



Making friends

Description

People don't *attract* enemies. Nor do they *collect* them. They **make** enemies. Enemies aren't out there. Enemies are manufactured by our actions and to surround yourself with enemies.



Enemies are like friends in this respect. We *make friends*.

We would probably not ask, "Did you *attract* (or collect) any friends at school today?" But we might inquire if Jonny *made* some friends.

Enmity and friendship are not entirely symmetrical. Sometimes we talk of *natural* enemies (cats and pigeons, paparazzi and celebrities, cold-war antagonists), but rarely natural *friends*. Perhaps friendship requires even more work than making enemies.

Friends are also cultivated. Friendships grow, like plants. Contrary to the concept of *making friends*, social media tend to treat friendship as a collection. Friends are out there. You just have to get them to sign up.

Hopefully, anyone with even a modest sense of sociability recognises that the idea of a “friend” in FaceBook is a metaphor. To be named on someone’s list no more qualifies you as a friend than an entry in an address book, even if it does give you access to some of their photos, comments, and “lists of friends.

It’s ok now to criticise social media. Digital commentator and psychologist Sherry Turkle laments that social media and other surrogates for sociability diminish our capacity for meaningful relationships. She refers to “the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other. We’d rather text than talk.”



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Many businesses are following the trend set by social

media, and talk of *engaging* customers and audiences in this *friendly* kind of way. (See [Audience disengagement](#).) Audience engagement also implies that audiences are out there. They pre-exist, ready to be meshed, interlocked, engaged.

What if audiences are more like friends? What about *making* audiences, cultivating audiences, growing them, and not just in numbers.

The cultivation of audiences is also a bit like education. An audience is the result of an educative process. To *educate* is to *edify*. To educate is to bring up or rear; to edify is to build up. You have to educate an audience, which is to bring it into existence through education.

Perhaps this is what successful entertainers, teachers, politicians and authors do. They don’t just put their produce on show and lure customers and audiences, like wasps to a pile of toffee. They *make* their audiences. There has to be something about creativity and design here – the art of making (*poiesis*), about which more could be said. It’s also about *building* community, which is never just gathering around a charismatic individual.

So in engaging audiences we should not presume they are out there, to be attracted. Perhaps we have to create them, bring them into being, set the atmosphere and prepare the ground for their cultivation.

Notes

- Education: In our book *Interpretation in Architecture*, my co-author Adrian Snodgrass wrote: “The development of hermeneutic skills involves the development of latent abilities in interpreting, understanding and applying what the other has to say. This is not the learning of a method, but **education** in the sense of “bringing out” or “leading forth” of latent abilities of judgement and evaluation by way of dialogue, in which the learner and the teacher and the learner and the text interact in a dialectic of question and answer that draws out meanings from the text and from within themselves.” (p.163) A footnote elaborates further: “The term “education” is from Lat. *e-ducere*, “to lead out”. “Training” may have similar implications, as it is inferred to derive from Lat. *trahere*, “to draw, draw forth, extract” (OED). Education is also “edification”, the building (from Lat. *ficium*, from *facere*, “to make”) of a temple (Lat. *aedis*). Education builds up the student, so that instruction equates to construction. “Instruction” is from the Lat. *struere*, “to pile up, to build”, that is, to edify.” (note 44, p.285)
- In the film *Bladerunner*, scriptwriters Hampton Fancher and David Peoples introduce a clever challenge about friendship. Pris says, “Must get lonely here J. F.” Sebastian says, “Mmm?! Not really. I make friends. They’re toys. My friends are toys. I make them. It’s a hobby. I’m a genetic designer. Do you know what that is?”
- Also see posts: [What are audiences for](#), [We are all entertainers](#).
- Mariza Dima, Mark Wright and I are running a workshop on audience engagement at NordiCHI 2012, 14 October in Copenhagen: <http://ace.caad.ed.ac.uk/nordichiworkshop/>. More about that later.

References

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Category

1. Economics

Tags

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