

A Global Perspective on Friendship and Happiness

Edited by

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Foreword

Sean Moran

This book is based on a conference covering the topics of “Happiness” and “Friendship,” held by the Pandisciplinary Network in a remote monastery up a mountain in Ireland. It was no ordinary conference. I wish that you could have been there. Another time perhaps?

The story of how the gathering came about is slightly convoluted. I had previously organized some conferences at Oxford University on behalf of a well-established interdisciplinary network of academics that was founded by Rob Fisher. Michelle Ryan from Ireland had given a paper at Oxford and had been very helpful to the organization. The plan was to arrange some further conferences on the same topics in Prague, the Czech Republic; and Michelle was invited to be involved in these. But the unfortunate consequences of the UK “Brexit” referendum led to the collapse of the network—after sixteen successful years of promoting interdisciplinary discussions—and the cancellation of the Prague events. I had already written “calls for papers” for “Happiness” and “Friendship,” but there was no longer a conference structure to host them. We were, so to speak, “all dressed up, with nowhere to go.” There was much disappointment. Two potential delegates from the USA were particularly dispirited that they would no longer be travelling to the Czech Republic to give talks on happiness and friendship, and asked me if Ireland might be a possible location instead. It turned out that Michelle and I live in neighbouring counties—Limerick and Tipperary. So, we had a chat, and, in the spirit of Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, said: “Let’s do the show right here!” And that’s what we did. The two American delegates who had encouraged us to organize something in Ireland—Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan—became the editors of the book you are now holding.

Michelle asked me early on in the planning stage what I wanted from the conference. My reply was simple: “Good conversations.” We certainly had plenty of those, as you will see when you read the chapters of this book. We had no budget for advertising, and no support from any institution, but somehow we managed to generate interest among the international academic community. Applications to come to Ireland and give a talk exceeded our expectations. In fact, I had to withdraw my own paper—on Thomas Aquinas’s theory of friendship—to make room for an international delegate. It will be featured at a future conference, I hope.

Thirty academics were eventually selected to come to Ireland from the USA, the UK, Canada, Israel, Brazil, Denmark, France, Italy, Romania and Russia. The rendezvous point was the Red Cow in Dublin. (This is not a blushing bovine, but a well-known hotel on the outskirts of the city). All the delegates arrived at the Red Cow within ten minutes of the specified time, but not, unfortunately, the bus we had sent. That arrived an hour later. We had managed to engage the services of the only bus driver in the whole of Ireland who did not know the location of the famous Red Cow. At least the experience gave our international guests an insight into the rather elastic conception of time that some Irish people have. The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh is quoted as saying: “There are over thirty words in the Irish language which are equivalent to the Spanish *mañana*. But somehow none of them conveys the same sense of urgency.” A similar joke is attributed to former *taoiseach* (Irish prime minister) Seán Lemass, former Irish *taoiseach* and president Eamonn De Valera, and an un-named Irish monk, illustrating another Irish national trait: a love of “the *cráic*.” This word—pronounced “crack”—translates as “fun” or “jocular conversation.” That was certainly something that we wanted at our conference on happiness and friendship.

Meanwhile, at the monastery 150 miles away, Michelle and I were anxiously waiting for the bus, and wondering when we could actually begin the proceedings. We had no need to worry. While Michelle patiently gave directions by phone to the bus driver every time he pulled up to say that he was still lost in Dublin, Tim Madigan (who had a list of delegates) and Tim Delaney started “the *cráic*” going at the Red Cow by having the assembled company introduce themselves. So by the time the delegates arrived at the monastery, after their bus journey up along the winding mountain roads, they had started to become friends, and our planned ice-breaker activity was not needed. The conference was back on schedule.

The monastery was founded in 1832 by a colony of Irish and English monks, who had been expelled from Notre Dame de Melleray Abbey in Brittany, France, following the 1830 French Revolution. It was built in the Knockmealdown Mountains in County Waterford, and called Mount Melleray Abbey in memory of the French monastery they had left behind. Some of the older monks who are there now have been at Mount Melleray for more than sixty years, fulfilling their monastic duties of prayer, *lectio divina* (sacred reading, or study) and work. The monks operate according to a strict timetable—unlike our bus driver—beginning with the first prayer service of the day, Vigils, at 4 am, and finishing with Compline at 8 pm. They are of the Cistercian (Trappist) order, famous for being silent. In fact, they have their own special Monastic Sign Language. But this silence does not extend to their interactions with pilgrims and other guests. The monks follow the *Rule of St Benedict*, which

includes the instruction: “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: ‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me’” (Matthew 25:35). Mount Melleray has continued this monastic tradition of hospitality to the visitor, including our academic guests.

The monks were particularly keen to meet the busload of delegates, because this was the first international scholarly conference in the monastery’s history and they had never had visitors of the Hindu, Muslim, and Mormon faiths before. The Guestmaster, Fr Denis-Luke, gave an opening blessing on the first day, and on the last day blessed delegates on the bus for the journey back to Dublin and onwards. This worked; the driver miraculously found the Red Cow this time. Almost all of the delegates, even those without religious belief, voluntarily attended one of the religious services – Vespers – in the chapel, and this gesture was very much appreciated by the monks. Although this was not a religious gathering, but a secular, interdisciplinary conference, the monks were always around and took part in the academic and social activities. Fr Denis-Luke told Tim Delaney about the Irish song “Delaney’s Donkey.” The opening words to this are: “Now Delaney had a donkey that everyone admired. Temporarily lazy and permanently tired. A leg at every corner balancing his head. And a tail to let you know which end he wanted to be fed” (by William Hargreaves). The next morning, another monk introduced Delaney, Anastasia Malakhova and Daria Gorlova to the monastery donkeys (Bill and Bob, named after the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous). The trio of friends enjoyed the personal tour of the grounds and shared in the happiness of Delaney’s Donkeys!

One notable feature of this gathering was the absence of the typical annoyances that often arise at academic events: the egocentric speech disguised as a question, for example. Discussions were supportive and collegial, as we hoped they would be at a conference whose topic was happiness and friendship (though I once went to a conference about humor that featured some of the grouchiest people you would ever meet). That’s not to say that there wasn’t some robust dialogue. The philosophers in particular were keen to grapple with each other intellectually, in the tradition of Socrates. But it was all good-natured.

As organizers, we set out to cultivate a tone that encouraged mutual respect and engagement with the issues, rather than allowing delegates to advertise their personal status—as some conferences inadvertently (or even deliberately) permit. For example, academic titles were not used in the program, on name badges and so on. Everyone had the same length of time to present their ideas, and there were no “keynote” speakers. We lived together for the three days of the conference, and everyone attended every session in full plenary: there were no “drive-by presentations” (in which the speakers

disappear after giving their talk) and no parallel sessions. The technology was relegated to the role of supporting and supplementing the presentations, so “PowerPoint karaoke” was discouraged. There was an element of “digital detox” about the event, with nobody using laptops or cellphones while they were listening to a paper. It was refreshing to see delegates giving the proceedings their full attention, and engaging in authentic discussions, in a spirit of international collegiality.

We had plenty of help and support for the conference. Marc Jones kindly designed our website free of charge. Rick Lewis, the editor of *Philosophy Now* magazine, generously sent a box containing enough copies of the latest issue for all of the delegates and monks. John, Michelle Ryan’s husband, ferried delegates about. Tadhg Foley handled the catering; Joe O’Flaherty and Pat Fitzgerald organized the rooms for us; Stefan Reynolds supplied us with tea, coffee and biscuits. And Michelle kept the whole event running smoothly with gentle, friendly efficiency.

After the conference dinner, we had an evening of “the *craic*.” This ranged from our oldest delegate (80) singing *Ochi Chernye*, to our youngest member (20) performing some songs from Broadway shows. There was Russian folk dancing to *Kasatchok*, followed by a Canadian rendition of *Love Me Tender*. A philosopher from Denmark sang the Danish national anthem and an American gave us an impersonation of Groucho Marx singing “Hello, I Must Be Going.” We sang the Beatles’ song *Michelle* to Michelle Ryan. Some Irish pilgrims from the Legion of Mary who were also staying at the monastery accepted our hospitality, and one of their number sang the song “Down by the Salley Gardens.” The monks joined in the fun, and we were treated to a spirited rendition of the traditional Irish song *The Galway Shawl* by Father Denis-Luke.

Why did we feel a need to arrange a conference on friendship? The reasons were clear. Friendship is important to us all. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle said that we humans are a social species and need friends in order to flourish. Recent empirical evidence seems to be that friendship can both enrich and extend our lives. Because friendship—and its absence—is a central part of the human condition, understanding it more fully is a worthwhile aim.

Appreciating friendship better—and its place among other human emotions—may help us to live more fulfilling lives. And while friendship generally seems to be good for individuals, we also need to consider what happens when friendships turn toxic. There can be a darker side to friendship, characterized by betrayal and revenge. Such themes are explored powerfully in fiction, drama, film and historical writing.

Since friendship is so important, we need to make sense of the effects of rapid technological and social transformation. In particular: How is the nature of friendship changing in our networked global village, in which people and ideas are more mobile than ever before? Are virtual or Facebook friends comparable with friends in the “real world”? Can new methods of befriending be cultivated in the cosmopolitan city, to promote social cohesion? What are the consequences of being friendless? And how can those who are socially isolated be brought into life-enhancing friendships? What new configurations of friendship are possible today? In our fractured times, how can we personally add to the amount of friendship in the world? The Friendship conference sought answers to these questions and more.

And what of happiness? Again, we turn to Aristotle, who said that “Happiness is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world.” We all want to be happy. The right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” are held to be unalienable rights in the American *Declaration of Independence*, Bhutan first measured “Gross National Happiness,” and the United Nations regularly commissions independent *World Happiness Reports*. But what exactly is happiness? Different answers come from psychological, philosophical, cultural, artistic, sociological, political, economic, scientific and theological perspectives.

Is happiness merely a subjective feeling of wellbeing that can be brought about by pleasurable experiences, or is there rather more to it than that? Is it to be found in drugs (prescription and illegal), alcohol, gambling, in sex, or in spiritual methods such as meditation?

Does it correspond to living the Good Life, as the ancient philosophers believed; or is true happiness only possible in the afterlife, as some religious traditions maintain? How is deferred gratification more problematic in our hectic postmodern age? What sorts of things can make us happy in our everyday life? Do possessions and status guarantee happiness? Ought we to aim for happiness directly, or will it come about naturally as a side effect of doing meaningful activities? What roles, if any, do entertainment, travel, sport, the arts, education, material success, hobbies, crafts and family have? In what ways are happiness and health—both physical and mental—related? How do literary and mass media depictions of happiness inform our view about what it is and how best to achieve it? What significance has the idea of happiness to business, politics and the law? How can happiness best be promoted, and unhappiness minimized? Are we entitled to demand uninterrupted happiness? What is our responsibility towards those who are not happy? How can we personally add to the amount of happiness in the world? The Happiness conference looked for answers to some of these questions.

I hope that you enjoy our book. I thank the editors, Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan, for a magnificent job. Their gentle chivvying kept all of the authors to the timelines (maybe they can have a word with our tardy bus driver).

Perhaps you might keep your eye on our website for details of future conferences (www.pandisciplinary.net); and if you would like to stay at the monastery as a retreat from the world for a few days, you could contact the Guestmaster, Father Denis-Luke (www.mountmellerayabbey.org). Another time perhaps?

Editors' Introduction

The topics of friendship and happiness are both intriguing and often interconnected as friends help to make us happy and when we are happy it's easier to create and maintain friendships. We believe that readers will find this collection of original articles a very worthy contribution to the field of friendship and happiness studies. The chapters found in this publication are the result of the “Happiness & Friendship” conference held June 12-14, 2017 at Mount Melleray Abbey, Waterford, Ireland.

Prior to this conference, Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan were conducting research on their then yet-to-be-published book, *Friendship and Happiness: And the Connection Between the Two*. We were already friends with Sean Moran who had helped to run conferences on friendship and happiness for the organization Inter-Disciplinary.Net. Moran informed us in September 2016 that the next conference would be held in Prague in early June, 2017, right around the time our book was scheduled to be released. For a number of reasons, Moran informed us that the conference would not be held in Prague but would, instead, be held somewhere in the United Kingdom, most likely in London. Eventually, it became clear that the Inter-Disciplinary.Net organization with its conferences and its original affiliations would not be able to sustain itself and would not be held in the UK thus jeopardizing the conference itself. Having visited Waterford, Ireland for his college's sports studies program, Delaney suggested to Moran that he consider hosting the conference himself at his college, the Waterford Institute of Technology. Moran thought this was a good idea and decided to take on the challenge of hosting the international conference himself. Before long, Moran locked in Mount Melleray Abbey outside of the city of Waterford to serve as the host site of the conference. He also secured the assistance of Michelle Ryan who did a fantastic job helping to organize the conference. Michelle helped to take care of the conference fees, room bookings, and so on.

With the dates and location secured it was time for Moran and Ryan to work with the monks at the monastery at Mount Melleray Abbey. This was the first time such an event was held at this location. Mount Melleray Abbey is a community of Cistercian monks. The monastery is situated on the slopes of the Knockmealdown Mountains in County Waterford, Ireland. The accommodations in the monastery were simple and clean. There are 14 en-suite bedrooms available for conference participants; some of which included twin

rooms which would help delegates to reduce their costs if they wanted to share a suite. Nearby was also a Georgian country house hotel, about a 10-minute walk from the conference venue. Some conference attendees preferred the silence at the monastery for quiet contemplation (during non-conference session times) while others enjoyed the hotel.

With such a unique setting as Mount Melleray, the conference itself was quite unique and not only helped to make attendees happy, it provided a wonderful opportunity for folks to reaffirm old friendships, maintain current friendships, and establish new ones. Conference participants, and thus, contributing authors to this book, were from various places around the globe including, Ireland, the United States, Russia, Romania, Italy, Denmark, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Canada, the UK, Brazil, and Israel. Such a diversity of folks helped to create a global view of friendship and happiness.

As editors, we standardized the format of the contributing chapters to fit the parameters of Vernon Press. While we find value in all the contributing chapters found in this collection the ideas expressed do not necessarily reflect the beliefs and research of the editors. Still, it was our pleasure to put this manuscript together, and we hope that you will also enjoy its contents.

Tim Delaney, State University of New York at Oswego

Tim Madigan, St. John Fisher College and Bertrand Russell Society

PART A: FRIENDSHIP

Having friends is an important aspect of happiness in life. Sharing moments of joy with friends enhances any positive experience; conversely, good friends help us to get past negative situations. The value of friendship has been evident since the dawn of humanity and remains so today. As humans have evolved so too has the nature of friendships. Historically, friendships were mostly restricted to face-to-face interactions but today, with the advent of technology and electronic forms of communications, friendships can be established, maintained and created electronically via social media platforms, especially Facebook. Thus, friendships include a range from face-to-face to Facebook.

In Part A of this book, contributing authors share their perspectives on a variety of friendship scenarios. In chapter 1, Delaney and Malakhova examine electronic friendships and answer the profound question of whether or not such friendships can be considered *real* (in comparison to face-to-face friendships). In chapter 2, Madigan and Malakhova review Aristotle's categories of friendships and examine the concept of "familiar strangers"—a term utilized by psychologist Stanley Milgram. In chapter 3, Denis-Luke O'Hanlon incorporates the role of religion and love into his discussion on friendship. The precarious nature of global relations and the need for friendship as a means to overcome strife is the theme in chapter 4, written by Ali Çaksu. The topic of gay friendships is discussed in Elena-Lidia Dinu's article (chapter 5) and in chapter 6, Rita Dirks revisits the notion of electronic friendships first discussed in chapter 1.

Chapter 1

Are Electronic Friendships *Real* Friendships?

Tim Delaney and Anastasia Malakhova

Introduction

Friendship is a valued commodity and an essential aspect of happiness. Traditionally, friendships were limited to face-to-face associations between people. Aristotle was among the earliest of all social thinkers to discuss friendships and he categorized three specific types of friends: friends of utility (these friends derive some benefit from each other), friends of pleasure (these friends are drawn to each other for a variety of reasons wherein in each derives a pleasurable experience), and friends of the good (wherein each of the friends admire the other's goodness and help one another strive for goodness). As time moved on from the era of the Ancient Greeks, people learned to forge long-distance friendly relations via written communications spearheaded by a variety of mail services (e.g., long-distance mail carriers, telegraph devices and postal services), the development of telephone communications, and most recently via electronic communications (e.g., texting and social media platforms). In this chapter, the authors examine the validity of electronic relationships compared to the more traditional face-to-face forms of friendships and attempt to answer the question, "Are electronic friendships *real* friendships?" Such a question has come to the forefront on the study of friendship due to the increasing amount of time that people are spending in the electronic world.

The Value of Friendship

There are many people in our lives. Some are of greater value than others. If you ask yourself, "Who are the most important people in my life?" the most common answer are generally "friends" and "family." The value of friendship is demonstrated in a number of ways, beginning with the historical explanation that humans forged friendship groups for such reasons as companion-

ship, safety and basic survival. The development of friendship groups and the formation of strong social bonds improved the group's chances of survival. As humans continued to evolve physically and intellectually over hundreds of thousands of years the need and desire for companionship and a strong communal bond with others has remained intact.

The value of friendship is something that many people take for granted and often fail to fully appreciate; that is, until a time arises when you really need a friend for comfort and camaraderie. Close friendships provide us with someone to talk to and hang out with. We can laugh, cry, and share special moments with friends. Friends help us deal with troubling situations in times of need; they serve as a “sounding board” when we need to work out and solve problems as they can provide helpful advice; and, they make great comrades when we want to share pleasant and happy moments from our lives. Friends are valuable because we can trust one another. Close friends will not hesitate to make a sacrifice for one another and are willing to take risks with you. And, perhaps most importantly, a friend is someone you can reach out to in a time of need. As summarized by the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2017), friendship “is a distinctively personal relationship that is grounded in a concern on the part of each friend for the welfare of the other, for the other's sake, and that involves some degree of intimacy. As such, friendship is undoubtedly central to our lives, in part because the special concern we have for our friends must have a place within a broader set of concerns, including moral concerns, and in part because our friends can help shape who we are as persons.”

The value of friendship still exists today, of course, and most friends enjoy opportunities to hang out with one another in a face-to-face format. However, in recent years, friendships have expanded beyond this close proximity aspect. Sure, there have been friendships throughout time that have survived without constant interaction but some sort of social interaction is still an important aspect of friendship. With the advent and continued advancement of communication technology, however, people are now able to continue old friendships or establish new friendships with little or no face-to-face interaction because of developments in electronic interactions in the electronic cyber world. The cyber world involves a universe that consists of computers, inter-computer communications, and computer networks such as the Internet—a place where humans go to communicate electronically. It has become so common for people to spend time in the cyber world that socializing and conducting business online is an expected form of valued behavior.

Spending Time in the Electronic World

We have been socialized by both the traditional agents of socialization and by cyber technology into accepting the idea that participation in the electronic world is the norm. The amount of time spent in the cyber world generally comes at the cost of less time spent with personal relationships in the “real” world. Consider, for example, that in 2014, Americans aged 18 and older spent an average of 11 hours per day with electronic media (e.g., television and internet use) (Richter 2015). When we factor that most people are awake 15 to 17 hours a day, 11 hours per day of electronic media represents a high percentage of our waking activity. American teens spend about nine hours a day using media for their enjoyment; with some 13-year-olds checking social media sites 100 or more times a day (Wallace 2015). Research has shown that the average daily internet media consumption of Americans more than doubled from 13 percent in 2010 to 30 percent in 2015 (Karaian 2015). This same research indicates that Latin Americans spend the most time (13 hours per day) with some sort of media and Asian-Pacific residents the least amount of time (a little more than 5 hours) (Karaian 2015).

More recent data indicates that the trend of Americans spending an increasing amount of time in the electronic world is still trending upward. Citing research data conducted by Asurion (a leading provider of device insurance, warranty and support services for cell phones), NBC's *Today* (2017) reports that, on average, Americans check their phone once every 12 minutes, or 80 times a day. One in ten Americans checks their phone every 4 minutes. So, if you are a non-American who communicates electronically with an American and wonder why they seem to always respond so quickly to electronic communications, this explains why. The desire, or need, to be electronically in touch with others is so strong for Americans that 31 percent feel anxiety when separated from their phone. The data also reveals that the average American cannot go more than 4 hours without checking their phones. The reason for this need to stay in constant electronic touch with the cyber world was previously explained in this chapter; that is to say, Americans, like others, have been socialized into accepting that this is the norm for behavior. Add to this, the realization that cell phones are used to store the contact information of friends, family and business associates, photos, and GPS services.

In the United Kingdom (UK), young people aged between 16 and 24 spend more than 27 hours a week on the internet and people of all ages are spending twice as much time online compared to 10 years ago. This dramatic increase has been fueled by an increasing use of tablets and smartphones. Young adults are especially responsible for this increase in the UK as the time spent online has almost tripled from 10 hours and 24 minutes each week in 2005 to 27 hours and 36 minutes in 2014 (Anderson 2015). The average person spends

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About the Contributors

Jocelyn Ahlers is a Professor of Linguistics at California State University, San Marcos. Her research focuses on the intersection of language and identity. As well as linguistic anthropology, she has taught knitting and spinning.

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Tim Madigan is Professor and Department Chair of Philosophy at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. He is the President of the Bertrand Russell Society and co-editor (with Peter Stone) of the book *Bertrand Russell: Public Intellectual*. He is also the co-author (with Tim Delaney) of the books *Friendship and Happiness: and the Connection Between the Two*, *Lessons*

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