

Tiffany Petricini, **Friendship and Technology: A Philosophical Approach to Computer-Mediated Communication**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 156 pp., \$128.00 (hardcover).

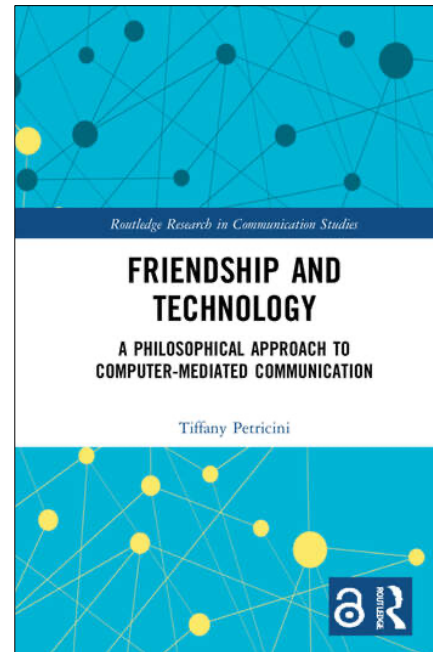
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Throughout history, friendship has been consistently considered a human good that promotes the prosperity of humankind. It is “one of the eternally fascinating topics to which great minds of every age turn with fresh interest” (Rake, 1970, p. 163). In our era revolutionary shifts in communicative technology are prompting radical changes in every relationship in our lives. Measures such as social distancing and lockdowns implemented across the globe during the Covid-19 pandemic have not only tested the strength of all human relationships but also increased our reliance on mediated communication, which many scholars believe hinders the development of interpersonal relationships.

Situating friendship in the digital age, **Friendship and Technology: A Philosophical Approach to Computer-Mediated Communication**, by Tiffany Petricini, examines the possibilities and challenges of communicative technology on every facet of friendship at the philosophical level, interweaving theories of phenomenology, media ecology, and communication ethics.



The introductory part of the book begins with the debate in the literature associated with the negative and positive effects of technology on friendships, claiming that the book will lean toward taking an optimistic view. It points out that there is a lack of attention on the shifts that technology has caused in the experience of friendship from the humanities-grounded communication tradition, and proposes to frame friendship as a communicative phenomenon, as friendship is created, sustained, managed, and developed via various forms of communicative work and practices.

Apart from the introduction, the book is composed of six chapters, exploring various themes related to friendship. Chapter 1 begins the investigation into the communicative phenomenon of friendship from encounter, the first step in all human relationships. The chapter delves into the phenomenological accounts of encounters, which helps to understand how they can be viewed as a communicative phenomenon. It first examines the nature of human relationships by reviewing the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, who placed intersubjectivity at the center of all social relations. We live in an intersubjective world, and encounters with others are considered a part of our everyday existence. It also utilizes the work of Joseph Tischner to show how encounter helps one learn the truth about the other by seeing and reading the face of that person in this face-to-face situation. Schutz and Tischner’s views on bodily presence and encounter are also cited to explain why physical presence is no longer necessary for encounters to occur. It is communication between

two people, rather than their physical existence, that matters. The chapter finally presents the research of two contemporary scholars, Maria Bakardjieva and Shanyang Zhao, who utilized Schutz's work to explore the relationship between modern media and social relationships, to discuss the possibilities for encounters in the technological age. While some scholars suggest that individuals have become slaves to their devices, ignoring the opportunities to develop social relationships, the author argues that technology is only expanding horizons for encounters, not destroying them.

A mere encounter is not enough to spark a friendship, and the leap from strangers to friends only occurs when two individuals recognize the unique interiority, or particularity, of the other. Chapter 2 deals with the theme of particularity by drawing from the work of Walter Ong, to place the recognition of particularity in the communicative realm. It also discusses the roles of intentionality, voice, givenness, and confirmation in revealing, accepting, and legitimating the existence and uniqueness of the other. The chapter finally puts the experience of particularity in the mediated settings, concluding that it is more than possible to explore the unique particularity of the other through dialogue in mediated settings.

While in chapter 2 the role of dialogue is recognized as essential for the development of particularity between individuals, chapter 3 dives into a deeper examination of dialogue. It begins by drawing from Martin Buber and Walter Ong to explore the basics of dialogue. While words and language play central roles in dialogue, it is more than just words. The "between" (p. 66) of the two participants is an essential element of dialogue. In the space of the "between," friends are mutually received as their unique selves through genuine dialogue. Transitioning to Schutz on the role of interpretation in perceiving others and the surrounding world, it explains the interpretative process in the dialogue between friends, which leads to the examination of the possibility of dialogue in mediated settings. While there is a lack of sensory cues (e.g., bodily gestures, facial expressions) that can aid in interpreting meaning in mediated communication, the evolution of communicative technology has been creating new cues (e.g., emojis) to compensate for that.

For most of human history, all social relationships were limited by time and space. Chapter 4 examines the altered dimensions of time and space and the associated effects on friendships. It first explores the connection between friendship and time from a phenomenological perspective, arguing that friendship is felt as an enduring relationship and that the duration of friendship is part of its essence. It then traverses the evolution of time consciousness, as related to shifts in technology in human society, from cyclical to linear and from intangible to quantified. Scheduling time has become a routine in our lives, and time spent with friends becomes fragmented in our hectic schedules. The chapter further analyzes the changing boundaries of physical space with the development of communication technology. Proximity, which was considered one of the key characteristics of friendship development in early interpersonal communication literature, is no longer a necessity for the creation and maintenance of friendship. Finally, it proposes that intimacy, the true bond between friends, can transcend time and space, and social media can provide more access to opportunities for intimacy development by providing "more casual, immediate, and informal modes of communication" (p. 94).

To explain that friendship is more than just two individuals being together, chapter 5 discusses the notion of "sunaisthesis", which refers to the joint perception undertaken by friends. It first looks at friendship loss and dissolution, a topic on which there is very limited research. Throughout the existing works

(Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009; Krämer, Hoffmann, & Eimler, 2015; Rose, 1984), arguments are made that friendship loss is not always negative, and that friendship can be maintained despite negative consequences on our lives. The chapter then examines the role of communicative technology on friendship dissolution and suggests that while there are similarities between online and offline friendship breakups, there are also some unique qualities associated with friendship loss in the digital age. First, unfriending online appears to be more self-focused than other-focused. Second, the process of unfriending online is more dehumanizing than in an offline context. It happens all at once with the click of the button. Losing a friend can be hurtful, whether in an online or offline context, and the reason for this may be related to sunaisthesis, the nature of friendship itself. The chapter then investigates the Aristotelian notion of sunaisthesis. It is considered the shared perception that friends enjoy, and, in the process of achieving it, two individuals create a "we" together. Therefore, in one sense, when we lose a friend, we lose a part of ourselves. Sunaisthesis can only be achieved through communicative acts, not by physically being together, thus it is possible to achieve it through mediated communication.

Chapter 6 serves as the conclusion for the book. It expands on friendship as a communicative good from the perspective of communication ethics and reviews each individual theme of the previous chapters as a good, exploring the practices that could protect and promote each theme, thereby contributing to the flourish of friendship as a whole. At the end of the book, the author calls for further studies on friendship and technology, suggesting that our efforts are better spent reflecting on how technology might bring values to ourselves and the lives of our friends.

While there is a wealth of research on technology and friendship, there is little research at the phenomenological level, and this book undoubtedly fills a gap in this field. Unfortunately, regarding communicative technology, the book has not considered the possible challenges the development of artificial intelligence may bring to friendship, which could have a huge impact on human relationships. Despite this minor issue, this book provides a unique perspective for readers to reexamine friendship in mediated settings. Those interested in the fields of interpersonal communication, mediated communication, communication theory and philosophy, and media ecology will find this book to be a fascinating read.

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