



The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit

By Sherry Turkle

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The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit By Sherry Turkle

In *The Second Self*, Sherry Turkle looks at the computer not as a "tool," but as part of our social and psychological lives; she looks beyond how we use computer games and spreadsheets to explore how the computer affects our awareness of ourselves, of one another, and of our relationship with the world. "Technology," she writes, "catalyzes changes not only in what we do but in how we think." First published in 1984, *The Second Self* is still essential reading as a primer in the psychology of computation. This twentieth anniversary edition allows us to reconsider two decades of computer culture -- to (re)experience what was and is most novel in our new media culture and to view our own contemporary relationship with technology with fresh eyes. Turkle frames this classic work with a new introduction, a new epilogue, and extensive notes added to the original text.

Turkle talks to children, college students, engineers, AI scientists, hackers, and personal computer owners -- people confronting machines that seem to think and at the same time suggest a new way for us to think -- about human thought, emotion, memory, and understanding. Her interviews reveal that we experience computers as being on the border between inanimate and animate, as both an extension of the self and part of the external world. Their special place betwixt and between traditional categories is part of what makes them compelling and evocative. (In the introduction to this edition, Turkle quotes a PDA user as saying, "When my Palm crashed, it was like a death. I thought I had lost my mind.") Why we think of the workings of a machine in psychological terms -- how this happens, and what it means for all of us -- is the ever more timely subject of *The Second Self*.

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The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit By Sherry Turkle Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #386873 in Books
- Brand: Simon & Schuster
- Published on: 1984-06
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover
- 362 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

A brilliant and challenging discussion presented with extraordinary clarity.

(Christopher Lehmann-Haupt *The New York Times*)

About the Author

Sherry Turkle is Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT and Founder and Director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self. A psychoanalytically trained sociologist and psychologist, she is the author of *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Twentieth Anniversary Edition, MIT Press), *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, and *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud's French Revolution*. She is the editor of *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, *Falling for Science: Objects in Mind*, and *The Inner History of Devices*, all three published by the MIT Press.

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Alva Sexton:

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