This memo is heavily influenced by Hubert Dreyfus' "On the Internet", where he lays out the limitations of tele-presence, "being there" without being there. Although Dreyfus' criticism is a radical one, showing the impossibility of creating a truly immersive experience, I want to use it in a less radical way: I want to use it to show, in case it is not clear from the beginning, that social media cannot take the place of the social world. This is the first of a two-part argument, suggesting that the problem with social media is not the way it functions but the way it presents itself. I will argue that there is a discrepancy between what online worlds can offer us, and what their design suggests that it can offer us. Therefore, please try to read it not as a radical criticism of social media but a criticism of a design that purports to give us a comparable alternative to the social world.

**Disembodied Experiences**

The bright red notification icon functions as the transitive moment from the physical world to the online world. Frequently, our journey in a social media platform begins with our intention to see what the notification is signaling. However, the icon is not meant to be purely informative; it is also an invitation for us to go into the platform. After we accept this invitation and click the app, moving inside the app from the specific notification page to the home feed is a matter of a single click. Even though we do not tend to think of it that way, this is a conscious design decision. To give an analogy to the non-virtual world, it stems from the same strategy as the clothing store that puts a "50% discount on selected items" sign on the door. Inside the store, the items on sale are never separated from the items that are full price, or even the most expensive "new season". Of course, this is not an accident or an arbitrary decision; it is a strategic one that is meant to bring the customer's attention to all the other items in the store. If the sales items are removed from the rest of the store, the customer is more likely to only check out those, but if they are together, there is a good chance that the customer's attention will be grabbed by an item from new season. Once the customer's initial motivation to check out the sales is overcome, the particular customer is just like any other who has come to check out the whole store. Similarly, the notification tab is never far removed from the home page, so that the user who comes in with the intention of checking out the particular notification is more likely to take a look at the home page; and thus turn into any other user who is in the platform to walk around and check out the feed for a while. For the clothing store, the hope is that the customer will buy more items; for the social media platform, it is that the user will spend more time and engage with it more.

This is what is only one of the ways in which the platform invites us to leave the physical world and exist for a bit in the online world. Here, "exist" is not meant as a hyperbole; just like when we are watching a movie or reading a book, we tend to experience ourselves in the platform more than in the real world when we are most engaged. Ask anyone who is walking on the street that is almost hit by a pedestrian checking out her phone. The awareness of the physical environment is heavily reduced when one is engaged with the online world. Therefore, we can reasonably suggest that for the most part, one cannot be in both worlds at once. We make a decision every time we go into an online world: Namely, to leave the physical world. Then, the question becomes: What are the limitations of an online world vis-a-vis the physical world? Hopefully, if we can notice its shortcomings, we may be tempted to look for a design that is less inviting when we are in the social world than when we are alone and unoccupied.

Dreyfus talks about the difficulty (or the impossibility) of true tele-presence. Because our experience as humans is so directly connected to our being there in the world, anything that we perceive as at a distance from our immediate bodies, we cannot help but feel as less real. This perceived lack of reality comes from three places: shared risk, the ability to control our grip of the world, and the ability to "read the room". The three features are all self-explanatory. The lack of shared risk refers to the fact that when we are on Facebook, we have the possibility of dis-engagement. We can only scroll through the home page, and if we do not like, comment or post anything, we can exist as pure spectators. The popular culture even has a name for this type of users: "Ghost followers". However, the physical world does not allow for dis-engagement. At any moment, we are necessarily in the world and at risk of things happening to us. We can never be "ghosts", because by merely being-there, we have made a decision to be there the way that we are. Similarly, the ability to control our grip refers to our ability to move closer and farther, to hold something lighter or stronger, etc. Dreyfus argues that having a continuous spectrum of ways in which we can interact with the world is necessary for our ability to make sense of the world as real. In online worlds, we have very limited control; we can zoom in on a photo, but we cannot look at it from a different angle. Related to this, we are not able to circumspect, or "read the situation", in social media. In the physical world, just by being in a room, we can get a sense of the mood in the environment. Actually, we cannot help but do so. However, in online worlds, there is no *mood* that prevails in discontinuous posts. Furthermore, even if the posts are arranged in a continuous manner, we cannot use our ability to circumspect: We have to look at each post individually to make extrapolations. [This paragraph is very provisional, because I am afraid that you will veto the whole idea as too radical. If we end up going with it, I will articulate on Prof. Dreyfus' account in a more full-fledged way. For now, I just wrote this to give you the main idea.]

In the end, the "problem with social media" is not about social media, but about our perception of it. Our dissatisfaction arises when we load online worlds with as much expectation as we do from the physical world. Of course, one way to fix this is to stop doing so. Perhaps, and maybe this is a good question for a self-help book. However, the way I want to approach the question is: How can we design an alternative that makes it easier for us to control ourselves and join social worlds when we are not preoccupied with the physical world. One may ask the question of why a social media platform would adopt an intentionally less-engaging design. Provisionally, we can give two answers that will be developed further later. The first is sustainability; once people start feeling that their social worlds are compromised by their engagement with online worlds, they may choose to get out of it completely. The second is the benefit of considering the public interest; a platform that succeeds in the same areas as the others but also allows its users' social lives to flourish as well is likely to be adopted by the discerning users. Dreyfus's book cites multiple studies, from CMU, Stanford and more, that showcase the negative social and psychological effects of social media use as it is experienced today. It is believable that these studies will continue, and create a change in the public perception sooner or later. Usually, something that is too good to be true eventually reveals itself as untrue. The fast food industry, after decades of making food more chemically-developed, more tasty but unhealthy, finally went through this change as the tremendous increase in diabetes rates finally caught the public eye. Today, existing social media platforms may be perceived as flourishing, but sooner or later, the rise of social deficiencies related to their use will be exposed. Then, an alternate design will become necessary if we do not wish to lose the benefits of online communication altogether.