**From the World to the Screen and Back**: A Possible Thesis

**Thesis**: In its current structure, friendship-based social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat -- not interest-based Reddit, Pinterest, Tumblr, etc.) fail to fully perform what are potentially their most beneficial function, which is to enrich their users' external social lives (social lives that are outside of the platform, in the physical world, in its common-sense use) in significant ways.

This failure is caused by intentional design choices. First, the presentation of the average platform is such that its default, easiest use case is socialization within the platform with no relation to the outside world. Although this is clearly also a utility the platform can provide, it is relatively trivial with respect to the potential it has. Secondly, there is some use of technical capabilities that are not mainly intended to ensure the "best" experience for the user, but towards definitions of success that are not user-centered (most number of clicks, maximum time spent in platform, etc.). Targeted ads, "snap streaks", the infinite scroll structure, and other methods of "addictive design" are among the design decisions that hampers the user to see the possibilities of the platform that are useful and "on his side" (currently vague, I will pinpoint what I mean). The user only has a second-order say in the type of the experience she has in the platform, via her previous activity in the platform. This is at times depowering, and reveals the platform as manipulative and untrustworthy, hence causing the user to treat it as mere entertainment or a virtual pass-time. Finally, the universalized and vacuous presentation of the platform reveals itself to the user as foreign, chaotic, and difficult to get a hold on in its entirety (Also makes it susceptible to the Sartrian gaze). The "home page" is not like a home, but like a scary forest (I know, bad analogy).

An alternative social media platform is possible, in which the possibilities that are left marginal in existing platforms are centralized, and currently central features are still allowed, but marginalized, thus making the platform auxiliary to the users' social lives. It is possible and feasible from a financial perspective to define the success of the platform in relation to the "best" experience the user can have, by allowing the user to have first-order decision making capabilities about the experience that she has. A platform in which the main areas of navigation are localized "communities" (Similar to the interest-based platforms' models) would make the platform easier to navigate and intuit. In total, these changes will hopefully reveal to the users the platform's ability to enrich their real social lives, rather than act as an entertaining and unserious substitute.