other as friends” (p. 9). Up until this chapter, much of the discussion has revolved around several moments of choice within friendships—the choice to reach out, the choice to partake in dialogue, the choice of how to communicate.

For Rawlins, ethics specifically enter the arena of friendship when we make choices related to similarity and difference. He wrote, “All communicative contexts are reflexive achievements. When we share emerging moments of real time, we co-construct the ‘now’ in which we are living” (p. 21). In the

construction of the now, we again employ choice. Rawlins wrote, “All interpersonal events composing a ‘set of alternatives’ simultaneously are partially performed and partially perceived. We construct choices as we select them and select among them as they are constructed” (p. 22). Co-creating knowledge and sharing moral visions requires the agreement in choice, and Aristotle addressed how friends can make good choices together using the term sunaisthesis.

Doing Good Things For and With Our Friends

To understand sunaisthesis, it is important to overview two ethical components of the good in friendship. The first is desiring or doing good *for* others, the second *with*. Rawlins explained that “in close friendship we desire good things to happen to our friend because we care about this particular person. The activities compassing personal friendship occur for the most part in private settings out of public eyes and ears” (2009, p. 5). Stocker (1981) considered friendship from a teleological position and argued that teleology alone is not sufficient in understanding the good acts we do for our friends and that they do for us. He wrote, “To understand them we must recur to their source, or *arche* not simply their end, or *telos*” (p. 747). He then examined the *arche* of friendship. For Stocker, we first begin with the friendly act itself, “to identify it as a friendly act” that “only its purpose, goals, ends, desires, and the like are critical” (p. 748). He added that “character and other elements we act out of are relevant if at all, only because and to the extent they are reducible to teleological elements” (p. 748). He noted that there is a difference between “friendly acts done for a friend” and “acts done out of general friendliness, amiability, or goodwill” (p. 75). The defining element here is that of particularity.

Sokolowski (2002) argued that virtue friendships require shared virtues. He showed sharing virtues “involves calibration” and honing. He continued that “it demands that in the contingences and vicissitudes of life we possess the insight and the character to achieve truly the good of another” (p. 462). Not only, then, do we need to be moral agents, but we must meet our friend in the particular to know “precisely what he needs ... and how he needs it” (p. 462). To be able to do this requires the ability to share perceptions of the good. Stocker considered this an “expansion” and an “intersubjectivizing” of the good by me” (p. 459). This is sunaisthesis. It is the synecdochal activity that creates a “we” in the space of friendship.

Sunaisthesis and Friendship

Sunaisthesis is used in both the *Eudemonian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. Flakne’s work (2005) demonstrated that sunaisthesis was “overlooked” and “misconstrued” in the majority of the literature, which was unfortunate because she considered it “central to Aristotle’s philosophy of friendship” (p. 37). Kosman (2004) wrote that the literal translation of sunaisthesis is co-perception,

although it was taken up by a later tradition to mean apperception. He wrote that the latter tradition used it in a way that meant

either the inward awareness that accompanies perception (what we often call simply consciousness) or the self-awareness or self-consciousness of ourselves as conscious. But Aristotle here intends a more literal sense of *sunaisthesis*, a sense that can be heard in the etymology of the term: the shared or common perception that friends enjoy. (p. 150)

Von Heyking (2008) also breaks down the term specifically in Aristotle's work. He argued that Aristotle "shows us how moral seeing (aisthesis) operates like 'aesthetics,' seeing of the beautiful. Acting rigorously or nobly cannot be reduced either to following a rule nor subjectivity" (p. 183). Continuing, he explained that

adding the sun-prefix to form sunaisthesis was rare in antiquity. Plutarch uses it to describe the fellow-feeling Solon created in Athens with his legal reforms. However, its primary meaning in antiquity was self-consciousness without necessarily referring to another, and its meaning shifted to signify the interiorization of the self. (p. 183)

Flakne argued the term derives from *suzen*, that is, the social life, and *aisthesis*, or perception.

Two scholars argue that the nature of the word consciousness itself implied a joint task. Ferrari and Pinard (2006) drew the conclusion that "the prototypical ancient meaning of *conscius* was, 'I know something with another person'" (p. 76). *Conscio* (Latin) came from the Greek *sunoidesis*, *con* meaning with and *scio* meaning "I know," they explained (p. 76). While some scholars might point out the similarities between synesthesia and sunaisthesia, the ancient Greek and Latin usage of the term sunaisthesis is completely unrelated to the notion of synesthesia, the medical and sensory term (Jewanski et al., 2020).

Liu (2010) wrote that "human living (to *zen*) is living together (to *suzen*)" (p. 580). Her argument is part of a broader claim of Aristotle's that we are social creatures by nature. She and Kosman (2004) both showed that Aristotle considers living together to consist of more than co-location. Liu wrote, "Aristotle equates living together with simply spending days (to *sunemereuein*) in each other's company, an activity whose significance shows up most conspicuously in contrast to the lives of grazing animals" (2010, p. 594). She pointed out in Aristotle that although sheep graze together, they do not *live* together in the way that human beings live together. Kosman addressed the misconception that a happy life requires self-sufficiency. He warned that the notion "might lead us to view friends as an unnecessary addition to such a life" (2004, p. 135). He wrote:

It is peculiar to think of a happy person living in isolation, and more than just peculiar to think that such a person might choose to live his life apart from the company of others like himself, other persons, whom he might love and be loved by. (p. 135)

To live is to live with others, and a significant component of human living is perceiving.

Liu explained that “Perceiving is part of to *zen*” (2010, p. 583). Co-perceiving is part of to *suzen*. Liu considered friends to be “second selves” because they, too, exist and feel pleasure from living. She wrote “we need to jointly perceive (to *sunaisthanesithai*) friends, and this requires us to live together (to *suzen*) with them” (p. 583). Kosman asked, “What is a human life in the fullest sense of actively living, that is, as the end toward which the structures and powers of a human being are directed?” (2004, p. 136). For Aristotle, Kosman argued, “it consists in the active exercises of perceiving and knowing” (p. 136). He added that “therefore life in common with others must also consist of perceiving and knowing in common with them” (p. 136).

Kosman struggled with a particular section in Aristotle in which Aristotle claims that perceiving and knowing is desirable. He wrote that there is a translation error that has been perpetuated. He draws our attention to a translation of Aristotle that claims that “to perceive and know oneself are what is most desirable for each person” (p. 137). Kosman wrote, “According to interpretation, you will recall, friends are desirable because they provide an avenue, imperfect but all we have, to the pleasure and moral betterment that derives from self-awareness” (p. 137). He continued:

If, in other words, we abstract consciousness in the sense of considering it without reference to the particular subject of consciousness, then there would be no difference between my desiring that I be conscious and my desiring that some other person be conscious. But that would be, Aristotle continues, like supposing that my desire to live might be satisfied by some other person living instead of me. (p. 138)

Kosman showed that this is a common way of reading Aristotle but it is incorrect. He added:

For me to wish *to be* is for me to wish for *my* being, which is, for Aristotle, to wish for awareness in the form of subjectivity; and this subjectivity is not another characteristic of mine. That the desire for life and thus for consciousness is for each person a desire for his or her own consciousness and does not then specify an additional element in the original desire, but a necessary part of the structure of that desire. One may desire that there be life or that there be consciousness without desiring that life or consciousness be one's own. (p. 140)

Kosman differentiated between the “exercises of consciousness” and “the mere possession of the powers of consciousness” (p. 141). It is the exercise of consciousness that Aristotle believed we desire. This is because amid “the society of friends,” the “power of thought” is transformed “into the activity of thought” (p. 145). Kosman called this transformation the “power of consciousness” and that it “constitutes the end of human life” (p. 145). The end to which all human life aims is to be conscious, which is impossible without being conscious in the consciousness of others. Consciousness enacted with others is communication.

In her 2013 work, Danblon wrote that the translations that conflated sunaisthesis with conscience “reveal the epistemological gap between the Aristotelian conception of rationality and its modern version, especially as it is inherited by Descartes” (p. 501). She wrote:

What Aristotle called *sunaisthesis* is the human capacity to feel that one feels, to put together sensations and emotions, but also to interact with others by sharing (discursive) representations of this common feeling. In other words, as an ancient version of the modern conscience, *sunaisthesis* is the human capacity to experience the common sense. (p. 501)

Being together or even perceiving together is not the ultimate good. It is *doing* together that is important. It requires shared “contemplation,” “praxis,” “cooperation,” and “collaboration” (Kosman, 2004, p. 148). Eating in the same space is not a true “shared” activity. Shared activity involves an “enlargement of being,” Kosman argued. From this perspective, Kosman showed that co-living “is understood in a new way, such that being conscious together does not indicate being conscious, as it were, side by side, but forming together a partnership of consciousness, a community characterized by the common perception that is *sunaisthesis*” (p. 148). This living though moves beyond perception and requires “shared plans and projects, communal hopes and memories, cooperative theories and strategies” and “common ways of looking at and experiencing our common world” (p. 149).

Kosman added that the idea of “living together” “involves a corporate life properly called political, the life of comrades engaged in shared projects of language, thought, action, and culture” (p. 150). He wrote that “the partnership of good friends will above all,” according to Aristotle, “be concerned with the goods of our lives, and will thus involve thinking together and feasting together” (p. 151). His point was that “reading *sunaisthesis* this way will enable us to parse correctly the passage I earlier cited as important to Aristotle’s argument: the perceiving of one’s friends is in a sense necessarily the perceiving of oneself and knowing oneself” (p. 151). Kosman then argued that the translation should be “for one’s friend to perceive is necessarily in some sense for oneself to perceive, and in some sense, for oneself to know” (p. 151). To justify this, he wrote:

It is not that I see myself in my friend and therefore see myself in seeing my friend. It is rather that he and I, joining together in the partnership that friends constitute, become a conscious community, a single soul, as Diogenes recalls Aristotle to have said, dwelling in two bodies. (p. 151)

Aristotle insisted, Kosman argued, that sunaisthesis “be realized by common discourse” (p. 153). He added, “*Sunaisthesis* is not primarily what friendship provides, but part of an explanation of what is required if it is to be desirable” (p. 153). Communicating is the end of sunaisthesis.

Communication: The Good of Friendship

Emmeche (2017) explained that “for some forms of friendships, the agents not merely attend to common interests; their perception is shared, mediated by the very relationship as an embodied activity of distributed cognition” (p. 47). He gave the example of art. He pointed out instances in which “friends or colleagues work close together to solve problems or develop new forms of creative expression” (p. 47). Using Flakne’s perspective of sunaisthesis, this work explains our limitations on the number of friends we can maintain. It requires ongoing communicative labor that requires a significant amount of cognitive energy.

In living, perceiving, and doing together, friends cease to exist as individual I’s and instead become a We. Sunaisthesis is the synecdochal activity in word, thought, and deed that creates the We. In 1964, Warren attempted to unravel the mystery of the term sunaisthesis in the work of Plotinus. He explained that “*Sunaisthesis* defies accurate translation, and the best I can do is to enumerate the various shades of its meaning” (p. 90). Warren wrote,

it does not simply mean consciousness (the awareness of the duality of knower and known) or self-consciousness (the awareness in which what is known is the knower). Even when the terms are *sunaisthesis hautou*, one can not simply translate, “self-consciousness.” This phrase may mean a consciousness that one part of a mental whole has for another part, i.e. that we are thinking certain thoughts. (p. 90)

Warren wrote that sunaisthesis “is a relation of part to whole, whole to part, and part to part” (p. 91). He continued that “one might say that the particularly ‘sunaisthetizing’ agent is a kind of unity such that its consciousness or awareness is always of that unity itself” (p. 90). As for the agent which enacts sunaisthesis, Warren argued that it “may be a particular individual or even the universe” (p. 91). Warren wrote, “*sunaisthesis* refers to a plurality in a unity and a consciousness or awareness in some way of that whole with itself” (p. 91). Sunaisthesis is awareness of my awareness, awareness of the other’s awareness, awareness of the other’s awareness of my awareness, and the other’s awareness

of my awareness of their awareness. Flakne referred to sunaisthesis as “double intentionality” (p. 49). She wrote:

What is important here is that in the kind of aesthesis that is sun-aesthesis, I intend toward both what my friend intends toward, and to her being-in-intention. The sensible form that I “take on” in *sunaisthesis*, then, is that of my friend’s determined human life, a life organized around ends which tie together past, present, and future capacities for determination. (p. 49)

She added:

Not only do I intend, in my aesthesis, my perception, to an object, but I also intend toward you, in your sensible form, which is nothing other than your *Energeia*, your life as a determined perceiving and knowing, a perceiving and knowing organized around ends that give you pleasure. (p. 51)

Drawing from Aristotle, Liu (2010) even argued that we cannot even perceive our own lives independent of friends. She wrote, “we do not perceive either our own or each other’s lives directly, but rather through synecdochic activities that reveal the structure of the whole” (p. 589). For Liu, joint perception, sunaisthesis “requires an intimate acquaintance with each other’s lives” (p. 595). She added, “this acquainting consists in knowledge of the character, history, and trajectory of a life, as well as sympathetic understanding of how that life has been experienced” (p. 594). It is communicative. It can only be achieved communicatively, not by being in one’s physical presence.

In *Eudemian Ethics*, Flakne argued, Aristotle differentiates between an abstract, particular living and social knowing and perceiving. She wrote that “Sunaisthetic speech is a special kind of speech, one that somehow pertains to the ethical ideal of self-sufficiency” (2005, p. 49). She continued that “Sunaisthetic speech transforms perceiving selves into ethical selves” (p. 49). The true good life requires being together and doing good together, and as such, is impossible without sunaisthesis.

Sunaisthesis, Friendship, and the Mediated Realm

Bennett (2016) argued that “as we transfer more and more of our human exchange to mediated environments such as Facebook, we inadvertently limit our ability to grow in relationships” (p. 256). She insinuated that relationships that have been transferred to Facebook are more likely to be “sparse, superficial and unsatisfying” and went on that we must convince “ourselves that they are genuine” (p. 256). She then added that “trust, loyalty, faithfulness all are developed in an environment that is tangible, actual—a place where people are meeting face-to-face, sharing life together through words *and* deeds” (p. 256). Like Bennett, McFall (2012) was skeptical of the ability of technologically mediated communication. He argued that “technological communication”

impedes our ability to morally reflect through friendship. He also added that proximity did not necessarily facilitate “moral betterment” (p. 223). McFall acknowledged that while mediated communication “can aid existing character-friendships,” he maintained that it cannot create or sustain them.

Bennett and McFall are only two among many who are not encouraged by the direction that modern technology seems to be taking our friendships. Many others are much more hopeful. If we consider the three components of sunaisthesis, living, perceiving, and doing, we can evaluate the role of technology. Vallor (2012) pointed out that the notion of the shared life is problematic when we interpret Aristotle in light of technology. He wrote, “deeper reflection on the meaning of the shared life (*suzen*) for Aristotle raises important and troubling questions about the capacity of online social media to support complete friendships of virtue in the contemporary world” (p. 185). He added that without co-location, “social media and other forms of online interaction seem antithetical to shared living” (p. 288). Human living is togetherness.

Togetherness is quite possible today in online environments, offline environments, or using a combination of the two in a hybridized style of relation. Mary Chayko (2012) considered the possibilities for relationships that exist as a result of our technology and explored the notion of the sociomental bonds. She defined these bonds as existing “primarily in a mental realm, a space that is not created solely in the imagination of one individual but requires two or more minds” (p. 1). She argued that “they are no less real for being located in a mental realm. They are the manifestation of an absolutely genuine and often deeply felt sense that despite physical separation, a closeness among people, a nearness, exists; that while the physical distance separating people may be great, the social distance between them may be very small indeed” (pp. 1–2). She added that “they represent an experience of communion with another person, one that does not depend on face-to-face meetings to be initiated or maintained” (p. 2). Chayko pointed out that

even when the people involved in a sociomental connection do not know, have never seen, and cannot accurately visualize one another, a kind of mental pathway exists between them, along which information may be passed or people may otherwise influence one another. It is as though a passageway to many potential forms of social exchange and social relationship has been opened. The people involved may not be aware of this passageway or “use” it in any but the most weakly realized fashion, but due to the sociomental connection that exists, they have an increased opportunity to use it at some point in the future. Thus many more outcomes to an interpersonal association (including face-to-face relationships, friendships, and even love affairs) are possible when a mental pathway has first been opened between two people in the form of a sociomental connection. (p. 73)

Elder (2014) argued that “social media preserves the relevantly human and valuable portions of life, especially reasoning, play, and exchange of ideas” (p. 287) and as such, can also lead to the sharing of flourishing lives.

Elder (2014) highlighted that Aristotle associated shared living with conversation and thought. She argued that “any medium allowing friends to share conversations and thought should thus be compatible with virtue friendship” (p. 288). More specifically, she wrote:

Our capacity to share our lives and thoughts via language and other symbolic representation and artistic expression surely plays a role in the kind of sharing of ideas, experiences, and perceptions that constitutes the realest sense of living together, and conversations are facilitated rather than discouraged by many social media. (p. 289)

Von Heyking (2017), in a response to critics of his work *The Form of Politics*, argued that to even be able to asynchronously share, across time and space, his response to his critics is an example of sunaisthesis. Their work is collaborative. Von Heyking suggested that one partner can even be silent.

Munn (2012) argued that

Under my account of shared activity, friends engaged in such activity jointly pursue a goal when all of them not only desire a particular outcome, but also desire that the outcome be the product of the combined activity of the group, as it is composed. As friends, they may be willing to reduce the likelihood of achieving the desired outcome, in order to ensure that if it is achieved, the group which achieves it is composed of the friends. (p. 4)

Munn placed the *sharing* solely within the *communicative praxis* realm. He wrote, “I take communication to be the planning of activity, the sharing of ideas, the development of procedures and so on, while activity involves putting the things into praxis” (p. 4). The foundations of friendship related to *mutual caring* and *intimacy* can only arise through communicative praxis. He wrote, “two components commonly held to be required for friendship, namely mutual caring and intimacy, predominantly arise through shared experience, rather than independently of it” (p. 9). Friendship allows for a space of sharing moral visions. In the final chapter, we will explore this space from a communication ethics framework.

Conclusion: Joy, Sorrow, and Peace in Being with our Friends

Reconnection with lost friends can bring great joy, as can ending bad friendships. Unexpected loss of friendships can bring great sorrow. In my niece’s case, just being in each other’s company can bring a sense of calm and peace. Throughout this chapter, we have alluded to several reasons why this is so—the role of sunaisthesis and the nature of human belonging.

Thinking back to sunaisthesis, when we are with others we are something more than just our self with another self. We create an us together. In an

analysis of the notion of the good and justice, Baracchi concluded that there is an excess in friendship in which an openness extends “beyond each of the friends involved, beyond even their relatedness, their tending to be at one, to become one” (2009, p. 21). Related to the notion of sunaisthesis, Baracchi explained that this excess leads to a love of self that is manifested through “the departure towards the other, in an ecstatic movement outside oneself that can never allow for a simple return without dispersal” (p. 21). Continuing on, Baracchi explained that “one recognizes oneself as other because one contemplates in the other an in(de)finite openness to radical alterity, an alterity altogether irreducible to an other human being as well as to (any other) being” (p. 21). So, in one sense, when we lose a friend, we lose a part of our self, although it truly is the loss of something we created that was more than our self. We lose a window into the world of others and out of the world of self.

It also hurts because belonging is a basic human need. Baumeister and Leary (1995) showed that the need to belong is a fundamental human need and deeply engrained in our personhood. In their review, they noted the evolutionary grounds for belonging and it would be difficult to argue that relationships do not help us survive from a physical standpoint. The social contract approach, the pair argued, is not enough alone, however, to explain how two people form a relationship, for anyone would do if we were merely looking at belongingness from an evolutionary perspective. Missing is the particularity. The belongingness motivation, according to these scholars, is at the heart of our interactions. Rather than from an economic framework, like Aristotle we see that their research supports the notion that human beings naturally gravitate to others; it is not, however, sufficient alone to explain friendship. Based on their theory, they moved further to argue that because belongingness is fundamental, the *loss* of such belongingness would have severe adverse effects on individuals.

In an examination of the events that unfold at the ending of a friendship, one scholar has homed in on the loss of a support system. Healy (2017) wrote that when we enter the space of friendship, “we are somehow agreeing to something that is ‘joint’, sometimes referred to as a shared life” (p. 91) and the end of that, then, means that someone withdrew their participation in that shared life. In the case of ghosting, where we are left with few answers, the withdrawal of that shared life together can be devastating. Healy explained that

our former friend was a person who we saw as a “second self”—we were deeply invested in one another; they were important to us and we cared deeply for their well-being to the extent we were willing to sacrifice some of our good to help them achieve their goals. (p. 18)

This devastation not only comes due to the nature of our participation in this shared life and being together that are central to the nature of friendship, but also due to the lack of answers that cause us to call into question the friendship

itself and any future friendships we may have. This, Healy argued, is devaluing and dehumanizing.

Friendship losses, like friendships themselves, can help us flourish. They become opportunities to grow. Recognizing and understanding the role that we played in ending a friendship is important. In Rose's 1983 study, women were significantly more likely than men to accept responsibility for the end of a relationship. They were unlikely to accept *sole* responsibility, however. Rose noted that "the recognition of one's own impact on the friendship could be a sign of maturity, or it could be a face-saving devise [*sic*], allowing the person to feel less rejection in a dissolving relationship" (p. 15). Healy (2015) noted that from an Aristotelian perspective, friendship is believed to play "a considerable role in our self-knowledge and perspectives on the world" (p. 186). The issue, she noted, is that if this is the case, it is difficult to understand childhood friendships which ebb and flow as a child develops. She wrote, "No one forms a friendship with the intention of ending it, yet over the course of a life, changes happen: some friendship inevitably fade or end" (p. 187). The virtue in the dissolution of friendship is balancing the needs of each person to create something that leaves both on the path to happiness. Knowing where we went wrong, or being able to communicate and articulate where our former friend went wrong, is an ethical duty grounded in an other-centered communication ethic, which we will discuss in our final chapter.

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6 Better People, Better World

Friendship as a Communicative Good

In Book VII of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argued that friendship “is either itself a virtue or connected with virtue” (2003, 1155a). In the beginning of this book, it was noted that one reason for an approach to friendship as communicative phenomenon is that it allows us to attend to the historic moment we are currently in and that it frames communication in a way that allows us to navigate friendship in an age of virtue contention. Whether friendship is a good, a faculty, or a virtue does not discount framing friendship as a communicative phenomenon. Arnett and Arneson define a communicative ethic as a “value-laden philosophy of communication that gives weight to issues and events” (2014, p. 9). They likened it to an “evaluative” house. The foundation of the particular communication ethic in this chapter is to begin from the framework that friendship is a communicative phenomenon. As such, we can expand to view friendship as a communicative good, which serves to keep us grounded in the particulars while avoiding the pitfalls of universal declarations about friendship. With this, then, the chapter examines the practices that promote both friendship and human flourishing from a communication ethics approach. It serves as the conclusion for this book, summarizing the previous chapters and tying each into the notion of goods and practices.

Friendship Ethics: A Brief Review

Eberwein and Porlezza (2016) have argued that technology has led to a challenge of communication ethics in our age in two ways. First, they wrote that “digitization of the media creates new ethical problems that stimulate calls for a redefinition of the norms and values of public communication” (p. 328). Second, they argued that “new instruments of web-based media observation introduce new possibilities for media (self-)regulation and accountability, thus complementing the initiatives of traditional institutions like press councils” (p. 328). Sociological literature recognizes several major social institutions, but generally friendship is not considered a major social institution across cultures. The historical evidence, though, suggests that it is.

Friendship persists across time and place and is a central good that is protected and promoted in all cultures. One cannot have happiness in the absence

of others. There are multiple benefits to having friends. As discussed in the first chapter, pain tolerance increases as the size of one's social network increases (Johnson & Dunbar, 2016). There are cognitive benefits, such as slowing cognitive decline in older adults (James et al., 2011). Also, social network size has been linked inversely to depression (Hill et al., 2015). In childhood, friends help each other through the development process. Friends make us better people, and they also help us participate and create meaning in the polis. Nehamas (2010) argued that friendship is not a moral good—however, that it is a good. Nehamas explained, “friends’ activities are often trivial, commonplace and boring, sometimes even criminal,” despite what we see in the idealized cultural images in general (p. 268). There are elements of Aristotelian philosophy associated with friendship that cannot account for friendships that are not between two people of the highest good, in some senses.

To exemplify how friends help us become better people and better citizens, Stocker (1981) explained that friends enlarge our mentality of the good. He wrote, “This expansion of my desire for the good, this ‘intersubjectivizing’ of the good by me, means that I have become more virtuous, more human, more perfect as an agent (p. 459). Meilaender (1981) argued that envisioning an Aristotelian perspective on friendship can prove problematic in our time. This is because we fail to recognize the nature of friendship in the formation of virtue and moral excellence. In this passage, he explained:

In our society the private bond of friendship is usually regarded as far less important than the public bond of citizenship. And indeed, if the preferential character of friendship creates problems for Christian ethics, it is not difficult to see what the more universal bond of citizenship might have done to seem more deserving as a focus for our attention and activity. (p. 68)

He added, “friendship, as we understand it today—an intimate, personal, and private bond among a small group of people—is for Aristotle only a more perfect expression of the bond which unites the polis” (p. 70).

The relationship of friendship and the effects on character development and society at large uniquely calls forth a virtue ethics approach. Even more specifically, as a communicative phenomenon, a communication ethics approach grounded in virtue ethics is pressing. Barrachi also recognized the importance of friendship to the polis. She wrote of the necessity of sympathy in friendship and explained,

Not unlike sailors at sea, conscious of the perils of their worldly transit, they share the same vulnerability to the measureless and non-human. Friendship, then, would stem from such an elemental sentiment of solidarity and promote accord within the community. In this way, it encourages like-mindedness, a community “of one mind,” as it were. (2009, p. 18)

Finally, Aristotle, too, noted the importance of friendship to the polis. In a passage on friendship and justice, he explained that

friendship seems to hold a polis together, too, and lawgivers seem to pay more attention to friendship than to justice; for concord seems to be somewhat akin to friendship, and this they aim at most of all and try their utmost to drive out faction, which is enmity. And when human beings are friends, they have no need of justice at all, but when they are just, they still need friendship; and that which is most just is thought to be done in a friendly way. (1155a21–29)

Technology and Friendship Ethics

Traditionally, empirical studies in mediated communication and their effects trend in deontological and utilitarian frameworks (Vallor, 2012). In an earlier work, Vallor (2010) argued that these frameworks have drastically narrowed our understanding of the effects of technology on human flourishing. From a deontological and utilitarian perspective, technologies' roles and effects on friendship are defined and judged in measurable and quantifiable ways associated with the individual and fail to recognize friendship as between persons. To explain this problem, she wrote:

Such studies can encourage a narrowly utilitarian calculus that draws conclusions about the impact of new social media on users' well-being simply from measures of their enjoyment of psychosocial goods such as feelings of "life satisfaction", "self-esteem" or "social capital." (Vallor, 2012, p. 187).

These frameworks often tend to be narrowly focused on particular times, and the broader nature of technological impacts over the course of human history are left out. Vallor suggested as a solution a turn to virtue ethics. Virtue ethics, she explains, "has the ability to account for the long-term and cumulative impact of particular practices on our character" (p. 187). As friendship has been important in every era of human history, scholarship that is attentive to its nature in history and the practices which it encourages and also effects it is important.

Stocker (1981) also recognized problems with a teleological approach to understanding friendship. He used the example of courage to show us that we run the risk of reifying practices of true friendship when he wrote:

One can act in order to show that one is courageous. But to act for that end need not be to act courageously, nor conversely. Rather to act courageously involves acting from a certain appreciation of the situation's danger, a suitable handling of fear, and the like. And these features, among others, are not amenable to a teleological understanding. Thus, there is no goal, properly so-called, the seeking of which is, as such, to act courageously. (p. 758)

Therapeutic culture finds value in teleological perspectives. Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) has sold millions of copies. One of his suggestions in his work was for people to be sincere. But in telling someone to be sincere, it is impossible then for them to be sincere. Rather than be sincere, their focus of attention is on the state of being so. When we tell someone what they *ought* to do in a friendship, we ignore that friendships are communicative phenomena that develop between persons. Friends *ought* to meet in person more. Friends *must* spend more time meeting face to face. These perspectives run the risk of treating the particular practices as means to ends rather than allowing the practices to naturally evolve through discourse.

Some scholars have argued that discourse is the defining pathway to achieving moral excellence (Sculd, 1989). Sculd called forth the notion of *hommonioia* to explain that friendship is not a "relationship that exists for the sake of satisfying our yearning for companionship" (p. 208). He clarified that "it is an ideal to guide us in developing the moral dimension of already existing institutional and quasi-institutional relationships" (p. 208). He then reasoned that the "instrumental function" of friendship is to "bring out the communal sensibilities that exist between individuals in order for them to engage in the sort of discourse that predicts their individual integrity and eventuates in good judgment" (p. 208). Sculd felt that virtue attraction was the cement of friendships. It is because friends are those with whom we engage in "moral pursuits" (p. 209). Sokolowski agreed, contending that "friendship exceeds justice as a human perfection" (2002, p. 452). He explained that "the virtues are embodiments of practical intelligence" and that

we ourselves are the works of doing. Virtues, therefore, are embodiments of practical reason, and the installation of reason into our inclinations takes place through the actions we perform and the choices we make. (p. 453)

The choices we make are what make the communicative work of friendship an ethical practice. Technology, used unreflectively in our everyday life, can be problematic for our relationships just as much as it can be used well. The choices we make about the use of technology in our lives and friendships are where the consideration needs to be. Are we using technology in a way that promotes flourishing in our friendship, the life of our friend, and our own life?

While this work has been quick to point out that technology has had many positive effects on our friendships, there are many scholars who are pointing out many of the choices that we make and their effects are harming individuals and the community as a whole. Choosing to unfriend someone online with the click of a mouse and no feedback about why can hinder the other's ability to reflect and identify what could be done differently, which are important to moral development. Neubaum et al. (2021) recently published an examination of the moral dimensions of unfriending. The ease of unfriending, for example, has been tied to a degradation and discouragement of civil discourse (Baysha,

2020). Rather than talk about our disagreements, our choice to unfriend inhibits conversations in the larger community.

On the theme of civil discourse, blocking ideas or unfriending is also problematic in that it creates “epistemic bubbles” (Elder, 2019). Elder coined the term “epistemic bubbles” to explain how we tend to block content we do not like or unfollow or unfriend others who differ in political opinions. The issue is that people are choosing to completely opt out of civic discourse completely. This raises several ethical concerns. For one, he argued, these bubbles create a form of self-isolation that leads to a “variety of social and political ills” (p. 18). He also discussed the issues associated with ignoring messages. We can ignore them at will, and it has not been that easy in the past. He made the case for disconnection on social media serving both good and bad purposes, and suggested a virtue ethics approach to thinking through friendship and disconnect on social media. For example, unfriending someone you disagree with could be an act of cowardice, or an act of courage, if it is motivated by fear of speaking up versus maintaining a boundary.

In a model proposed by Sibona and Walczak (2011), it is recognized that online friendship termination can result from both online and offline reasons. Utilizing Wright’s 1978 study on self-referent behavior in friendship, they argue that online reasons such as behavioral, contextual mismatches, and conflicted norms can occur in varying degrees with offline reasons such as personality and offline behaviors, and a change in offline relationships can lead to unfriending online. They then, based on their observations, added a fourth dimension to the online reasons—non-initiation, which was associated with interdependence. This, too, opens the door for a plethora of questions. Should someone’s online behavior be grounds for ending a friendship offline? Is our online identity an extension of our offline self?

In actuality, as this book has suggested, the distinction between online and offline is largely irrelevant. There was already a spectrum of typologies of friendship, ranging from simple to complex, which are comprised of “more multi-stranded socialities” (Heaphy and Davies, 2012, p. 315). It was suggested that I consider making typologies a feature of this work, to explore the levels of blended relationships that exist. But doing so not only would undermine this argument, but also be impossible. The use of technology is embedded in the particulars of the friendships themselves. Friendships as lived are much different than the romanticized and idealized notions of friendship that we often see in movies and television. This was a problem even pre-social media. La Gaipa (1982) also noted the problems associated with idealized friendships, even arguing that this has effects on the dissolution of friendships and conflict within.

In previous chapters, we have argued that, generally, friendship is an activity that occurs in the unreflective state of being. This orientation is problematic in the sense that just because it is something that we often do unreflectively does not mean that it should always be so. Just because we have been communicating with friends since we have been young does not mean we have been doing it correctly or in the most effective way. One way that we can bring

mindfulness of our friendship practices into the contemplative space of our friendships is through communication ethics.

Communication Ethics Approach to Friendship

Fritz (2014), in advancing the notion of professional civility as a communicative virtue, argued that it can provide a home for care of institutions. She explained that “care for institutions involves thoughtful engagement of an organization’s horizon of possibilities and a thoughtful, deliberate phenomenological turning toward key facets of organizational experience” (p. 223). This work has been an exercise in the thoughtful engagement of friendship’s horizon of possibilities and has turned to the key facets of experience related to friendship, outlined in each chapter. Earlier, I did briefly note that friendship can be viewed as an institution.

Fritz argued that MacIntyre considered institutions “necessary to reach the *telos* of human flourishing” (p. 224) and in the previous chapter and throughout this work, it has been a central tenet that from Aristotle and beyond, friendship has been considered instrumental in human flourishing. Fritz explained that with organizations, and similarly institutions, we are summoned “to tend to them with the care that we extend to human Others” (p. 223). She continues that “such care embraces a unity of contraries” (p. 223) and necessitates a reflection that cares for institutions “that support the labor, work, and action of human persons in the gestalt of public and private life” (p. 224). Fritz advocated for protecting and promoting those specific practices which led to professional flourishing in the workplace.

Fritz incorporated a conceptual framework that centered on three components:

- 1 “the need to see beyond immediate presenting problems occurring in institutional contexts”;
- 2 “the importance of taking a long-term view rather than a short-term view of organizational health”;
- 3 “and a rejection of the equivalent, in organizational terms, of temporary comfort reflective of a therapeutic response in the interpersonal context.”

In this conclusion, the goal is to adapt the above framework to attend to friendship as an institution from a communications ethics approach, and to engage in the particular forms of communication work and associated practices of each highlighted throughout this work.

We have already shown that there is some substantial disagreement in our era about what constitutes friendship itself. Arnett et al. (2009) argued that each communication ethic “carries or reflects two sorts of related goods” (p. 4). The first, they explained, is “a substantive good” and the second “is a set of communicative practices that ensures active protection and promotion of a given good” (p. 4). The trio suggested that the defining good of our postmodern age is “difference” (p. 5). Arnett (2010) has argued that a defining feature of

philosophy of communication that helps situate it as unique from philosophy in general is its attention to the particulars. Regarding this attention, he drew from Arendt and wrote, “Philosophy of communication engages particulars contingent on a particular situation, a particular moment, and a particular public contribution to public opinion” (p. 58). As examples of theories that have stood the test of time, he noted Aristotle’s virtue ethics and Buber’s dialogue, and said that they “offer examples of temporal conviction that remain significant as long as a given theory continues to pass a pragmatic test of public opinion in the public domain” (p. 58). The entry point of the particular is especially relevant for friendship studies.

Elder (2014) noted that “the shared good life” needs to address the universal good of human happiness and “particular goods for particular” human beings (p. 288). Sokolowski (2002) said that virtue friendships require shared virtues. He showed sharing virtues “involves calibration” and honing. He continued that “it demands that in the contingencies and vicissitudes of life we possess the insight and the character to achieve truly the good of another” (p. 462). Not only then do we need to be moral agents, but we must meet our friend in the particular to know “precisely what he needs ... and how he needs it” (p. 462). A philosophy of communication approach can help meet the friendship in the way it needs to be met and avoid the pitfall of reification.

Habits of the Heart—Practices that Shape Our Friendships

Looking back to earlier, Arnett et al. (2009) highlighted a twofold nature of goods. First, there is a substantive good, and secondary are a set of practices that protect and promote that good. On one level, we might say that human flourishing is the substantive good and friendship is one of a set of practices that protect and promote that good. We can also say that friendship is a substantive good, and investigate the particular practices that might protect and promote friendship.

Arnett and Holba (2012) recognized the importance of the particular within the confines of the friendship when they explained:

There is a universal commitment to begin a friendship, but if you are to be a friend you must play out that commitment in a unique and particular fashion. There is a particular demand, a unique caring that is called forth. Anyone who anticipates being a friend knows that each person requires different engagements. The horizon of what one might call a universal is only modestly approachable if one attends to the demands of the particular. (p. 4)

The pair then draws from Frankl’s work to highlight that a focus on the particular causes us to evaluate our practices:

Frankl’s work reminds us that human beings are in charge of two of the three elements that make life meaningful. We control what we give and

our stance against the inevitable. The environment does not simply beat up on us every day; we are in charge of two-thirds of our own lives by practices that give and practices that take a stand against the inevitable. Practices shape our communicative hearts. Our communicative practices form habits of the heart that begin to shape patterns of our interpretative lives. (p. 10–11)

This section will attempt to highlight those practices and to do so, it will examine the themes written about in each chapter as a practice. Finally, we also might say that each individual theme itself is a good and then examine the individual practices that protect and promote each. This next section will also do that.

Encounter

Looking back at the chapter on encounter, the chapter began by framing encounter as communicative and as the starting point of all human relationships. Drawing from the work of Schutz, a review of the phenomenology of encounter was explored. We live in an intersubjective world and encounters with others are a part of our everyday existence. After discussing Tischner's work on encounter, encounter was established as the paradigmatic relation of two persons relating to each other in the world. Several points about encounter were made over the course of the chapter. Encounter is communicative, essential for friendship, foundational for all human relationships, an everyday event, inherently relational, an event, not reciprocal in the sense of awareness but in the sense of contextual dependence on the nature of intersubjectivity, and revelatory. These components led to the conclusion that from a communicative framework, encounter could be understood as *the communicative phenomenon in which persons enter into a communicative common environment*.

So now, the section turns to viewing encounter as both a communicative good in and of itself, and of a practice that protects and promotes friendship as a substantive good. For each, the goal is to explore the ways in which we might protect and promote encounter in ways that promote human flourishing and remain critical of engaging in encounter in a way that is detrimental to both individuals, dyads, and the community in general. All human beings are by nature of being human embedded in an already social world that existed before their birth and will continue to exist after their death. Intersubjectivity is the state of only knowing the world in the between of persons, as all thought and knowledge are socially created.

In this natural state of everyday existence, we take for granted our world, and because of that, we also take for granted the existence of other humans. We take for granted that they exist like we exist, and we are able to do so because of the *thesis of general reciprocity*. For most of human history, we encountered others in their *originary presence*, first bodily. Their bodies were presented to us as objects, and much like we move through the apperceptive

process to envision that they have a heart, and stomach, and all other organs and physical features we can imagine, we also do so with their consciousness. With their consciousness, it cannot be accessed from the outside in any type of tangible way. Instead, we must rely on their words to grasp their interiority. When we encounter the bodies of others in our world, they are given to us in their *originary presence*. When we enter a space in which it becomes possible to communicate one's interior and make it exterior through language, we find ourselves in a communicative common environment.

So within this realm of discovery, one might then encourage that in encounter we remain ever mindful and attentive to the other that is before us, attune to their words and their presence. We must try to overcome our tendency to take others for granted, their existence for granted, and their bodies for granted. I cannot advocate for a constant and vigilant state of attunement, for that would be impossible, but a practice to be cultivated in which we thoughtfully think about and pay attention, intentional attention, to the humanity of those who surround us—even online.

The ways in which we encounter others, that is enter into communicative common environments, are not space-bound in today's world. To illustrate this point, I will now examine some of the ways in which I encountered others yesterday. To begin my day, I encountered each member of my family in some way as the house became alive. Although my niece grumpily walked past me with no communication whatsoever, in that moment we shared a communicative common environment. When she closed the bathroom door, she used an "involvement shield." As I drove the kids to school, each driver I encountered on the road had the potential for a shared communicative environment. Had I found myself sitting at the light too long, thinking about my book, I surely would have heard at the minimum a honking horn.

When I dropped them off at school, kids and parents hustled and bustled to stay out of the way of other cars. I encountered rushed parents and students looking forward to the day—or not; some looked quite irritated. While I exchanged no words with any of them, some shared eye contact or a wave or nod. In each of these instances, we see a case of encounter. I arrived home and immediately checked my email. Again, I *encountered* others, in their textual presence, in a very asynchronous way. As I began working on my book, I received an email from someone asking me to call. When I encountered her email, I then called. Throughout my day, whether mediated or not, I encountered many people in many different ways. I encountered some both in person and via text. The point is that in our peopled world, we encounter others regularly and in various different ways. My day was filled with choices, choices about whom to acknowledge or not, which medium to use and when, etc. And these choices should become part of an awareness in my reflective space that I have yet to truly engage in.

As a practice that helps achieve friendship, encounter is a necessary requirement, for we must share communicative common environments with someone to be their friend. I cannot be friends with a celebrity I see on television—there

is no shared communicative environment. As a good to promote and protect, we can look at the specific practices that promote and protect encounter from an individual and institutional perspective. At the institutional and individual level, we can apply Fritz's framework, mentioned earlier. First, she suggested a commitment to long-term health, to seeing beyond just the present, and to being wary of therapeutic approaches. Literature has tended to imagine technology as having opened the door for everyone to contact everyone all the time, but Zhao and Elesh (2008) explain this is a faulty way of looking at the state of electronic media in our world. They explain, "It might be true that calling has led to more contact with friends and family members, but there is little sign that telephone calling opened up new social contacts" (p. 567). This is problematic because as we know, philosophy of communication encourages a commitment to learning through difference. Meeting difference, from this perspective, would mean encouraging the openness to encounter. It means promoting the development of media and all endeavors that allow for encountering difference and promoting it, and protecting the public spheres in which encounter is possible.

In practice this requires a recognition of very real problems that prevent others from pursuing encounters in difference. First, would be comfort, of course. Learning in difference requires communicative work. Encounter requires communicative work, and cognitive and emotional energy. Another issue is stereotypes, prejudices, and bias. Difference needs to be met with courage, and possibilities and positivities related to encounter should be promoted. Protecting diversity is of utmost importance in the realm of encounter. Part of this is a secondary problem, and that is the digital divide. While the majority of people in the United States do have internet access, as discussed in the previous chapters, the small minority who do not still represent millions of people. We have made leaps and bounds thanks to pushes for global access to technology and the Web; however, in the world's least developed countries, under 10 percent have access to the internet. With the various possibilities that emerge from encounter alone and the role of encounter in human flourishing from its connection to friendship alone, ensuring that all have equal access to the spaces in which humanity can access others should be a priority.

Zhao and Elesh (2008) noted the digital divide as one among several issues related to misconceptions about our possibilities for encounter. In addition to the digital divide, they noted that there are "normative factors that restrict social connectivity" (p. 568). Even within the same physical space, the pair noted that "being 'within range' is not the same as being available for contact" (p. 569). Indeed, our earlier comment about stereotypes and prejudices apply here. While some normative constraints are beneficial, others are harmful. Here, then, a promotion and protection of an ongoing conversation about the nature of these restraints and their constant evaluation and reevaluation in the public sphere is necessary.

In his work on encounter, Tischner (2011) discussed the notion of the agathological horizon and of "being-through-each-other." He argued, "The

experience of encounter can only be complete if it takes place within the agathological horizon” (p. 62). Specifically, this horizon is “marking out the sphere of existence” (p. 62). He wrote,

It is through the encounter and through the structure of the agathological horizon that we are able to define the existential situation of one man next to another: how people *are* together, regardless of how they may possibly act together. (p. 62)

To return to the beginning of the chapter on encounter, where we noted that even strangers can have a positive effect on our lives, this concept of how people *are* together resonates with engaging the other with an ethic of civility and care with all others, and that protecting and promoting institutions and technologies that encourage ethics of care are important.

Likewise, protecting mediated and physical spaces that encourage practices and that promote sociality and togetherness are also important—for good works, and acts, with others. Just like in physical spaces in which bad acts are committed, there are spaces in the mediated realm that foster hostility and bad acts. The choice to stand up for another against an online troll, to filter a child’s social media feed, and even to block others from finding your profile are choices with consequences. Operating from a place of concern for sociality requires that one reflects on the *why* that drives the choice, hopefully facilitating choices that are in the best interest of sociality and difference. At its core, encounter needs to be protected and promoted as a source, *the* source, of exposure to alterity and difference. Being mindful of our own choices as well as mindful of our collective resources is important, and within this theme, asking ourselves which technologies and media facilitate our encounters with others, and as a result, our exposure to alterity and difference, are what becomes the central focus moving forward.

Particularity

In the Chapter 2, the communicative phenomenon investigated was particularity. Picking up with Schutz, a review of phenomenology of the apprehension of the other was undertaken, which argued that there are unaccounted for components of otherness that cannot be adequately or accurately received outside explicit communication, specifically the other’s own unique interiority. Transitioning to the work of Walter Ong and Corey Anton, the chapter then examined interiority and its evolution related to communication technology, and the role of intentionality and givenness in accepting and legitimating the existence and uniqueness of the other. To address concerns about the ability to address and receive particularity via mediated communication, I then examined the role of voice. Voice, I argued, was the revelation of one’s interior and it existed independent of sound. In the chapter, we identified that particularity is *the reciprocal recognition of the other’s unique consciousness (interiority) through voice*

within a context of belief. Voice, in the context of this project, is the expression of one's interiority. Interiority was one's unique consciousness that belongs to no other human being nor ever will.

The previous chapter on encounter had left off by saying that mere encounter is not enough to spark a friendship. Instead, there is a tension that emerges. In each encounter there is the potential for a social relation, and in the communicative process one will arise through the tension between mere encounter and particularity. Ong, in several of his works, including *In the Human Grain* (1967), explained that the atoms in our bodies are millions of years old and for them all to come together to create the being that is us is no less than proof that God exists. If we go further, what a miracle that the atoms in two bodies build to give rise to two unique interiorities that they come together to do good things together!

Doing good things together means that we have an expression into the outer world of our consciousness—we communicate. Everyone does, but to move from an everyday encounter to a relation requires a recognition of one's particularity. And that alone is not enough—it must be reciprocal and voluntary. Using Anton's work, it is important to remember that this process cannot be forced or scripted. We dwell in the what is said, we dwell in our friend, and we dwell in the friendship without stopping to reflect on these things in themselves. In the moments that we do, the focus of our attention changes. Like encounter, as a practice particularity is naturally associated with human flourishing because it is a practice that leads to the good of friendship (and other important social relationships).

On one hand, one of the reasons that we should protect and promote particularity is because it, itself, is a good. Aristotle's work on ethics discussed the nature of pleasure, pain, and our purpose in life. While not all things that are good bring pleasure, particularity does. Revisiting Chapter 2, remember that Nathaniel Branden highlighted that human beings experience actual joy when we experience being "visible" as unique individuals to others. Recall that he wrote:

When we encounter a person who thinks as we do, who notices what we notice, who values the things we value, who tends to respond to different situations as we do, not only do we experience a strong sense of affinity with such a person but also we can experience our self through our perception of that person. (1993, p. 70)

The practices that allow us to even express ourselves as particulars in our world, then, need to be protected and promoted. The protection of autonomy and choice, but managed and negotiated through the tension of similarity and difference embedded in difference, is one of Rawlins' major contributions to friendship.

To clarify the specific practices to promote and protect related to the overall good of particularity requires a deeper understanding of the role of particularity

in creating the virtuous individual. The very recognition of the good is a co-created construct. To explain this process, Stocker (1981) wrote the following:

I do not seek this larger good simply because it is useful for me. If I were to do so, my “perfect” friendship would have slipped into being a friendship based on utility. Nor do I seek this larger good simply because it gives me a good feeling to do so, because it is pleasant to me. If I were to do so, my “perfect” friendship would have deviated into being a friendship based on pleasure. Rather, I see this good for another because I have become someone who is capable of friendship, someone who can desire and accomplish the good of others as my own good. I want good things not only for myself but for others as well, and the others in question have the same disposition toward me. The friendship is reciprocal and mutually acknowledged. This reciprocal and enlarged well-wishing involved a categorical form. It is a highly sophisticated intellectual structure. It is a form of recognition or identification. The good of my friend is identified as my own good, and my good is identified as the good of my friend, and both of us rejoice in the identifications that we mutually accomplish. (pp. 459–460)

Being able to have virtuous friendship requires intimate knowledge about the friend, understanding their particular being, because to be a good friend means to do good things for the other friend, which requires recognition. Protecting and promoting the practices and spaces that encourage the co-creation of goods, stories, and revelation between friends is a central focus for our future endeavors. Whether this is ensuring that massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMPORGs) continue to exist, encouraging virtual happy hours, throwing birthday parties for our friends in person, or any of the other various spaces in which two or more people can meet and express themselves as they choose, all of these spaces should be recognized as legitimate spaces where we can both send and receive our particular interiors.

Dialogue

In Chapter 2 and into Chapter 3, the role of dialogue was recognized as important for the development of particularity between persons. The chapter began with a discussion that asserted that depersonalization is a general communicative issue, independent of technology. Under the presupposition that dialogue is a necessary component of friendship following many scholars, such as Rawlins, the chapter examined the nature of dialogue through the work of Buber and Ong. The constraints of dialogue are amplified when communication becomes filtered through technology. The more filtered the dialogue (e.g. text versus video chat), the more possible that the lack of cues will lead to interpretive problems in attempting to understand the other. Now the focus will move to the particular practices that promote and protect authentic dialogue.

Media that help facilitate this authentic dialogue are in the forefront of our discussions. While there is rhetoric about the negative effects of technology on our relationships, more emphasis needs to be placed on the positives of technology. Using one single app like Snapchat, users have at their fingertips voice, video, text, the option to engage in synchronous and asynchronous dialogue. They can use stickers or play games with others. Platforms like YouTube allowed me to take videos of my world and life and share them with my friend in Monterrey as she and I shared a common goal of language learning.

Dialogue is an important component in the process of drawing out the interiority of the other and allowing for the emergence of particularity. As noted previously, Ong was influenced greatly by Buber's work. In the act of coming into relation with other people, we draw on a stock of knowledge that brings forth an interpretive process. Human thought in its nature is binary and "breaks" down what we see. This is paradigmatic of language, as language is equally digitizing and breaks down as well as brings up. For example, we are well aware that in the process of naming, the word given to the object of intention is not the object of intention itself. Words are arbitrary representations of the objects of intentionality. However, in entering discourse and dialogue, words give life and representation to some things that are very real and not tangible, like the inner consciousness of others. In addition to dialogue being necessary for particularity, it is also the only way in which a friendship can become such an "object" that it can be identified as such. Friends co-create meaning, including the meaning that their unique friendship has and that it is even a friendship in the first place.

Chapter 3 identifies several challenges related to dialogue and the interpretive process, and this is an opening for a discussion on ethics. Dialogue is clearly a practice that leads to human flourishing and friendship. But dialogue is a good that needs to be protected in and of itself. For this work, specifically, the goal is to stay as close as possible to an understanding of the communicative practices that promote and protect dialogue from the perspective of friendship and friendship ethics. First, related to the co-creation of meaning, it is important to be mindful of the current conversation that is questioning the quality of online friendship or its authenticity or genuineness. Based on the philosophical underpinnings, friendship's significance is co-created in the between of persons. As such, we employ evaluative deontological and utilitarian universals to relationships that are not particularly ours. For one thing, friendships vary and change over the course of lifespans and across time and place. Some friendships look much different than others. Some are considered to have "weak ties" or dismissed as not "true" but instead "friendly relations." Rather than discussions of the nature of "true" friendship's ability to occur online, from a philosophy of communication perspective the focus would be better centered on what practices in mediated settings can protect and promote the dialogic space that allows for the co-creation of friendship. What spaces encourage people to engage in dialogue? What can we do to protect these and encourage their use?

Throughout the chapter, the lack of cues was a main focus. The lack of cues does reduce the available information for interpreting the other. This causes, because of the nature of human thought and language, the interpreter to draw from their stock of knowledge from their protentions and retentions more so than the face-to-face setting. Text creates phenomenological distance, and in Chapter 4, where we discussed intimacy, we saw this manifest as the feeling of closeness. From a Fritizan framework and philosophy of communication perspective, though, a more situated and long-term perspective is needed.

As noted in the chapter, it is important to resist lamenting the loss of cues. Loss of cues is not inherently negative, nor is distance. As we saw in the chapter, studies show that when cues are reduced there are actually several positives. The more reduced the cues and the more an individual must rely on words alone, the more introspective they must be. They tend to be much more deliberate in their messages. To exemplify this, I am going to explain a game that I play in my classes when we review verbal and nonverbal communication.

Almost all my students are familiar with charades, and I find great joy in bringing the game of Taboo into the classroom and telling them it is “reverse charades.” Rather than eliminating the verbal, it eliminates the nonverbal. Students must rely on their words to get their teammates to guess particular words that they have drawn on cards. At the end of the activity, I tell them the following. I ask them how many are good at painting. A few raise their hands, but never very many. When a student enters a class on painting, no matter what they possess when they come in, they will learn particular skills, techniques, and a strong knowledge base in order to leave better than when they come in. And so it is with communication. While it is natural to humans, doing it well or in the most effective way is not intuitive. Studies in communication provide, like the painting class, skills, techniques, and knowledge. When a student leaves a painting class, the teacher cannot supply them with something they will need to continue to grow and create—this is the paints, the materials. When I ask the students what the materials are of communication, they say words. Words, yes, are the materials and as nonverbal cues are reduced, a deliberateness and level of introspection is required, more so than available to past generations.

When I ask students where they get words, they always pause. The answer is learning, from learning. From reading, from education, and from communicating with others. Philosophy of communication directs us to a commitment to always learning, particularly from difference, and this continues to be a focal point, even more so in an age where cues are reduced and our words often stand alone. So, as in the earlier summary of the chapter on particularity, again a commitment to protecting and promoting learning spaces, particular spaces where we encounter others, is also a relevant piece to the good of dialogue.

One final problem area to probe here at the end is related to a small section of Chapter 3 where I noted that in our technological age, sometimes we may not be certain at all who, if anyone, will be on the other end of our message. Not only are we even unsure if anyone at all will read our messages, we now

are in an era where “deep fakes” are a reality and a concern. Chesney and Citron (2019) wrote an extensive review covering the challenges and potential benefits that deep fakes have for culture. They explained, “The ability to distort reality has taken an exponential leap forward with ‘deep fake technology’” (p. 1753). The pair defines deep fake technology as audio and visual technology that makes it possible to depict “real people” of “saying and doing things they never did or said” (p. 1753). For the reasons discussed in the chapter, mediated communication is already conducive to depersonalization. How might we navigate these concerns?

Arnett and Arneson (2014) noted that Friedman suggested a “need for ‘existential trust’” in response to Buber’s claim that “existential mistrust has dominated” our time (p. 16). They continued that “with a loss of trust, we lose the ability to distinguish genuine problems from manufactured problems, the genuine friend from a disingenuous salesperson, and genuine hope from a lost cause” (p. 16). Instead, there is always an underlying hidden meaning that is sought. The inability to trust that the other is bringing their authentic self in dialogue is already problematic. Mistrust is also growing in the technological realm due to deep fakes, bots, and “catfishes.” While it may seem hopeless, there is hope in Ong’s claim that all language conceals but also reveals. Arnett and Arneson (1999) advocated for a dialogic civility perspective. They wrote that “a dialogic civility perspective on interpersonal discourse is grounded in historicity, not therapeutic discourse” (p. 30). Specifically, they note the importance of listening to the demand of a particular moment, and this includes interpersonally listening to the particular moment and particularity of the friend. They wrote, “Dialogue suggests that ‘we’ more than ‘me’ must guide the discourse of self, other, and the historical moment” (p. 5) and therefore, from a philosophy of communication approach, we must lean in on the “we” to guide us.

Tuning in to the “we” requires a commitment to listening in all forms possible. Ihde (2007) reminds us to pay attention to the “horizons of speech” and argued that “if there is an ethics of listening, then respect for silence must play a part in that ethics” (p. 180). For Ihde, this goes far beyond dialogue between two individuals but is instead the narrative of all humankind. Particular ethics are secondary to the ethic of solidarity and community. Ihde explains that “ethics must depend on a silent agreement of humankind that itself already presupposes a certain unanimity of voice and thought. Ethics must take its place second to a sense of community” (p. 180). An attentiveness and protection of silence as a space not of emptiness but instead of possibility is of utmost importance.

Intimacy

In the chapter where we explored space and time, we examined the nature of intimacy and the tendency to imagine it as a space-bound phenomenon. Space and time are hardly goods that we can protect and promote as communicative

phenomena, but intimacy, which is associated with both as social dimensions, is a substantive good and a practice that protects and promotes friendship. The chapter began by exploring the connection between friendship and time, arguing that friendship is experienced as duration. As a result, friendship can be viewed as a *durée* of communicative acts that bring two people together. Time consciousness has changed and evolved alongside the correlative shifts in communicative technologies, and the chapter then reviewed this evolution and how it has altered our perceptions of time and space. The implications of altered perceptions of time and space have altered our experiences of friendships and our experiences with our friends, with implications for our physical bodies in space and the felt sense of distance (phenomenological distance/intimacy). At the end, a discussion of silence in the mediated realm and its connection to intimacy and distance ensued.

Just as social systems have been extended, so, too, has intimacy into the noosphere. We can trace these changes historically. There are several themes related to intimacy that require a final glimpse in the arena of communication ethics. Chambers (2013) noted the rhetoric “that IM [instant messaging], texting and social network sites are somehow undermining human intimacy and sociality” (p. 14). Part of the issue, she argued, is that skeptics fail to recognize the importance of “weak ties.” She wrote in more detail:

Weak ties may offer us access to the kinds of resources and varied social groups and belief systems that close family and friends are unable to supply. Those with extensive weak ties will have access to information, new ideas and tastes from outlying parts of the social system. (p. 15)

Weak ties are not then necessarily problematic and as noted in the chapter, intimacy is not universally accepted as a standard feature of friendship. That being said, the implications for how we live our lives and the choices we make related to this are still important to consider.

In a previous section, I cautioned against utilitarian frameworks that measure friendships and caution against views of friendship in which friendship is equated with networking as a ploy to gain social capital. Economic theories and attempts at understanding human behavior from economic frameworks are nothing new. A more thorough study of social capital and its ethical implications, possibly drawing from Bordieus, would be recommended as an area of future research. Information sharing is another arena for further study. In his article “Information and/or Communication” (2002), Ong cautioned us against conflating information and communication. He wrote that information “itself does not of itself involve meaning” (p. 505). He added that “it does not involve human consciousness, or consciousness of any kind” (p. 505). This is an important distinction as we have discussed the tendency for mediated communication to depersonalize. Depersonalization is further problematic in an age of information as income. Chambers (2013) did note that “I suggest that we have entered an era in which ‘friendship’ becomes both a potent exemplar of

individuality and personal choice and a global marketing tool to influence our personal tastes and patterns of consumption” (p. 162). Both these issues are associated with depersonalization and treating the person as an object.

As noted in previous chapters, it requires consistent effort to avoid imaging the friend as an *it* and to recognize their *thouness*. This requires deliberate effort to avoid reducing what we share and how we perceive it. In an explanation of how two individuals can build a We-relationship (stream consciousness together) in an online environment, Zhao (2015) explained that the two individuals move through “mutual biographical disclosure” (p. 119). The pair will “reach back to their memories, unwind the reduced streams of inner consciousness and bare the contexts of their retrieved thoughts and emotions to others for examination and reflection” (p. 119). He added, “such voluntary disclosure of the innermost part of one’s consciousness” is “common” in the online world (p. 119). He also added in another essay the following argument: “In the online world mutual knowledge is derived from the biographic narrative people supply about themselves that describe who they are and what they have been through” (2007, p. 147). And related to existential mistrust, he reminded us that we must take their word for it. He wrote, “Since observation of others in a shared living environment becomes impossible, we have no choice but to base our knowledge of others on what they tell us about themselves” (p. 148). In Buber’s and Ong’s terms, this requires faith, a leap of faith, and belief. From here then, the point I hope to make is this: the goods that we need to protect and promote are those which promote intimacy between friends and protect self-disclosure.

Online, one problem that is particularly new is that of saving casual chats. A private spoken conversation between two friends could be recorded, but it is unlikely that an outsider could do it well on a regular basis. Within a mediated setting, the unknowns and uncertainties between the pair in chat are much greater. It has come to light that many media giants have been saving private chats for some time, and even Amazon has come under fire for storing recordings from Alexa, even when no recording should have been taking place. I do not claim to have any answers, only suggest that if we view this from a communication ethics standpoint, the priority in these situations would be to protect the spaces of self-disclosure as safe spaces between friends and be important in considerations about how and why we choose to engage in particular behaviors for economic reasons.

Another consideration related to intimacy that prompts more questions than answers is related to choices about who we choose to remain in touch with and why. No two friendships are alike, Healy noted, and each friendship results as a process of negotiation. Healy (2017) mentioned that because of the nature of friendship as giving special preferences over strangers, friendship is a moral relationship. In creating intimacy, a pair consents to creating a space between two people in which only those two people are privy to not only its content but even its existence. This space does not simply disappear when a friendship dissolves, yet at the same time, when friends grow apart, the intimacy still

seems to also dissolve. It is beyond the scope of this book to explore this further, beyond the context of Healy's argument on residual duties. Healy specifically argued that there are residual duties that former friends have, that places a moral obligation on the other beyond the normal expectations of behaviors to mere strangers.

This ethical obligation to the past friendship is important, as is our ethical obligation to the future. Nehamas (2010) wrote it beautifully—"Friendship, like every kind of love, is a commitment to the future, based on a promise of a better life together than either one of us can have alone" (p. 278). Entering into friendship, into friendship in every sense, is a promise for the future that creates particular expectations and norms that are co-created between the two. These promises are voluntary, reciprocal, and transcend space and time. Because of their importance, choices to continue or end friendship, choices about what to share and with whom, and choices about how, when, and why to communicate all should call us to a more deliberative effort in engaging that guides our interactions.

Sunaisthesis: Engaging the "We"

In Chapter 5, to understand the importance of how being part of a friendship is more than just two friends, the chapter began by looking at the nature of dissolution and loss. Throughout the work, arguments were made that absence is not the same as loss, and that loss is not always negative. This chapter first recognized these arguments and then added that despite the generally positive effects of friendships in our lives, friendships often can be maintained despite negative consequences on our lives. Also, many friendships are fleeting, and their ending is not always negative. The chapter examined the role of social media on friendship dissolution and suggested that while there are similarities there are also some unique qualities of friendship dissolution in our age. They are that 1) unfriending online is more self-focused than relationship- or other-focused and 2) the process of unfriending online is different from unfriending in the physical realm.

After noting these effects, the chapter then investigated the Aristotelian notion of sunaisthesis. Using Flakne's (2005) translation, sunaisthesis is conceptualized as the synecdochal activity of friendship, in which two individuals become a "we." It is developed through performing communicative acts together and made evident in storytelling. It involved a joint perception, and as an activity that occurs through communication. The chapter then proposed that this is possible through mediated settings alone; however, it remains mindful that the majority of our relationships are hybridized and sunaisthesis takes place across all settings.

There are several implications then from an ethics standpoint related to this theme that can be teased out. For example, Christakis and Fowler (2009) showed us through their studies of social networks that our friends' friends even have significant influences in our lives. Through social contagions and

hyperdyadic spread, how we feel, what we do, and how we think are impacted. Not only that, but their research showed that when we end a connection to another, others that are three degrees separate are also removed. Our endings have significant effects, also. The choices we make within our friendships have an effect on not just us and our friend, but on others. Making good choices, virtuous choices, then, is conducive to the good of the community and the world.

Concerning matters of the good of friendship, Barrachi (2009) argued that the goods that are promoted and protected within friendships are not centered on anything tangible, but instead “that which is sought after or loved” (p. 20). Drawing from the *Eudemian Ethics*, Barrachi showed that the good that friends promote is living together, wanting to live together, “within the compass of ‘the end that one may be capable of’” (p. 20, drawing from passage 1245b8 in the *Eudemian Ethics*). What better a friend that knows and shares the same end to which we strive and helps us achieve it?

Barrachi explained that Aristotle on one hand maintained that justice was obsolete and unnecessary due to friendship, but also that friendship is “communal or political cohesion” (p. 18). It is both “irreducible to justice” and “equivalent with justice” (p. 18). Barrachi returned to an earlier book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* prior to Aristotle’s discussion of friendship to grapple with this tension. She noted that two conclusions can be drawn. First, that “friendship is understood *lato sensu*, as a vaguely defined bond of solidarity” (p. 18). Second, it could also be understood by a closer examination of the term justice in which “being just will never have meant merely following the laws” (p. 18). Based on the earlier discussion, Barrachi concluded that Aristotle considered justice to be a complete virtue, “arete teleia,” and then she went on to note that justice is a relational virtue: “It is excellence relationally manifested, the complex exercise of excellence by essentially relational beings” (p. 18). Our very notions of right and wrong are dependent on our friendships.

The Path Forward: A Call to Action

Now that we are at the end of this book, my hope is to provide a very modest call to action that summarizes how I, and others reading this text, utilize this information in the best way to inform their future friendships and protect those friendships they hope to continue. I was struck by a work on cyberliteracy by Laura Gurak (2008) titled *Cyberliteracy: Navigating the Internet with Awareness*. She began the work with the following:

In this book I argue that in terms of current discussion—at home, in the classroom, and in the boardroom—what we really need to understand is not just how to use the technology but how to live with it, participate in it, and take control of it. In other words, what we need is a new literacy, a critical literacy, for this new medium. Unless people become familiar with the social, rhetorical, and political features of digital communication, they

will be led into cyberspace with only a limited understanding of both the power and the problems of this technology. (p. 11)

Drawing from Ong, Gurak argued that the dichotomy we see that tries to locate online text as either print or even embed it within an oral tradition is problematic. It is neither. It is a new form of communication and requires a new literacy. With each of Ong's shifts in the cultural sensorium (oral culture, chirographic, typographic, then secondarily oral), we also saw the emergence of a new form of consciousness that required a new rhetoric. Within each of these shifts, we had accompanying changes in "our senses of space, community, and self" (p. 18). Becoming cyberliterate in one sense means drawing an awareness in our system of these changes—for us to be able to place ourselves in the changing environment in order to be able to understand where we have been as a culture, where we are, and where we could go.

Ong was attentive to the various forms of media, particularly of mass media versus mediated interpersonal communication. He noted that "it is not always true that person-to-person contact is nonexistent in today's mass media, particularly in those using the spoken word" (2000, p. 291). He added, "The telephone has certainly helped maintain many close personal relationships at a pitch otherwise impossible" (p. 291). Ong explained, "To be present to himself, man must find the presence of another or others. Man's life-world is not the opposite of solipsist: it is a world not of presence but of presences" (p. 295). He then wrote, "In presences we mature. Each individual finds himself by dealing with a thou, and another thou, and another. The presence of other persons fills man's consciousness, as objects cannot" (p. 295). Then, if we go back to Aristotle, if human flourishing cannot occur in a vacuum, we need others to be our best selves, then all friendships that promote mutual human flourishing, regardless of where the communication takes place, are true friendships. Continuing, Ong wrote,

Situated among objects, a person may indeed find them interesting, but he responds only to other persons, other presences, who are not objects. In a whole universe filled with countless objects and occupied by only one other man alone, it would be to the man alone that I could present myself, establish a relationship of presence. (p. 295)

Ong then explains that presence today is different, though. He writes,

The kind of presence which early man was able to establish in the universe was vastly different from the presence enjoyed by technological man today. Despite what personalizing effects may have been realized in his immediate environment, for early man the globe was not truly peopled. (p. 296)

He adds,

The presence of man to himself over the face of the globe is basically a presence of the word. It is not a peripatetic presence. Individual men do not all journey to the ends of the earth and back to encounter each other. The presence is realized within human communications media. (p. 298)

The ability to have a new enlightened and empathetic understanding of others in our world is a feat of social media.

In understanding our history, the presence of each of us becomes visible. Our unique histories and futures, and the meaning we make with others, is the path through which we can navigate living with, in, and taking control of technology in our lives. Having an awareness of the pitfalls and the advantages of using communicative technologies within our friendships is a good first step. Resisting our flawed tendency to think in binary terms and pit online relationships against offline is another. Our efforts are better spent reflecting on how technology might bring value to ourselves and the lives of our friends. The good life, happiness, and success of the polis require participating in ongoing conversations about the essences of such matters, and friendship is at the heart of all three. While this work began as an attempt to understand the essence of friendship, the habits and practices which shape this metaphorical heart known as friendship instead took precedence. While this book will now conclude, I can only hope that the beat continues.

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